

NEW HABITS DIE HARD

From compassion to exclusion: the increasing anti-immigration attitude of the
CDA 1994-2017.

MA Thesis

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Introduction

Coinciding with the rise of populist anti-immigration parties, a prevalent theme in Dutch media, and thus, arguably, in the Dutch society,¹ became the question whether Dutch politics (or those of the 'Western world' in its entirety) were generally moving towards the right side of the political spectrum. There are numerous examples of newspaper or magazine articles that appeared - especially shortly after Second Chamber elections - in recent years that argued that Dutch politics, and individual Dutch political parties, were taking increasingly right wing standpoints.²

To illustrate and explain how this - supposed - shift in politics came to be, some journalists compared the reception of (the ideas of) populist anti-immigration politicians over the years and concluded that in recent times, the public opinion seemed to be more receptive to extreme right wing, anti-immigration views as it was some decades ago. They argue that ideas that were once deemed too extreme, now seem to be increasingly 'normalized', as even traditional mainstream political parties have adopted them. With this, public opinion of what is deemed 'normal', 'acceptable' and, with that, what is 'abnormal' and 'unacceptable' has changed in favor of right wing politicians.³

The normalization of extreme views and the corresponding shifting of public opinion, is often described as 'the Overton window' (see figure 1).⁴ The Overton window, introduced

¹ As the media are often a grand influence on public opinion. For literature covering this, see Vliegthart, R., *Framing Immigration and Integration: Facts, Parliament, Media and Anti-Immigrant Party Support in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam 2007) and Entman, R., Matthes, J. and L. Pellicano, *Nature, sources and effects of news framing*. In: K. Wahl-Jorgensen and T. Hanitzsch, 'The Handbook of Journalism Studies' (2009), p. 175-190.

² For example, see Righton, N., 'Is Nederland politiek rechtsaf geslagen', *de Volkskrant*, 18-03-2021, Cankaya, S., 'Nederland is weer rechtser geworden. Het antwoord is aan de jongeren', *de Correspondent*, 16-03-2017, Anon., 'Havana aan de Waal blijft links in een rechtser Nederland', *Omroep Gelderland*, 13-03-2017 and Stoffel, S., 'Links lijkt zijn wonden en rechts gaat met badjas en al naar Den Haag', *Joop*, 22-03-2021.

³ In Wijnberg, R., 'Mens, erger je niet... aan het fascisme', *de Correspondent*, 11-01-2021, Dutch journalist Rob Wijnberg did exactly this when he juxtaposed the portrayal of different extreme right wing politicians by NOS (the Dutch public broadcasting corporation). Wijnberg argues that where anti-immigration politicians Janmaat in the 1980s and Fortuyn in the 2000s were depicted by the NOS as extremes with unrealistic policy proposals, the, arguably even more, xenophobe Wilders gets treated as any other politician when he proposes - supposedly - unconstitutional policies in an contemporary NOS item. In Bregman, R., 'Wie de wereld wil veranderen moet onredelijk, onrealistisch en onuitstaanbaar zijn', *De Correspondent*, 24-12-2015, Wijnberg's colleague Rutger Bregman poses a similar argument.

⁴ In the Dutch context this is often done by journalists from left wing online journalism platform *de Correspondent*. Examples of articles referencing the Overton window are Bregman, R., 'Wie de wereld wil veranderen moet onredelijk, onrealistisch en onuitstaanbaar zijn', *De Correspondent*, 24-12-2015, Wijnberg, R., 'Mens, erger je niet... aan het fascisme', *de Correspondent*, 11-01-2021 and Bregman, R., 'Hoe ideeën de wereld veranderen' *De Correspondent*, 24-04-2014. Most international journalism that references the Overton window seems to come from the United States

by a Conservative think tank,⁵ is essentially a slider that can move down a range of more or less freedom between degrees of political acceptability. In the middle of the range, the most acceptable of the degrees, is 'policy'. Policy is on both sides followed by 'popular', then 'sensible', 'acceptable', 'radical' and finally; 'unthinkable'. For instance, on the subject of immigration, proposals like 'unlimited free entry for all immigrants' or 'deportation of all residing immigrants' are the unthinkable options on both sides. Free entry for a limited number of political refugees however, could be 'policy'. The idea behind the Overton window is that it can move. For example, when the window moves one step in either direction, once radical policy-proposals suddenly fall inside of the window of possibilities and become 'acceptable'.⁶

So how does the Overton window move? The window was initially used to explain what policies public officials could enact. Joseph Overton, inventor of the Overton window, used his window to argue that shifts in public opinion started with the public. Hence, think tanks or lobbyists should not try to convince politicians to support policies outside the window, but rather convince the public that policies once deemed outside Overton's window, now fell well within the realm of possibilities. By proposing policies that are deemed 'radical' or 'unthinkable' that generate a lot of media attention, these policies become increasingly normalised and, in turn, make less extreme policy proposals seem less radical. If the limits of acceptability of the Overton window shift to the right, its centre moves in the same direction. When this is the case, 'policy' and 'popular' hold the same place inside of the window, but could now mean different policies than before the window shifted. When this happens, the Overton window reveals a shift in public opinion and it becomes clear how politicians can use this mechanism to their advantage: by proposing increasingly radical policies, the middle of the window (public opinion) can be forced to move in the desired direction.

It is easy to see why the Overton window is gaining relevance⁷ as an explanatory

and most often revolves around either Bernie Sanders or Donald Trump and the 2016 and 2020 elections. These two politicians seem logical choices to connect to the Overton window, as they both, knowingly or unknowingly, seem to use its mechanisms to further their political agenda. Some of the articles that cover this subject are Amis, L., 'The alt-right's long march: How the Overton window is shifting', *New Statesman*, vol.105 2018, Astor, M. 'How the Politically Unthinkable Can Become Mainstream', *New York Times*, 25-02-2019 and Periello, T. and F. Wong 'Bold versus Old' *Democracy. A journal of ideas*, 18-05-2018.

⁵ Astor, M. 'How the Politically Unthinkable Can Become Mainstream', *New York Times*, 25-02-2019.

⁶ Mackinac Center for Public Policy, *A Brief Explanation of the Overton Window*.

⁷ Marsh, L., 'A Theory of Everything', *The New Republic*, vol.102(12) 2016, p. 6-8, explains why the Overton window is rapidly gaining popularity. In the academic world the Overton window is becoming more popular as well in recent years as it is being used in fields ranging from inequality in health care (See Lynch, J.. Theorizing Regimes of Inequality: Welfare, Neoliberalism, and the Reframing of a Social Problem. In *Regimes of Inequality: The Political Economy of Health and Wealth* (2020) p. 27-47) to African journalism (See Siguru Wahutu, J. 'Fake News and Journalistic 'Rules of the Game'', *African Journalism Studies*, vol.40(4) 2019, p. 13-26.). Most recently, prominent scholar and far-right expert C. Miller-Idriss used the Overton in a similar manner than the aforementioned journalists, as she explained how far-right ideas are becoming increasingly commonplace in Miller-Idriss, C., *Hate in the Homeland*, (Princeton 2020).

model within the context of the (perceived) increasing normalization of anti-immigration views, as it provides an interesting narrative and premise. However, there is almost no academic literature⁸ that shows the workings of this theoretical mechanism in the political practice. Of course, topics like the changing public opinion regarding the topic of immigration and integration⁹ and the increasingly restrictive stancepoints on this topic taken by - even traditionally mainstream - political parties¹⁰ are the subject of scholarly works, as well as the influence of populist parties can have on this process.¹¹

However, a work on if and how this happens within the context of a single (centre) party, does not exist. To gain insight in the influence of extreme ideas and the - perceived - place they hold in public opinion on a specific party, and in what other factors contribute to a political parties' development of its immigration and integration standpoints, this thesis will revolve around the changing attitude regarding this topic of a traditionally mainstream Dutch centre party: the Christian Democrat CDA (Christen-Democratisch Appèl). Also, I will explain if, why and how these ideas, or watered down versions of them, were adopted by the CDA. What role can be attributed to the extreme right wing politicians and what agency or choice do mainstream parties like the CDA have in this development? Central to this thesis will be the question: "Why did the CDA take on an increasingly restrictive approach to the topic of immigration and integration between 1994 and 2017?".

There is an extensive amount of literature that touches Western politics' shift to the right. Many works that focus on the European case feature the Netherlands as an example. Furthermore, there are also a reasonable number of publications that specifically deal with the rise of anti-immigration parties in the Dutch context.¹² Three often heard causes of the changing public opinion regarding immigration and integration in the West are: the anti-Islam

⁸ That is, apart from the recent publication Miller-Idriss, C., *Hate in the Homeland*, (Princeton 2020).

⁹ For example, see Bos, L., Lecheler, S., Mewafi, M. and R. Vliegthart 'It's the frame that matters: Immigrant integration and media framing effects in the Netherlands.' *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, vol.55(11) 2016, p. 97-108., Schemer, C., 'The Influence of News Media on Stereotypic Attitudes Toward Immigrants in a Political Campaign' *Journal of Communication*, vol.62(5) 2021, p.739-757 and Vliegthart, R., *Framing Immigration and Integration: Facts, Parliament, Media and Anti-Immigrant Party Support in the Netherlands*.

¹⁰ For example, see Bale, T. 'Cinderella and her ugly sisters: the mainstream and extreme right in Europe's bipolarising party systems' *West European Politics*, (2003) 26(3), p. 67-90, Heerden, S. van, Lange, S. de, Brug, W. van der, & Fennema, M. 'The Immigration and Integration Debate in the Netherlands: Discursive and Programmatic Reactions to the Rise of Anti-Immigration Parties', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol.40(1) 2014, p. 119-136 and Vliegthart, R., *Framing Immigration and Integration: Facts, Parliament, Media and Anti-Immigrant Party Support in the Netherlands*.

¹¹ For example, see Belanger, E. and K. Aarts, 'Explaining the Rise of the LPF: Issues, Discontent, and the 2002 Dutch Election' *Acta Politica*, vol.41(1) 2006, p. 4-21.

¹² Some great examples are Vliegthart, R., *Framing Immigration and Integration: Facts, Parliament, Media and Anti-Immigrant Party Support in the Netherlands*, Heerden, S. van, Lange, S. de, Brug, W. van der, & Fennema, M. 'The Immigration and Integration Debate in the Netherlands: Discursive and Programmatic Reactions to the Rise of Anti-Immigration Parties', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* and Bale, T. 'Cinderella and her ugly sisters: the mainstream and extreme right in Europe's bipolarising party systems' *West European Politics*.

sentiments that were the result of - or amplified by - the terrorist attacks of the early 2000s like the attacks in London, Madrid and New York (1)¹³, supposed, already present feelings of discontent about, among others, the existing immigration and integration policies, brisped up by the emergence of anti-immigration parties (2)¹⁴ and the effect that negative (media-)’framing’ of immigrants has on the public opinion (3)¹⁵. Of course, these explanations are not mutually exclusive.¹⁶

This last cause; the effect of framing, is also the topic of many academic publications.¹⁷ There lacks scholarly consensus about the exact definitions of ‘frame’ and ‘framing’, but a commonly heard one describes a frame as “a central organizing idea or storyline that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events”¹⁸. Framing happens on an individual level, but frames are often introduced by (political) elites, before they are adopted by the media and finally by the public.¹⁹ Framing messages have a major influence on public opinion. Hence, elites try to introduce competing frames that favor them or their ideas over the frames of other elites. Even when framing messages do not affect individual opinions, they can still have major political influence because they affect (rival) elites’ perception of what the public opinion is. Thus, framing can be an important political tool and elites try to use frames strategically. For example, if right wing political elites are successful in making a frame that portrays immigrants or Muslims in a negative manner dominant, public opinion on these subjects will shift and these specific elites can use the ensuing change of the public

¹³ For example, see Panagopoulos, C., ‘The Polls-trends - Arab and Muslim Americans and Islam in the Aftermath of 9/11.’ *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol.70(4) 2006 p. 608-624 and Cherney, A. and K. Murphy, ‘Being a ‘suspect Community’ in a Post 9/11 World – The Impact of the War on Terror on Muslim Communities in Australia.’ *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, vol.49(4) 2016, p. 480-96.

¹⁴ For example, see Muis, J., and T. Immerzeel ‘Causes and Consequences of the Rise of Populist Radical Right Parties and Movements in Europe.’ *Current Sociology*, vol.65(6) 2017, p. 909-930 and Dennison, J. and A. Geddes ‘A Rising Tide? The Saliency of Immigration and the Rise of Anti-Immigration Political Parties in Western Europe.’ *The Political Quarterly* vol.90(1) 2019, p. 107-116.

¹⁵ For example, see Vliegthart, R., *Framing Immigration and Integration: Facts, Parliament, Media and Anti-Immigrant Party Support in the Netherlands* and Bos, L., Lecheler, S., Mewafi, M. and R. Vliegthart, ‘It’s the frame that matters: Immigrant integration and media framing effects in the Netherlands.’ *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 97-108.

¹⁶ Vliegthart, R., *Framing Immigration and Integration: Facts, Parliament, Media and Anti-Immigrant Party Support in the Netherlands*, 1-7 and 131-145.

¹⁷ Apart from Vliegthart, R., *Framing Immigration and Integration: Facts, Parliament, Media and Anti-Immigrant Party Support in the Netherlands*, see Bos, L., Lecheler, S., Mewafi, M. and R. Vliegthart, ‘It’s the Frame that Matters: Immigrant Integration and Media Framing Effects in the Netherlands.’ *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 97-108, D’Haenens, L. and S. Bink ‘Islam in the Dutch press: with special attention to the Algemeen Dagblad’, *Media, Culture & Society*, vol.29(1) 2007, p. 135-150 and Schemer, C., ‘The Influence of News Media on Stereotypic Attitudes Toward Immigrants in a Political Campaign’ *Journal of Communication*.

¹⁸ For example, this definition is featured in a handbook of journalism studies. See, R. Entman, J. Matthes and L. Pellicano, *Nature, Sources and Effects of News Framing*. In: K. Wahl-Jorgensen and T. Hanitzsch, ‘The Handbook of Journalism Studies’, 175.

¹⁹ R. Entman, J. Matthes and L. Pellicano, *Nature, Sources and Effects of News Framing*. In: K. Wahl-Jorgensen and T. Hanitzsch, ‘The Handbook of Journalism Studies’, 175-176.

opinion in their favor.²⁰ After 2001, in the aftermath of, mainly the 9/11, terrorist attacks, the media-frame regarding Islamic immigrants indeed changed, as the 'Islam as a threat' frame became increasingly dominant. This in turn had a negative effect on the public opinion regarding immigrants.²¹

Because of the effects of the increasing dominance of this frame, anti-immigration politicians and political parties could capitalize on this shift in public opinion. When parties that are on either far side of the political spectrum gain popularity, other, less extreme, or even mainstream, parties can employ a strategy of 'accommodation'. This strategy entails that a (less extreme or mainstream) party starts to address a topic in a similar fashion as the (extreme issue stance pioneering) party it is accommodating itself to, albeit in a less extreme manner.²² Accommodation can be an effective weapon for less-extreme parties, as it can be used to counter or prevent success of the political adversaries that took the 'extreme' political position in the first place or to further one's own popularity by piggybacking onto the success of the issue stance pioneering party. Most often, accommodation is a temporary fix, as when the danger that the party who is being accommodated to lessens, the accommodating parties return to their original issue stances.²³ However, this is not necessarily the case.²⁴

This strategy is often employed by traditional mainstream parties when faced with anti-immigration parties. Traditionally right wing parties will start to address the same topics with a similar discourse as the anti-immigration parties. As a result this discourse will become dominant, bolstering the legitimacy of newly dominant frames that influence discourse. Sometimes, this will lead traditionally leftist parties to also address immigration and integration problems, which, in turn, can negatively influence their election results. As a result, the right-bloc becomes stronger at the expense of the left-bloc.²⁵ When other parties employ an accommodation strategy, far-right politicians can use this in their favor by simply 'upping the ante' to change the discourse even more in their favor. For example, this strategy was successfully employed by Jörg Haider of Austria's far right party FPÖ in the late

²⁰ R. Entman, J. Matthes and L. Pellicano, *Nature, Sources and Effects of News Framing*. In: K. Wahl-Jorgensen and T. Hanitzsch, 'The Handbook of Journalism Studies', 175-176.

²¹ Bos, L., Lecheler, S., Mewafi, M. and R. Vliegthart 'It's the frame that matters: Immigrant integration and media framing effects in the Netherlands.' *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 97-101.

²² Heerden, S. van, Lange, S. de, Brug, W. van der, & Fennema, M. 'The Immigration and Integration Debate in the Netherlands: Discursive and Programmatic Reactions to the Rise of Anti-Immigration Parties', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 122.

²³ Bale, T. 'Cinderella and her ugly sisters: the mainstream and extreme right in Europe's bipolarising party systems' *West European Politics*, p. 67-70 and 84-87.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, 67-70, 75-76 and 84-87.

²⁵ Heerden, S. van, Lange, S. de, Brug, W. van der, & Fennema, M. 'The Immigration and Integration Debate in the Netherlands: Discursive and Programmatic Reactions to the Rise of Anti-Immigration Parties', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 120-124 and 130-131.

1990s.²⁶ When this happens, and the accommodating parties do not change their strategy, the accommodating parties can be 'pulled' into adopting increasingly right wing positions on the topic of immigration and integration. When this happens, the public opinion of a matter can shift so much that ideas that were once deemed extreme or unthinkable are increasingly normalized to the point that they are no longer unthinkable but rather 'acceptable'. In other words, when this happens, the theorized shifting of the public opinion associated by aforementioned journalists with the mechanism of the Overton window becomes a reality because of the agency of populist right actors who pioneer and propagate extreme ideas.

These two theoretical concepts; framing and accommodation will feature prominently throughout this thesis as they are pivotal in the argument I will present. In the coming chapters I will demonstrate that - but more importantly why - by accommodating to anti-immigration parties that employed (perceived-to-be-)dominant frames regarding immigration and integration in their favor, the CDA has moved from a middle party with a strong Christian Social wing to a party that is part of the right side of the political spectrum with a clear Conservative ideology. As for my source material, I will employ sources that show internal discussions on what party course was deemed desirable by members of the CDA, like reports of internal party commissions, lectures by prominent party ideologists and works on the CDA by the 'party-expert', Pieter Gerrit Kroeger²⁷ as well as election programmes and election results to show what these internal discussions amounted to. With this intensive focus on the internal processes of one political party, I hope to contribute to the relevant historiography on how changing public opinion and the emergence of populist anti-immigration parties can influence the ideological course of traditional mainstream parties.

The periodisation 1994-2017 was chosen because at the start of this period, the CDA still took a very social stance regarding the topic of immigration and integration and - as I will show not to be entirely coincidental - there were no populist anti-immigration parties active in the Dutch parliament. By including this period, the reasons behind a shift in the CDA's policy proposals can be more adequately uncovered. Also, with this periodisation, the possible political effects of events in the early 2000s like '9/11' can be taken into account. The reasons 2017 is taken as the endpoint are threefold. Firstly and most importantly, I will show that shortly after the 2017 election, the CDA appears to have definitely consolidated its ideological course on the topic of immigration and integration. Secondly, after the 2017

²⁶ Bale, T. 'Cinderella and her ugly sisters: the mainstream and extreme right in Europe's bipolarising party systems' *West European Politics*, 75-76.

²⁷ An important work that will feature throughout this thesis is Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds. Het CDA in de nieuwe eeuw* (Amsterdam 2020) in which Kroeger narrates the CDA's history. Historian Kroeger has published two books on the CDA and is the most renowned CDA expert, member of the CDA and also co-author of internal commission evaluation reports.

Second Chamber elections the CDA was confronted with not one, but two populist right wing parties to combat, as newcomer party Forum voor Democratie (Forum for Democracy) entered the Dutch parliament. This marks the start of a new era, as in the period that this thesis covers, the CDA was confronted with - at most - one populist party on its right side.²⁸ The final reason is of a more practical nature: to avoid writing on contemporary developments that are too close to judge adequately.

Furthermore, the reasons that this thesis will be about the CDA instead of another Dutch political party are fivefold. Firstly and most importantly, the CDA - as I will demonstrate in the first chapter of this thesis - could be seen as a traditional centre party up until 2002. Secondly, the CDA can be viewed as a traditional mainstream party, as it, or its predecessors (the CDA was created out of a fusion of three confessional parties) had taken part in every executive branch of government from the Second World War until 1994.²⁹ Thirdly, because the difficult³⁰ fusion of the three confessional parties CHU, ARP and KVP into the CDA only happened in 1980³¹, the chance of contrasting views still existing within the party, leading to discussions about the desirable political course or party ideology - that could be useful in this work - was deemed larger with the CDA than, for example, long existing classical parties like the VVD liberals or Labour PvdA. Fourthly, the CDA, as I will demonstrate in this thesis, has changed its position regarding immigration and integration significantly during the last two decades. Finally, this shift in identity and ideology of the Christian Democrats often features in news media and thus contributes to the relevance of this subject.³²

This work is divided into three, chronologically arranged, chapters. In the first chapter, *A new face*, which covers the period 1994-2002, I explain how the Christian Social CDA of the 1990s reacted to the rapidly changing reality of the new millennium and the rise of populism. In the second chapter, *The Balkenende era: retaining power* the years under new party leader Jan Peter Balkenende (2002-2010) are covered. In these ambivalent years, there were continuities as well as discontinuities and the CDA had to face a couple of tough choices regarding their position on immigration and integration. In the third and final chapter, *Conservative consolidation*, covering the period 2010-2017, I demonstrate that the CDA

²⁸ Although I will show that the CDA at one point had to deal with two populist threats at the same time (Geert Wilders and Rita Verdonk), there was only one populist party it had to deal with at that time (the PVV), as the VVD arguably still was to be categorized a traditional mainstream party.

²⁹ Parlement.com, consulted on 13-06-2021.

³⁰ Napel, ten, H., 'CDA Partijgeschiedenis', *Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen*.

³¹ Parlement.com, consulted on 13-06-2021.

³² For example, see recently published articles like Witt Wijnen, P. de, 'CDA haalt, op onderdelen, de VVD rechts in', *NRC Handelsblad*, 07-03-2021, Aharouay, L. 'Hoekstra grijpt z'n kans, dat smaakt bij het CDA naar meer', *NRC Handelsblad*, 08-06-2021 and anon., 'Middenpartij CDA blijft naar rechts kijken', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 11-02-2019.

continued the line it had set in since 2002 and that the Conservative wing of the party asserted its dominance.

CHAPTER ONE
A new face

In this chapter I will explain why and how the position of the CDA regarding immigration and integration changed between 1994 and 2002. This periodisation was chosen because at the end of this period, a shift to the right in the political parties' stance regarding the aforementioned topic took place. Namely, this shift first became clear in the run-up to the 2002 elections, when the ideological development of the CDA on the topic of immigration and integration entered a new phase.³³ By juxtaposing the 2002 CDA election programme to the two that came prior to it, the breach that occurred in the early 2000s becomes evident. To explain this discontinuity, both internal and external factors that influenced the Christian Democrats' ideological course will be discussed.

The year 1994 signalled the start of the Dutch 'purple' cabinets that formed the executive branch of government in the Netherlands until 2002. These cabinets were presided by Labour Prime Minister Wim Kok and existed out of a coalition with, mainly, the VVD liberals. These cabinets were called purple cabinets because they primarily consisted of the labour PvdA (red) and the liberal VVD (blue). The purple cabinets also marked the first time since the birth of the CDA in 1980 that the Christian Democrats were not included in the coalition.³⁴ This was perceived as a major defeat by the CDA, as it, or one of its predecessors, led the previous six cabinets and supplied the Prime Ministers, spanning a period of seventeen years. Furthermore, the Christian Democrats lost as much as 20 seats in parliament, going from a record high of 54 down to 34 seats.³⁵ Of course, the CDA acknowledged that it was in a crisis. This can be inferred from, for instance, the fact that a special internal committee, named 'Strategisch beraad' (Strategic Deliberation) was instituted to provide the CDA with a renewed ideological course. The report that was the result of this committee was called *Nieuwe wegen, vaste waarden*³⁶ (New ways, same values) and was meant to update the CDA's political standpoints to the

³³ For example, in the election programme CDA, *Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid*. (The Hague 2002) significantly more attention is paid to the topic of immigration and integration than in the previous election programmes; CDA, *Wat echt telt: werk, veiligheid, milieu* (The Hague 1994) and CDA, *Samenleven doe je niet alleen* (The Hague 1998). This is exemplified by the amount of instances relevant keywords like migrant (and its conjugations) occur, but also by the policy proposals that the document entails. For instance, in CDA, *Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid*. the CDA proposes a tougher stance on immigration and the participation in society and the job market by residing migrants.

³⁴ Parlement.com, consulted on 08-04-2021.

³⁵ Ibidem.

³⁶ Andriessen, F.H.J.J., *Nieuwe wegen; vaste waarden: aanzet tot een strategisch beraad binnen het CDA* (The Hague 1995).

- then - current times. The major loss of parliamentary seats, which resulted in being excluded from the final formation of governing parties, was later attributed to internal unrest in the party, some unfortunate utterances by CDA party members and the media portraying some CDA policies as unjust and harsh.³⁷

The poor election result and difficult formation process had nothing to do with the CDA's stance on immigration and integration, as this would only become an important theme in (Dutch) elections and the corresponding public debate as a whole from the early 2000s on out.³⁸ The reason I pay attention to this election is twofold: firstly, it is important to consider the CDA's base stance on immigration and integration and, secondly, it is important to realise that this electoral loss was internally perceived by the CDA as a signal that the party needed to reinvent itself to regain the relevance and political power that it had held until shortly before.³⁹ I will argue that this crisis, that followed the 1994 election results, played a pivotal part in the Christian Democrats' shift to the political right.

As stated, it took the CDA until 2002 to be part of the executive branch of government again, as there were eight years of 'purple rule' in the Netherlands. In the 1998 elections, the CDA lost another five parliamentary seats, bringing their total down to 29. This meant it became the third-largest party, dropping one place further down the line compared to 1994.⁴⁰ The period between 1994 and 2002 was a turbulent one for the CDA: it changed party leaders three times, did not fare well electorally and had a difficult time adjusting to being an oppositional party for a change.⁴¹ These factors contributed all the more to the fact that to many the 2002 election results, where the CDA became the largest party by a landslide, came as somewhat of a surprise.⁴²

The main source materials used to characterize the CDA's basic stance on immigration and integration are the party programmes for the 1994 and 1998 elections, respectively *Wat echt telt: werk, veiligheid, milieu* (What really counts: work, safety, environment) and *Samenleven doe je niet alleen* (Society is not a solo effort).⁴³ When looking at these election programmes, the topic of immigration and integration does not seem to be of tremendous importance as it does not feature as prominently throughout the

³⁷ Metze, M., *De stranding: het CDA van hoogtepunt naar catastrofe* (Nijmegen 1995), 206-212 and Bosmans, J. and A. van Kessel, *Parlementaire geschiedenis van Nederland* (Amsterdam 2011), 197-202.

³⁸ Holsteyn, J.J.M van, and G.A. Irwin, 'Never a Dull Moment: Pim Fortuyn and the Dutch Parliamentary Election of 2002.' *West European Politics*, vol.26(2) 2003, p. 41-44.

³⁹ Andriessen, F.H.J.J., *Nieuwe wegen; vaste waarden: aanzet tot een strategisch beraad binnen het CDA*, 2.

⁴⁰ Parlement.com, consulted on 09-04-2021.

⁴¹ Ark, R. van (et al.), *25 jaar CDA: tussen macht en inhoud* (Baarn 2005), 96 and Kroeger, P.G. and Stam, J., *De rogge staat er dun bij: macht en verval bij het CDA 1974-1998* (Amsterdam 1998) 331-342.

⁴² Parlement.com, consulted on 13-04-2021.

⁴³ CDA, *Wat echt telt: werk, veiligheid, milieu* and CDA, *Samenleven doe je niet alleen*.

programmes as, for example, the governmental budget deficit does in *Wat echt telt* or Confessional solidarity does in *Samenleven doe je niet alleen*.⁴⁴ Also, both regarding the topic of immigration and integration and in its entirety, the two programmes are relatively similar. What is striking is the positive framing of refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and integration. The aspect of the theme immigration and integration that features most prominently in the party programmes is the latter of the two; integration.

The language that is used to describe what is called the 'multiculturele samenleving' (multicultural society), a term that is scarcely literally applied, most often bears a positive connotation. The term - or an interchangeable one - is mostly used to signal a changing society, one that poses new challenges, but also offers new chances. When those challenges, like the lacking participation of migrants, are met, society will benefit and flourish. For example, in *Wat echt telt: werk, veiligheid, milieu* it is stated that "... a many colored society is an advantage, especially when all those different talents are educated, involved and utilized."⁴⁵ This is the general message of both party programmes on this topic. The one time that the term 'multiculturele samenleving' is literally mentioned in *Wat echt telt: werk, veiligheid, milieu* it is in the context of how "family, friends, and (migrants own) organisations are ties that can create a safe environment that ensures that nobody is left behind... from these ties (people) can participate and emancipate. In this way everyone in the multicultural society can participate today from their own motives."⁴⁶ The authors of the programme continue by stating that the government should be watchful that commerce does not get in the way of this, as spiritual freedom values pluriformity and diversity and society should treasure these values.⁴⁷ The one time the multicultural society is literally mentioned in *Samenleven doe je niet alleen*, it implies that the CDA values a multicultural future. In the election programme it says: "The bigger cities are the centres of interaction, renewal; economic motors, cultural centres and the multicultural meeting places of the next century. These cities must become more attractive to live, work and recreate in. To achieve this, large investments in infrastructure, combating crime and poverty, the integration of cultural minorities... are necessary."⁴⁸

To be clear, both election programmes mention an ample amount of times that cultural minorities are lagging behind when it comes to participation in the job market or society as a whole. However, the minorities in question are rarely attributed agency in this capacity. The process of integration is primarily a challenge to the government, her

⁴⁴ For example, in *Samenleven doe je niet alleen*, about a mere two-and-a-half pages of the total of 100 are dedicated to immigration and integration.

⁴⁵ CDA, *Wat echt telt: werk, veiligheid, milieu*, 11.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, 78.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, ibidem.

⁴⁸ CDA, *Samenleven doe je niet alleen*, 78.

institutions and society. During these years, the CDA apparently saw the multicultural society as imperfect, just because it was not yet finished. It seems as though the Christian Democrats viewed a - more or less - perfect diverse society as malleable, and as an achievable goal, that, with the right stimuli and the right amount of patience, would be achieved. This explains why 'minorities', 'immigration', 'integration' and other relevant keywords are most often mentioned in the context of tolerance, aiding and expediting, the enrichment of the Dutch culture and the emphasis on the fact that the majority of immigrants is already successfully integrated and participating and contributing to society. The CDA refers to the Dutch society as "a mosaic of different groups with their own traditions, institutions and ways of life, who actively participate in society. This enriches the Dutch culture."⁴⁹ The challenges that are posed by this - unfinished - mosaic, are often found in how the Dutch society should adapt to the coming of these migrants with their different cultures as opposed to how the adaptation should happen the other way around. For instance, in *Samenleven doe je niet alleen*, it is stated that governmental policy, the education system, broadcasting and press, healthcare and penitentiary institutions should be adapted to embrace and foster cultural diversity.⁵⁰ Cultural minorities should be made able to participate in society in a top-down manner. Also, they should hold visible public offices, as the Dutch government should be a proportionate reflection of Dutch society.⁵¹

The topic immigration features a lot less prominently than the topic of integration in the two documents.⁵² For example, the term immigration, or any conjugation of it, does not feature a single time in *Wat echt telt: werk, veiligheid, milieu*.⁵³ However, when it does feature, the theme of immigration is treated with a similar Confessional charity as the topic of integration. The scarce amount of times the party programmes refer to refugees are often linked to international development cooperation.⁵⁴ However, it must be mentioned that even de CDA's charital stance regarding refugees knows its bounds, as in both programmes it is stated that sheltering refugees in countries neighbouring the region of origin is preferable to taking in refugees in the Netherlands.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, in both the 1998 and the 1994 programme, the CDA committed itself to the harboring of refugees out of both its Christian compassion and the honoring of international treaties.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ CDA, *Samenleven doe je niet alleen*, 40.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, 41.

⁵¹ Ibidem, ibidem.

⁵² For example, 'cultural minorities', 'integration' and (lacking) participation of migrants are found, or referred to, everywhere in the party programme, whereas terms like 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker' only feature in the sparse pages that cover international development cooperation.

⁵³ The words that were searched for are 'immigrant' and 'immigration'. The term 'migrant' however, does feature in the party document, albeit only three times.

⁵⁴ For examples, see CDA, *Wat echt telt: werk, veiligheid, milieu*, 11 and CDA, *Samenleven doe je niet alleen*, 58.

⁵⁵ CDA, *Wat echt telt: werk, veiligheid, milieu*, 28 and CDA, *Samenleven doe je niet alleen*, 58.

⁵⁶ Ibidem, ibidem.

These two election programmes show that during its oppositional years, the CDA took, as was common during these times, a relatively social and left-leaning stance on the topics of immigration and integration. This is not surprising, as these stances are in line with the then-dominant frames regarding the immigrants and the multicultural society: the '(socio-economic) emancipation'- and 'assimilation'-frames. The narrative provided by these frames indeed put the pith of the responsibility of integration matter with the government and Dutch society as a whole, instead of with the (im)migrants. Furthermore, negative framing of the Islam was less occurrent than it would soon become.⁵⁷

In sharp contrast to this: in the 2021 CDA election programme *Nu Doorpakken!* it is emphasized that migration and integration lead to recurring tensions in society which undermine solidarity. In this contemporary document, the CDA pleads for more grip on the national borders and on the number of newcomers within those borders. Well guarded outer European borders are paramount in effectuating this. If these are not realised, the political support for harboring new refugees will swindle to a level where they will no longer be welcome. Moreover, in the programme it is argued that even the borders within Europe need reconsidering, as the free movement of persons within the EU leads to unwelcome results.⁵⁸ This is obviously a very different approach to immigration and integration than the party had just over two decades ago. What happened? In the rest of the chapter I will demonstrate how and why this shift in policy proposals first came into being. This shift was the result of a new 'frame' regarding migrants and cultural minorities, and the Islam specifically, the 'Islam as a threat'-frame that gained salience at the expense of an older frame; the 'assimilation'-frame.⁵⁹ By adopting and co-opting this new frame, and thus accommodating to the anti-immigration political elite that introduced this new frame, the CDA contributed to its salience and helped bolster the frames' newfound dominance and the further forming of public opinion on the subject.⁶⁰

To understand how this happened, we must look at the context of the rapidly changing world and, for many, corresponding worldview that occurred around the turn of the millennium. On the 11th of September, 2001, the two airplanes that flew into the New York World Trade Center shocked the world. This cataclysmic event and the subsequent terrorist attacks on European soil instated, or bolstered existing, fear of the Islam in many. In turn, this helped xenophobic right-wing sentiments that already existed gain momentum.

⁵⁷ Bos, L., Lecheler, S., Mewafi, M. and R. Vliegthart, 'It's the frame that matters: Immigrant integration and media framing effects in the Netherlands.' *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 97-108.

⁵⁸ CDA, *Nu Doorpakken!* (The Hague 2021), p. 98.

⁵⁹ Bos, L., Lecheler, S., Mewafi, M. and R. Vliegthart 'It's the frame that matters: Immigrant integration and media framing effects in the Netherlands.' *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 97-101.

⁶⁰ R. Entman, J. Matthes and L. Pellicano, *Nature, sources and effects of news framing*. In: K. Wahl-Jorgensen and T. Hanitzsch, 'The Handbook of Journalism Studies', 175-176.

Throughout the Western World, feelings of malcontent were brisked up by the coinciding emergence of populist anti-immigration parties.⁶¹ In the Dutch context, the anti-immigration sentiments were personified by Pim Fortuyn. The former Labour party member and university professor formed his own political party Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF) after a brief stint with the Leefbaar Nederland (Liveable Netherlands) party.⁶² Fortuyn started generating media attention because of his natural charm and his critical views on the purple cabinets and their blind spot for the flawed multicultural society. Fortuyn openly spoke out against immigration, Muslims, and the, supposed, failed Dutch integration policies. His status skyrocketed after the 9/11 attacks. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center made some to come see him as some kind of prophet, as Fortuyn was one of the very few who publicly claimed the multicultural society was not all rosey.⁶³

Politically, Fortuyn's timing could not have been better. With the wind of 9/11 in his sails, Fortuyn's pet topic of the failed multicultural society and the Islam as a scary and backwards religion gained salience.⁶⁴ With this, Fortuyn was successful in the strategic framing of the issue, meaning that mainstream news media, consciously or unconsciously adopted the same frames.⁶⁵ As a result, the 'Islam as a threat'-frame became increasingly dominant.⁶⁶ These developments helped shift the public opinion against immigrants, Muslims and the immigration policy of the purple cabinets, and in favor of Fortuyn and others who criticized the government's approach on this topic.

This presented the CDA with a chance to capitalize on its recent electoral losses. By also adopting the 'Islam as a threat'-frame, they further helped legitimize the frame and corresponding shift in public opinion as well as employing Fortuyn's monumental rise in popularity for their own gain. As an oppositional party they could not be held directly accountable for the government's, now, apparently flawed, approach to immigration and integration. With their largest opponents already discredited by Fortuyn, a rebranded CDA that positioned itself in accordance with the changed perception of migrants might do well in the upcoming elections. This coincided, not entirely coincidentally, with the fact that the CDA was extra inclined to be receptive to influences on their ideology and policy stances, as the humbling losses of the last two elections made them open to reconsiderations of their views

⁶¹ Vliegthart, R., *Framing Immigration and Integration: Facts, Parliament, Media and Anti-Immigrant Party Support in the Netherlands*, 1-7 and 131-145.

⁶² Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds.*, 72 and 76-78.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, 80-81.

⁶⁴ Belanger, E. and K. Aarts, 'Explaining the Rise of the LPF: Issues, Discontent, and the 2002 Dutch Election' *Acta Politica*, 16.

⁶⁵ Entman, R., Matthes, J. and Pellicano, L., 'Nature, sources and effects of news framing'. In: Wahl-Jorgensen, K. and T. Hanitzsch *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, 175.

⁶⁶ Bos, L., Lecheler, S., Mewafi, M. and R. Vliegthart, 'It's the frame that matters: Immigrant integration and media framing effects in the Netherlands.' *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 97-101.

and values. What better place to look than the government-critical new kid on the block that fared so well in the polls and, until recently, enjoyed the idea of becoming party leader of the CDA itself: Pim Fortuyn?⁶⁷

Under new party leader Jan Peter Balkenende, the CDA did exactly this, as it adopted a strategic position on the topic that, thanks to Fortuyn, dominated the Dutch 2002 elections: a tougher stance on immigration and integration.⁶⁸ This strengthened the, already present, more Conservative side of the CDA, which gained the upper hand within the party, at the expense of the more Christian Social side of the party. The CDA Conservatives, hoping to present their party as a traditional law-and-order party, tried to connect the issue of immigration to this theme, not only in order to gain an electoral advantage over the parties that formed the purple cabinets, but also as an attempt to find an answer to the newly arisen populist danger.⁶⁹ With this focus on law and order and a tougher stance on immigration and integration, the CDA was clearly accommodating itself to Fortuyn's LPF, as these were pet topics of Fortuyn that gained a lot of media-attention during the election campaign.⁷⁰ Most often, accommodation is a temporary fix.⁷¹

However, as I will argue, this time that would prove not to be the case. By employing an accommodation strategy, a mainstream party contributes to the normalization and legitimacy of the issue the populists have put on the agenda. Even if the marginalisation of populist parties succeeds, the newly perceived 'normal' can have changed because of the position mainstream parties have taken in the accommodation process, normalizing once extreme views - or their watered down versions - and consequently making the once-extreme-deemed policy proposals or issue stances now seem like more realistic options than they had been before accommodation happened. With this shift in public opinion, it might not be desirable for the mainstream party to return to its original issue-stance, as that original stance now relates differently to the changed public opinion.

⁶⁷ Fortuyn, at a time, had frequent advisory talks with prominent CDA party members and some, like Kroeger, claim that Fortuyn for a time wanted to become the CDA's party leader. For more information, see Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds.*, 71-73 and 96.

⁶⁸ The influence Fortuyn had on the 2002 elections, thanks to the large amount of media attention he received in these times, is the topic of numerous publications. For examples, see Koopmans, R., and J. Muis, 'The Rise of Right-wing Populist Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands: A Discursive Opportunity Approach.' *European Journal of Political Research*, vol.48(5) 2009, p. 642-664, Belanger, E. and K. Aarts, 'Explaining the Rise of the LPF: Issues, Discontent, and the 2002 Dutch Election' *Acta Politica*, 4-21, Holsteyn, J.J.M van, and G.A. Irwin, 'Never a Dull Moment: Pim Fortuyn and the Dutch Parliamentary Election of 2002.' *West European Politics*, vol.26(2) 2003, p. 41-66 and Buur, M.S., *De Conflicten Van Fortuyn - Wat Was De Invloed Van Pim Fortuyn Op De Conflictlijnen Van Het Nederlandse Politieke Debat?* (2019).

⁶⁹ Kersbergen, K. van, and A. Krouwel, 'A Double-edged Sword! The Dutch Centre-right and the 'foreigners Issue'.' *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol.15(3) 2008, p. 399.

⁷⁰ Belanger, E. and K. Aarts, 'Explaining the Rise of the LPF: Issues, Discontent, and the 2002 Dutch Election' *Acta Politica*, 4-21 and Buur, M.S., *De Conflicten Van Fortuyn - Wat Was De Invloed Van Pim Fortuyn Op De Conflictlijnen Van Het Nederlandse Politieke Debat?* (2019).

⁷¹ Bale, T. 'Cinderella and her ugly sisters: the mainstream and extreme right in Europe's bipolarising party systems' *West European Politics*, 67-70 and 84-87.

Furthermore, if a shift in public opinion occurs, even if the populist parties are successfully marginalized, the void that is left on the edges of the political spectrum leaves room for new adversaries with similarly populist, or even more extreme, views to emerge. As we shall see later, this is exactly what happened.

What exactly did this accommodation strategy mean in practice for the CDA in 2002? By all means, it did not mean that the Christian democrats tried to portray themselves as tough on immigration and integration as the LPF. After all, the CDA consists of Christian Democrats who hold confessional values - like compassion - dearly.⁷² However, when comparing the 2002 political programme *Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid.* to its 1998 and 1994 counterparts, the difference is striking. For the first time in the studied period, the CDA is guilty of 'tough talk' on the issue of immigration and integration. Also, the topic takes a more prominent place in the first election programme under party leader Balkenende.

A prime example of this is seen when one looks for the word 'migrant' in the 2002 programme. Out of the ten times it features in *Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid.*, which is significantly more than in the previous two party programmes⁷³, six times it refers to how the Netherlands should not be a haven for economic migrants, another three times it refers to the lacking job market participation by migrants and one time to the insufficient proficiency of migrants' Dutch. Other terms that stand out in terms of number of occurrence are 'terrorism' and 'illegals'.⁷⁴

When it comes to the frame through which (residing) migrants were perceived, the impact of the increased threat stemming from Islamic countries is evident. Because of this, the focus in *Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid.* lies more on immigration than on integration. This is an indication that immigration was deemed more relevant than before, because until then-recently it was perceived to be less of a potential threat. This is exemplified by the fact that the CDA promised to fight for tougher regulations in many aspects of the immigration process in its election programme.⁷⁵ To underline the justness of this tougher approach, the programme reads "Een echte vluchteling hoeft niets te verbergen"

⁷² As we have seen in how the CDA presented itself in their 1994 and 1998 programmes. Solidarity is a core value of the Christian Democrats and, up until 2002, was allegedly its main motivation for harboring refugees. For examples see CDA, *Wat echt telt: werk, veiligheid, milieu*, 28, CDA, *Samenleven doe je niet alleen*, 58 and later CDA, *Slagvaardig en samen* (The Hague 2010), p. 9.

⁷³ The term is mentioned three times in *Wat echt telt: werk, veiligheid, milieu* and four times in *Samenleven doe je niet alleen*.

⁷⁴ The term 'terrorism', or its conjugations, does not feature in *Wat echt telt: werk, veiligheid, milieu*, occurs just twice in *Samenleven doe je niet alleen* and six times in *Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid.* 'Illegals' (or relevant conjugations) occurs three times in the 1994 programme, once in the 1998 programme and five times in the first election programme under party leader Balkenende.

⁷⁵ CDA, *Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid.*, 10.

(A real refugee has nothing to hide).⁷⁶ This populist-style one liner has a distinctively different tone from the previously discussed election programmes and is influenced by the new frame propagated by Fortuyn. Also, the CDA does not connect its plans on international development cooperation to a Confessional value like compassion, charity or kindness like it did before, but rather explicitly mentions that it supports the prevention of migration and asylum seekers in the future. This shift from the focus on charitable acts of development cooperation to the prevention of the influx of migrants, underlines the changed frames through which migration were perceived.⁷⁷ Furthermore, this frame changing exposes a certain hierarchy in the CDA's ideology, as the safety of Dutch citizens appears to be more important than the safety of refugees.

Also, the party proposes to crack down on residing migrants whose integration is not satisfactory. The programme reads "The goal of a debate on the integration and future of the Dutch society is the conviction that the existing tensions surrounding this issue should not be left unaddressed".⁷⁸ This seems to be an implicit reference to Fortuyn, who claimed that the purple cabinets often turned a blind eye when it came to migrants' integration problems.⁷⁹ Another clear example of the changed frames regarding residing migrants can be inferred when the topic of 'tolerance' is mentioned. The 2002 programme states that the Dutch society should be tolerant of different cultures, but only when they adhere to the rule of law and do not oppose the process of integration in the Dutch society.⁸⁰ This may not appear to be remarkable or even tough language, but the two election programmes that appeared before *Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid*. did not feature this 'rule-of-law-nuance' when discussing the topic of tolerance. Therefore it seems that this is an attempt by the Christian Democrats to emphasize their identity as a party that is strong on the law-and-order principle. In this programme, the CDA showed itself to be influenced by external factors like 9/11 and Fortuyn as it becomes clear the party is opting for an accommodation strategy in order to capitalize on the prevalent public opinion.

Although the 2002 programme clearly makes use of different frames than the two election programmes that came before it, the CDA did not take a diametrically different standpoint on the subject of immigration and integration during the first elections of the new millenium. The influence of the changing global environment due to the perceived increased terrorist threat and the politicians that tried (and succeeded) to capitalise on this development is noticeable, but the CDA did not make a 180 degree turn. As can be inferred from the 2002 election programme, the charitable and social aspects of Christianity still take

⁷⁶ CDA, *Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid.*, 67.

⁷⁷ Ibidem, ibidem.

⁷⁸ Ibidem, 23.

⁷⁹ Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds.*, 81-82.

⁸⁰ CDA, *Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid.*, 23.

a prominent place in the constitution of the CDA's identity. However, the document also featured some elements that reinforced the identity of the Christian democrats as a party that is hard on law-and-order and norms-and-values, as well as some populist-like one liners. All in all, it seems that the CDA in the 2002 campaign tried to position itself as right from the center and tried to show the electorate a new face and, with that, made a break with the oppositional years in which the party preferred to show its Christian Social face.

CHAPTER TWO

The Balkenende-era: retaining power

In this chapter I will demonstrate that the CDA's 2002 shift to a more right-wing stance on immigration and integration signalled the start of a long term development, as the prominence and dominance of the more Conservative side of the Christian political party persisted throughout the Balkenende years (2002-2010). This outcome was not always set in stone as the CDA, during these years, remained a party that was struggling to find its own identity while trying to retain political power. As I will show in this chapter, the urge to retain its, newly regained, political power that came with reentering the executive branch of government, became an important internal influence on the CDA's ideological course. Hence, I argue that the CDA entered a new phase in these years, namely: the phase of retaining power. This introspective quest of the Christian Democrats was subject to internal quarrels and unforeseen external threats and opportunities. The way that the CDA handled these, and the different factors that contributed to the subsequent consolidation of the Conservative image of the CDA during the Balkenende years, will be discussed accordingly.

When, in the run-up to the 2002 elections, Balkenende's party opted for a strategy that accommodated to the Pim Fortuyn-favoring *zeitgeist* and corresponding malcontent electorate, it quite possibly was meant only as a short term (election) strategy.⁸¹ If the newly adopted political stances on the immigration and integration subjects were indeed initially meant as a mere temporary fix to best political adversaries on the left and right, this tactic did not have the desired effect. Political adversaries on both sides were definitely bested during the 2002 elections,⁸² but the CDA did not return to the more social and left-leaning stance regarding migrants they displayed during their oppositional years in the last decade of the twentieth century. Actually, the CDA did the opposite. During the Balkenende-era, the CDA did not just maintain its newly adopted 'tough talk' stance, it 'upped the ante' and expanded on it.⁸³ With this, the CDA not only consolidated its own Conservative face, it also contributed to the consolidation of the shift to the right of the public discourse, as a tougher stance on migrants became increasingly normalized.

⁸¹ As is most often the case when traditional parties employ a strategy of accommodation. For more information about this phenomenon, see Bale, T. 'Cinderella and her ugly sisters: the mainstream and extreme right in Europe's bipolarising party systems' *West European Politics*, 67-70 and 84-87.

⁸² The CDA became the biggest party in the Dutch 2002 elections. Data derived from Parlement.com, consulted on 25-04-2021.

⁸³ As I will show in this chapter, while the CDA had ample chances to return to their pre-2002 immigration and integration standpoints, they took an increasingly tough and restrictive, Conservative approach on these topics.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the CDA won the 2002 elections by a landslide. It seems that the strategy of accommodating to the LPF by adopting a similar discourse on the subject of immigration and integration proved very effective. Or at least, this is how it was perceived by many. In his work on the history of the CDA, *Tand des Tijds. Het CDA in de nieuwe eeuw*, historian Kroeger shows that many, internally and externally, believed the electoral success of Balkendende's party in 2002 should be attributed to the fact that it positioned itself as a more decent and stable alternative to Fortuyn's LPF.⁸⁴

Attributable to the Christian Democrats' tougher stance on immigration and integration or not, the CDA had done very well in the elections. The Confessional party gained 14 seats in the Dutch Second Chamber and, with that, its total amounted to 43 parliamentary seats. The liberal VVD, the blue of the purple cabinets, lost the exact amount of seats that the CDA gained and ended up with a mere 24 seats for its representatives. The party of Pim Fortuyn, who, with his harsh critiques on the purple cabinets, had played a significant role in the VVD's demise, became the biggest winner. The LPF, as it was the first time they entered in national elections, went from zero to 29 parliamentary seats and with that became the Netherlands' second largest party. This major victory was an unprecedented way of entering the political arena and, with this, the LPF holds a record that stands to this day. Fortuyn himself was not able to witness his parties' tremendous achievement, as he was assassinated by environmental activist Volkert van der Graaf just nine days before the elections took place.⁸⁵

Despite the VVD's large electoral loss, it was still the Netherlands' third largest party and together with the CDA and, much to the annoyance of the Social wing of the Christian party, the leaderless LPF, they eventually formed the cabinet Balkenende I.⁸⁶ An alliance between the Confessionals and Liberals is seen as a traditional centre-right cabinet. The addition of the LPF's populist xenophobes to this, historically often seen, cabinet made this a quite right wing one. With these two parties as coalition partners, it can reasonably be expected that the CDA was not being tempted to return to its pre-2001 more social face and values. On the other hand, the inclusion of the LPF in the 2002 coalition could have proven to be the pinnacle of a sly temporary accommodation strategy. If it had been a temporary one.

It was quite probable that, as was demonstrated by the Austrian Christian Democrat party two years prior, giving populist right wing parties the chance to govern can turn out to be advantageous to the traditional mainstream parties. In Austria, Christian Democrat

⁸⁴ Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds.*, 126-127, 169 and 175.

⁸⁵ Parlement.com, consulted on 22-04-2021.

⁸⁶ In Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds.*, 148-149, Kroeger describes the reluctance of the Social wing of the CDA to form a coalition with the LPF and Parlement.com, consulted on 21-04-2021, is employed as source for coalition data.

Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel formed a coalition that included the right wing populists FPÖ and soon they proved divided. With their incompetence to govern they subsequently signed their own death warrant, as they were increasingly fighting among themselves. One side of the party adapted to ruling and governing by compromising, while another side reacted to the governing side's 'going soft' by taking increasingly extreme political standpoints.⁸⁷ Historian Kroeger argues that this sly tactic elevated Schüssels status within European Christian Democratic circles and that CDA member Piet Hein Donner based his (now) famous⁸⁸ Donner-doctrine on this Austrian example.⁸⁹ The Donner-doctrine basically entails an accommodation strategy. The idea of the Donner-doctrine is that by accommodating to right wing parties and not excluding them from the executive branches of government, the CDA could win (back) voters from populist parties. These voters were, according to the Donner-doctrine, just decent potential CDA-voters who were displaced by dissatisfaction. They could be persuaded to (again) vote for the Christian Democrat party as long as they had the feeling somebody would finally listen to them.⁹⁰ As I will show in this thesis, the Donner-doctrine would almost amount to something resembling a master narrative within (and even outside of) the CDA in the coming years. Unfortunately for the CDA, the doctrine would quickly not only prove ineffective, it would also - not entirely coincidental and unrelated - prove to be a myth as the premise that it is based on, that CDA- and populist-voters would be very similar, would be falsified.

If the same thing were to happen to the LPF as happened to the FPÖ, then CDA would successfully do away with an important political adversary by co-opting their discourse, albeit a watered down version of it. With this, by employing the rhetorics of its own more right winged side, the CDA could destroy the threat coming from its right, and after this short stint, return to the values of the more Christian Social side of the party. It is possible that this prospect led the more left-leaning CDA circles to eventually comply and agree with the formation of a cabinet that included the populist LPF. However, those circles would have been disillusioned, as the CDA, as mentioned, never went back to its more Christian Social immigration and integration standpoints during the Balkenende years.

At first sight, the Dutch situation after the formation of Balkenende I surely showed some similarities to its recent Austrian counterpart. Tormented by internal division, scandals and a crisis of leadership, the LPF successfully diminished its own credibility and its

⁸⁷ Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds.*, 148.

⁸⁸ The doctrine features in a number of (newspaper) articles from recent years. For examples, see Goslinga, H., 'de doctrine van Donner schaadde vooral het CDA', *Trouw*, 11-11-2018, Anon., 'Gelooft het CDA nog in de Donner-doctrine', *de Volkskrant*, 10-02-2020 and Anon., 'Donner-doctrine klopt niet: er is electoraal nauwelijks grensverkeer tussen het CDA en de populisten', *Joop*, 08-12-2020.

⁸⁹ Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds.*, 148-149.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, 148-149, 175 and 315-321.

popularity waned at almost the same pace as it was, only recently, gained.⁹¹ This would be made painfully clear by the electorate during the coming Second Chamber elections. The increasing lack of credibility and vigor of the LPF proved hard to work with for its coalition partners and after a mere 87 days the Liberals and Confessionals gave up trust in the cabinet.⁹² The populist threat seemed averted and new elections could quite possibly lead to more stable coalition partners for the CDA, as they could still count on being the most popular party.⁹³

This judgement call proved only partially correct: the CDA would again become the largest party, but the populist threat was not averted. During the, short and intense, campaign for the 2003 elections, the populist danger came from the left rather than from the right side of the political spectrum, as the SP (Socialist Party) had built upon the, largely unnoticed, electoral success it enjoyed in the 2002 elections.⁹⁴ The SP employed many of Fortuyn's pet topics, as it portrayed itself as anti-elite, nationalist representative of the poor, white commonfolk, but - as befits a party with a Socialist ideology - lacked Fortuyn's harsh migration and integration standpoints.⁹⁵ Bearing these similarities, there was a very real chance that much of the malcontent citizenry would turn to the SP in the upcoming elections.⁹⁶ The CDA reacted differently to the threat from the left than it had recently done to the threat from the right, as it did not choose to accommodate itself to the Maoist rhetoric of SP-leader Marijnissen.⁹⁷ A good indicator of this is the fact that the CDA decided to use the same party programme as it did in the previous elections. Most parties did produce a new programme for the 2003 elections,⁹⁸ so the CDA's not doing so seems a deliberate choice.

This is striking, as it tells a lot about the political direction the CDA wanted to take its party in. Surely, returning to more leftist immigration and integration standpoints would have been easily explainable. After all, a more social approach to these topics was a part of its pre-Fortuyn and 9/11 identity. This means that it would de facto not have been accommodation to the SP to let go of the tougher stance on immigration and integration, but just a return to what may be perceived to be the Christian Democrats' ideological core.⁹⁹

⁹¹ Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds.*, 148-164.

⁹² Parlement.com, consulted on 23-04-2021.

⁹³ Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds.*, 148-164.

⁹⁴ Ibidem, 166 and Parlement.com, consulted on 22-04-2021 for election data.

⁹⁵ SP, *Eerste weg Links* (The Hague 2003), p. 48-53 and 62-66.

⁹⁶ Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds.*, 166.

⁹⁷ By not publishing a new party programme for the 2003 elections or, to the authors knowledge, any other utterance of publication that implied a significant change in the CDA's stance on immigration and integration that was more tilted towards the SP's stance on these subjects, the CDA was clearly not accommodating to the SP.

⁹⁸ Parlement.com, consulted on 27-04-2021.

⁹⁹ The CDA has, on numerous accounts, presented its ideological core as being quite Social. This becomes evident especially from the 'solidarity'-component of the CDA's four core values. This core consists of the different key concepts, 1) Distributed Responsibility, apart from responsible for oneself a good citizen is also responsible for others as society is something that is achieved together, 2)

With this, by carrying the banner of election programme *Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid.* for the second time in a row, not opting for a return to their former, more lenient stances on immigration and integration, the CDA implicitly made its, newly adopted, harsher stance the norm. This can be perceived as striking, as the CDA by not accommodating to the SP - ergo returning to its former values - reacted very differently to a populist threat coming from the left than from the right.

On the other hand, this choice can easily be justified from a political strategy point of view, as the more leftist standpoints on immigration and integration did not yield ample electoral results the last time.¹⁰⁰ At least, as I have shown, this is how it was perceived by the CDA internally, as the belief that accommodating to Fortuyn had been the reason they had fared so well during the most recent Second Chamber elections was prevalent among party members. It is also possible that the CDA strategists assessed the spirit of the times and concluded that, despite the rising popularity of the SP, retaining their harshened stance on immigration and integration would suit the current *zeitgeist* better than returning to their former stances on the topic and thus, would lead to more positive electoral results. After all, the more negative framing of Islam and Muslims was still prevalent and dominant.¹⁰¹ Moreover, because of the unsuspectedly rapid fall of Balkenende I after just 87 days, there was not ample time for a large-scale ideological reorientation. As the CDA had been a big victor in the recent elections, maybe the party just stuck to what worked. Of course, none of these explanations in favor of retaining a harshened stance on immigration and integration are mutually exclusive, so in reality the choice of the CDA might be attributable to a combination of these factors. The true nature of the CDA's different reaction to the SP remains unknown, and because of the limited scope that this thesis entails, is of insufficient added value to cover to a greater extent. Whatever the reason may be, the CDA eventually went into the 2003 election carrying the same banner as the year before, as it reused the 2002 programme *Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid.*, and with that, the same Conservative immigration and integration standpoints that came with it.¹⁰²

As mentioned, the elections were a success for the CDA, as it again became the

Public Justice; people should adhere to a law based on norms and values derived from Christian ideals, 3) Solidarity and 4) Stewardship; the idea that we as a society should care for the earth and her environment. The exact interpretation of these four keywords differs in different documents, but the core concepts remain the same. For instance, they feature in the 1980 development documents Steenkamp, P.A.J.M., e.a., *Gespreide verantwoordelijkheid: advies van een commissie van de wetenschappelijke instituten van KVP, ARP en CHU* (The Hague 1978), as well as in the most of the CDA party programmes that were published. For examples, see CDA, *Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid.*, 7 and CDA, *Slagvaardig en samen*, 9.

¹⁰⁰ As before the 2002 shift to the right, the CDA was reduced to being an oppositional party for eight years.

¹⁰¹ Bos, L., Lecheler, S., Mewafi, M. and R. Vliegthart 'It's the frame that matters: Immigrant integration and media framing effects in the Netherlands.' *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 97-101.

¹⁰² Parlement.com, consulted on 25-04-2021.

Netherlands' largest party. It even gained one parliamentary seat compared to the 2002 elections.¹⁰³ The populist threat from the left proved a lot less big as when it came from the right, as the SP repeated her electoral feat of 2002 and got stuck on 'just' nine parliamentary seats. The leaderless LPF became 2003's biggest loser, as expected. With the loss of 18 seats and the party's internal unrest still being rampant at the time, it successfully marginalized itself to the point of being well on the road to insignificance.¹⁰⁴ Continuing down the path that was set in during the campaign for the 2002 elections, worked well for the CDA. This was the result of the newly dominant frames, strengthened by grand events like 9/11 and capitalized upon by political elites on the right side of the political spectrum, and the CDA's Donner-doctrine (ergo; accommodation) that fitted the public opinion well. Populist threats on both the right and left were subdued and the CDA kept rising in parliamentary seats. The new coalition was again formed with traditional centre-right partners VVD and the LPF was swapped for a party that was deemed more stable: the progressive D66.¹⁰⁵

During the reign of this second Balkenende cabinet, the 'Islam as a threat'-frame was bolstered by a series of polarizing events, which lent themselves to a right-wing interpretation of politics. In 2004, Spanish trains were the targets of (Islamic) terrorist attacks, killing hundreds. In the Netherlands, members of the radical Islam group 'de Hofstadgroep' were arrested. The following year, London's public transit was attacked, also by terrorists. Furthermore, VVD politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali, who was openly critical of the Islam, together with the - also anti Islam - Dutch cineast Theo van Gogh, made a short film about the subordinate role of women in the Islamic world: *Submission*. This resulted in the second political assassination the Netherlands had to witness in a short timespan, as radical muslim Mohammed Bouyeri took van Gogh's life and attached a letter containing a death threat to Ali to van Gogh's partially decapitated body.¹⁰⁶ This reinvigorated or reinforced sentiments of fear - of (Islamic) immigrants - throughout the European continent.¹⁰⁷ The bolstered 'Islam as a threat'-frame shifted the public opinion further in the right wing Conservative or xenophobe direction.

This development, in combination with the void left by the sudden demise of the headless LPF, gave rise to, as Kroeger calls them in *Tand des Tijds*, 'reincarnations' of

¹⁰³ In the 2003 elections, the CDA got 43 parliamentary seats, as opposed to the 42 they obtained one year earlier.

¹⁰⁴ Election data was derived from Parlement.com, consulted on 23-04-2021. The waning relevance of Fortuyn's party is covered throughout Kroegers work. For example, see Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds*, 169.

¹⁰⁵ Parlement.com, consulted on 23-04-2021.

¹⁰⁶ Anon., 'Hirsi Ali geen spijt van Submission', in *Nieuwsuur, Nederlandse Omroep Stichting*, 31-10-2014., Anon., 'Open Brief aan Hirsi Ali', *NRC Handelsblad*, 05-11-2004 and W. Takken, 'Ze moesten en zouden *Submission* uitzenden', *NRC Handelsblad*, 13-01-2015.

¹⁰⁷ Vliegenthart, R., *Framing Immigration and Integration: Facts, Parliament, Media and Anti-Immigrant Party Support in the Netherlands*, 1-7 and 131-145.

Fortuyn.¹⁰⁸ These reincarnations claimed Fortuyn's heritage and the corresponding mandate of being the true voice of the people.¹⁰⁹ The difference, as I will show, was that these 'reincarnations' were harsher and tougher on immigration and integration than the original had been. They would position themselves on the right edge of the political spectrum, but because of the shift in public opinion caused by polarizing events and the accommodation of mainstream and left parties to the populist right, these edges had shifted, meaning increasingly extreme ideas could be introduced to the public and the limit of what was deemed acceptable could be stretched even further.

The first so-called 'reincarnation' - Geert Wilders - a VVD backbencher¹¹⁰ in parliament, left the Liberal party after disagreeing with the parties' political course. Wilders wanted to propagate a more Liberal, Islamophobic and xenophobic vision than his party did at the time.¹¹¹ After he severed the ties with his former party, he continued in parliament as the independent 'Group-Wilders' and with this group - after the 2006 election named the PVV (Party for Freedom) - he would stand as an electable candidate during the next elections.¹¹² The second 'Fortuyn-reincarnation' emerged during a conflict about party leadership within CDA's coalition partner VVD, as the parties' number two and then Minister of Immigration, Rita Verdonk, tried to assert her dominance over party leader Mark Rutte. Rita Verdonk also portrayed herself as Fortuyn's heir and tried to pull the VVD in a more populist and Conservative direction.¹¹³

By making use of the frames that were introduced and popularized after 9/11, these (former) VVD politicians capitalized on the increased dominance of the 'Islam as a threat'-frame. As stated, the self-proclaimed heirs of Fortuyn did not simply copy the former LPF frontman's rhetoric, they actually upped the ante. Especially Wilders took a tougher stance on immigration and integration than Fortuyn had ever done.¹¹⁴ With this, parties who employ a strategy of accommodation, like the CDA did during the 2002 campaign, can be

¹⁰⁸ Historian Kroeger calls Verdonk and Wilders "reincarnations" of Fortuyn throughout *Tand des Tijds*. This is to signify that they appealed to (roughly) the same part of the electorate and addressed the same issues as Fortuyn.

¹⁰⁹ Slaa, R. te, *Is Wilders een Fascist?* (Amsterdam 2012), 14 and C. Mudde and C. Kaltwasser, *Populisme* (Amsterdam 2017), 11.

¹¹⁰ A backbencher is a member of parliament that has no special responsibilities or function, as described in Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds.*, 96.

¹¹¹ Slaa, R. te, *Is Wilders een Fascist?*, 14.

¹¹² Parlement.com, consulted on 14-06-2021.

¹¹³ Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds.*, 260 and 282-283.

¹¹⁴ For example, Fortuyn argued in favor of a 'general pardon', which would allow a certain number of illegal immigrants who were residing in the Netherlands a long period of time to obtain the Dutch citizenship. For more information see, Anon., 'Fortuyn: Deel illegalen pardoneren', *Trouw*, 04-05-2002. Wilders fiercely opposed such measures, he stated during Dutch television talk show *EenVandaag* on 07-12-2006. Furthermore, the language used in Wilders' PVV election programme of 2006 explicitly links Moroccan youths with 'street terrorism' and a five year immigration stop of specifically Turkish and Moroccan immigrants. For more information, see PVV, *Verkiezingspamflet*, 25-08-2006, derived from pvv.nl, consulted on 14-06-2021.

tricked into re-accommodating to the increasingly right winged stances taken by the party (or, in this case: group) that is being accommodated to.¹¹⁵ If successful, the right wing parties can continuously up the ante and create a sort of a recurring loop that forces political adversaries further and further to the right.

The political elite being the group with the ability to introduce and assert the dominance of frames,¹¹⁶ especially in - what some call - a mediocracy¹¹⁷ like the Netherlands, can exert a large amount of influence on the public opinion as a whole. By adjusting their own programme and discourse to that of the increasingly extreme parties on their right side, mainstream political parties - probably unconsciously - participate and contribute to the shifting and consolidating of public opinion and with that the normalisation of once-deemed-extremes.

The CDA, in these times, because of the Donner-doctrine, thought it was more or less forced to abide by the spirit of the times and continued to accommodate to tough immigration and integration standpoints - albeit significantly less tough and exclusionary than their political adversaries on the right - in order to win back 'its' displaced electorate that was now voting for right wing populists.¹¹⁸ This - perceived - 'rightification' of the part of the electorate that the CDA thought they lost, would indeed imply a shift in public opinion and the receptiveness (parts) of the public to increasingly xenophobe rhetoric. Of course, at the time, there was some truth to this, as the polarizing events had increased the dominance of frames that portrayed the Islam as negative. That the CDA was at least partially aware of this, becomes evident if one looks at some of the legislation that was imposed under Balkenende II.

During this cabinet a multitude of immigration laws were passed that made the immigrational admission policies more restrictive. For example, in 2005 a bill was passed that made potential immigrants take certain steps of the integration-procedure (like getting a basic grasp of the Dutch language) while still residing in their country of origin, as opposed to being able to take these steps while already residing in the Netherlands. In 2006, the integration system got a more mandatory and result driven character. The change of the integration programme even entailed that, under some conditions, migrants that were already naturalized to the Dutch nationality, had to (re)do parts of the revamped, integration courses.¹¹⁹ Of course, these were for a large part the responsibility of Verdonk, as she was

¹¹⁵ Bale, T. 'Cinderella and her ugly sisters: the mainstream and extreme right in Europe's bipolarising party systems' *West European Politics*, 75-76.

¹¹⁶ R. Entman, J. Matthes and L. Pellicano, *Nature, sources and effects of news framing*. In: K. Wahl-Jorgensen and T. Hanitzsch, 'The Handbook of Journalism Studies', 175-176.

¹¹⁷ This term is used to describe a society where the media are especially important in the construction of public opinion. For more information, see Vliegthart, R., *Framing Immigration and Integration: Facts, Parliament, Media and Anti-Immigrant Party Support in the Netherlands*, 2.

¹¹⁸ Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds.*, 315-321.

¹¹⁹ Parlement.com, derived from the section on Rita Verdonk, consulted on 14-06-2021.

the Minister of Immigration Affairs and Integration at the time. However, one could argue that due to the distribution of parliamentary seats among the coalition partners - which was heavily in favor of the CDA - drastic revision of legislation related to a topic that dominated public debate would not be implemented without the CDA's approval. When one takes into account the increasingly Conservative immigration and integration standpoints the CDA was taking during these years¹²⁰, it becomes even more plausible that the CDA had an important say in these matters.

Eventually, unrest within the VVD, mainly caused by Rita Verdonk, resulted in the premature fall of the cabinet Balkenende II during the summer of 2006.¹²¹ D66 left Balkenende II the CDA formed the temporary minority cabinet Balkenende III together with the VVD, until a new coalition could be formed after the coming elections. During the campaign for the coming, moved up elections, the CDA now had to face not one, but two populist threats on its right side: Wilders and Verdonk. Newcomer and Fortuyn-heir Wilders portrayed himself as more right winged than VVD mischief-maker Rita Verdonk and with that, the rightful heir to the LPF's parliamentary seats.¹²² Wilders' stance on immigration and integration was a lot tougher than Fortuyn's had been, in fact, so was Verdonk's stance on the issue, but because of the increased dominance of anti-Islam frames and what was deemed normal and acceptable at the time, perhaps Wilders was right to see himself as the new Fortuyn in some ways as, in the shifted public opinion, Wilders' position corresponded more with the spirit of Fortuyn.¹²³

Moreover, the Social-Populist ideas of the SP were gaining popularity on the CDA's left side. Although the SP focussed less on the topics of immigration and integration than her right wing counterparts, its more lenient stances on these sensitive topics were surely attractive to the less xenophobic malcontent citizenry. However, it must be noted that, as well as the parties on the right, the left wing SP also moved to a more restrictive immigration and integration policy stance since the previous elections.¹²⁴ After populisms' quick demise following the death of Pim Fortuyn, its rampant rise during these years was perceived to be the largest threat the Balkenende hegemony had faced since it was holding office. Some

¹²⁰ As demonstrated by the mentioned election programmes in this chapter and the previous one.

¹²¹ Parlement.com, consulted on 14-06-2021.

¹²² Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds.*, 298.

¹²³ As previously shown, Wilders was significantly tougher on immigration and integration than Fortuyn ever was. However, due to the shift in public opinion Kroeger might be right in arguing that Wilders was closer to the original than the less extreme Verdonk.

¹²⁴ For instance, in its election programme SP, *Een beter Nederland voor hetzelfde geld* (The Hague 2006) the Socialist Party wants to put more responsibilities of the integration process on the immigrant instead of the government, than in their programme SP, *Eerste weg links* (2002), which was used in the 2002 and 2003 elections. Furthermore, it proposes policies that would make it more difficult for immigrants who refuse to integrate. For instance, in the 2006 programme, the SP proposes a policy that would make it mandatory to speak Dutch in order to qualify for social security benefits. For more information, SP, *Een beter Nederland voor hetzelfde geld*, 62.

prominent scholars call this development the second wave of Dutch twenty-first century populism.¹²⁵ Being faced with populist political adversaries on both sides, was new to the Christian Democrats. The CDA again had to position itself in the face of these threats. Going back to a more lenient stance on immigration and integration at that moment would probably not have seemed a credible tactic, as it would constitute a remarkable discontinuity that did not correspond with the spirit of the times. Accommodating to the threats on the right wing would alienate the Christian Social part of the CDA electorate and, perhaps more importantly, could not be unified with the parties core values of solidarity and spread responsibility. Instead, the CDA opted to take the intermediate option. By positioning itself more or less in the middle of the populist parties on these subjects, namely as tough on immigration but, true to their Christian norms and values, condemning proposals that were explicitly anti-Islam like the constitutional amendment that would effectively make the Islam a political ideology instead of a religion in the eyes of the Dutch law, they did their best to not stray from their ideals while conforming to the post-Fortuyn public opinion.¹²⁶

Nevertheless, when compared to their programme *Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid*. (2002 and 2003), the CDA's 2006 election programme *Vertrouwen in Nederland. Vertrouwen in elkaar*. (Confidence in the Netherlands. Confident in each other) marks another shift to a harsher and more restrictive stance on immigration and integration. For example, for the first time, the CDA explicitly mentions, or refers to, the Islam in their party programme.¹²⁷ This programme features passages on how the government should combat Islamic practices like female circumcision, crimes of honour and forced marriages. If society as a whole does not condemn these practices, a viable multicultural society can not exist, is the message that one should infer from the election programme.¹²⁸ The rule of law, and the Christian norms and values, are clearly hierarchically higher than the values of diversity and multiculturalism as these latter two are consistently said to be desirable but only if they do not conflict with the Dutch culture and ways. This way of ordering is also a first in the CDA's election programmes.¹²⁹

The 2006 elections proved a mixed success. On one hand, the CDA became the biggest party for a third time in a row. On the other hand, it lost 3 parliamentary seats and

¹²⁵ Among these scholars are Pieter Gerrit Kroeger, Robin te Slaa and political scientist and populism expert Cas Mudde.

¹²⁶ Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds*, 239-240.

¹²⁷ The term 'Islam' is mentioned four times in CDA, *Vertrouwen in Nederland. Vertrouwen in elkaar*. (The Hague 2006) as opposed to not one single time in CDA, *Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid*. or other previous election programmes.

¹²⁸ On page twelve, *Vertrouwen in Nederland. Vertrouwen in elkaar*. reads: 'that the government protects the values of the rule of law, combats hate speech and does not tolerate things like honor killing, forced marriages etc. Also religion should and may never be the reason for behavior that opposes the core values of society. Around those core values there is... no room for a multicultural society.'

¹²⁹ For example, see CDA, *Vertrouwen in Nederland. Vertrouwen in elkaar*, 12.

thus went from 44 to 41. This is a relatively small loss compared to its (former) coalition partners; the VVD lost six, D66 lost half of their 2003 total of six and the LPF went all the way back to zero. Between the governing parties, the CDA lost the least and thus became the 'best loser'. It was at these elections that the inheritance of Fortuyn - the vote of the malcontent citizen - truly showed itself.¹³⁰ Populist parties gained 25 seats compared to the 2003 distribution of seats, as the SP gained 16 seats and the PVV gained 9. The CDA election strategy of a right-of-the-middle middle ground, proved fruitful as it could profit from the internal division of the VVD. The more Conservative VVD electorate that preferred a tougher immigration and integration policy - largely the part that had voted Fortuyn in 2002 - en masse went and voted for Wilders, as he was 'closer to the original' than Verdonk was.¹³¹ The part of the VVD-voters who abhorred Verdonk's xenophobic one liners and had lost faith in their divided party, switched to the more decent Christian Democrats.¹³² However, there were two indicators that the CDA may have taken its anti immigration standpoints too far by this point. Firstly, the CDA had lost seats since the previous election. Secondly, the populist party on the CDA's left gained more parliamentary seats than the populists on the CDA's right side. This could imply that the public opinion was not moving to the right as fast or as much as the CDA did. However, as Entman, Matthes and Pellicano show in their work on framing, even when the frames propagated by the political elite do not affect public opinion on an individual level, they can still be of great influence because they affect other political elites' perception of what public opinion is.¹³³

This is exactly what happened. As Kroeger shows, due to the belief in the Donner-doctrine, the CDA's lost seats were internally - as well as externally - often attributed to the rise of the PVV, while in truth, the CDA did not lose - but actually gained - voters from the right. After all, the more moderate VVD electorate that was scared away by Verdonk's anti-immigration rhetoric switched to the CDA. Despite the accommodation strategy that the Donner-doctrine entails helped the CDA take a position that was favorable to the public opinion in the previous two elections, by this time, it might have caused a blind spot.¹³⁴

The new cabinet, Balkenende IV, was formed with the Labour Party PvdA, which lost nine seats but was still the second largest party, and the small Christian party CU. The tenure of this cabinet was characterized most by the global financial crisis of 2007. This theme dominated politics and news as the economic crisis that followed was, to most, a more urgent matter than the hot topic of the previous years; immigration and integration.

¹³⁰ Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds.*, 304.

¹³¹ *Ibidem*, 306.

¹³² *Ibidem*, 298.

¹³³ R. Entman, J. Matthes and L. Pellicano, *Nature, sources and effects of news framing*. In: K. Wahl-Jorgensen and T. Hanitzsch, 'The Handbook of Journalism Studies', 175-176.

¹³⁴ Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds.*, 298.

This is also because of a lack of polarising events of the proportions that were seen during Balkenende II as, for example, no political murders or high profile terrorist attacks dominated the Dutch media in these years.

The cabinet handled the international financial crisis fairly well and, because of the more social coalition the CDA were now persiding, the party had the chance to show its more social face to the electorate again. It seemed to do so when the cabinet signed a bill that brought into effect a 'general pardon' that granted asylum seekers who waited excessively long on a governmental decision on whether they would be granted a residence permit, the right to live and stay in the Netherlands.¹³⁵ At the time, one could reasonably expect that the CDA would be looking to position itself opposite of the increasingly anti-immigration Wilders and portray itself as a decent, stable and well governing party. However, perhaps because of the large danger on the left from the Socialist Party and the possible conviction that the PvdA would also benefit from this term in the executive branch of government, the CDA did again not return to a more social stance regarding immigration and integration. Instead, in the run-up to the 2010 elections, the CDA portrayed itself as tougher than ever on these topics. This course of action was chosen out of the belief that, by now, proved to be a persistent narrative within the Christian Democrats' party: the, on the Donner-doctrine based idea, that the CDA could and should 'win back' voters from the populist right, as they would be displaced - potential - CDA voters.¹³⁶

The 2010 election document, *Slagvaardig en samen* (Effective and together), was full of restrictive immigration policy proposals and 'populist tough-talk'-esque one liners.¹³⁷ The party programme featured implicit critique on Muslims' 'narrowmindedness',¹³⁸ established the primacy of the Western culture and corresponding values,¹³⁹ the forthcoming fight against extremism¹⁴⁰ and the implication that discrimination against Muslims is the

¹³⁵ Parlement.com, consulted on 14-06-2021.

¹³⁶ Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds.*, 380, 385 and 387.

¹³⁷ Some examples of the one liners are 'Who is given a place, should also give a place to others' in a section on freedom and freedom of speech that mentions cultural minorities (Muslims) intolerance (CDA, *Slagvaardig en samen*, 12.) and 'Extremism shall be fought with force' (CDA, *Slagvaardig en samen*, 14.).

¹³⁸ Page 12 of *Slagvaardig en samen* reads: 'The CDA asks newcomers to share the values on which they were admitted in the Netherlands: respecting people with other beliefs and religions. Whoever is given a place, should also give a place to others.'

¹³⁹ Page 13 of *Slagvaardig en samen* reads: 'The government and society offer a place to religious communities to the extent that they respect the core values of our rule of law... Who comes to the Netherlands can profess his faith freely, because he comes to a society where the Judeo-Christian and humanistic tradition and culture give color to society. That means that the Western culture and norms and values are leading to society.'

¹⁴⁰ Page 14 of *Slagvaardig en samen* reads: 'Extremism shall be fought with force... Against extremist utterances that call for violence, also when coming from religious leaders, all possible rights and remedies should be used with decisive action'.

consequence of ill-adjusted immigrants who do not adhere to the rules of Dutch society.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, the authors of the document state that support for the harboring of refugees is waning and that tougher criteria for attaining residence permits and, under some circumstances, the legal deportation of (presumably) orphaned children should come into effect.¹⁴² Moreover *Slagvaardig en samen* is the first party programme that appeared in the period this research entails that pays greater attention to the problems that are caused by (Muslim) immigrants than the importance of being tolerant of minorities. With this the CDA shows that it is influenced by frames propagated by Wilders.

In the run-up to the 2010 election, the CDA did the same thing as it did in the run-up to the 2002 election; accommodating to the right side of the political spectrum. In that sense, there is a continuity between the first and second wave of Dutch twenty-first century populism. However, the CDA had ample chances to take on a more lenient immigration and integration standpoint. For example, opportunities revealed themselves when the SP was rapidly gaining popularity or when the CDA was governing with the Labour party PvdA. However, as a result of the leading idea that the CDA could, should and perhaps would, win back the displaced voters, who, out of malcontent, gave in to the populist seduction on the right, the CDA pushed itself further and further to the right side of the political spectrum regarding immigration and integration. As I have argued throughout this chapter, this decision was made out of the conception that it would lead to positive electoral results for the CDA. In other words; the CDA adapted its ideology in order to retain political power.

The more the xenophobe populists 'upped the ante' and took increasingly anti-immigration standpoints, the more the Christian Democrats accommodated to these standpoints and moved in the same direction, albeit always with significantly less tough talk and restrictive policy proposals. This position was probably also taken by the CDA because of the fact that the Socialist Party had also moved to a tougher stance on immigration and integration during these years. This contributes to the validity of the theory that what was deemed normal, and with that what was deemed acceptable, changed during these years. The fact that multiple parties, from both the left and right side of the spectrum, all moved in the direction of Fortuyn and those who claimed his heritage - and made use of the frames that were dominating the public discussion on this topic because of them - implies that the

¹⁴¹ Page 15 of *Slagvaardig en samen* reads: 'Those who enter the Netherlands should become part of society. When that does not happen, it will lead to alternative societies with their own norms and values. That causes tensions, especially in neighborhoods where the number of newcomers, who do not or hardly know the language, is substantial. The majority of here-residing migrants do well... they are fed up with getting nasty looks on account of the behavior of others'.

¹⁴² Page 17 of *Slagvaardig en samen* reads: '... illegal minors should be reunited with their parents or families in their country of origin. If returning to that country is impossible because there are no parents or other (traceable) family members, there should be care facilities instated in the country of origin to send these minors to'.

favor of the public opinion moved to the right. However, as we can infer from the 2006 elections, it probably did not move as much as was perceived by the CDA.

CHAPTER THREE

Conservative consolidation

In the previous chapter I have demonstrated how the CDA ignored ample chances to return to a more social stance on the topic of immigration and integration out of the belief that it would lead to positive electoral results. Instead of again showing a more social face, the political party opted for an increasingly anti-immigration course to retain, more or less, the same relative position to - what they perceived as - their main political opponents at the time. In this chapter I will show how this newly acquired habit of accommodating to political opponents was a hard one to get rid of for the CDA, even when confronted with internal division and discussion about the effectiveness of this accommodation-course. This continuing of a more restrictive line on the topic of immigration and integration, even in the face of an internally divided party, is exemplary of the fact that the Conservative side of the CDA attained lasting dominance. With this, the development of the CDA's ideology on the topic of immigration and integration enters the final phase that will be discussed in this thesis: Conservative consolidation. In the sense of increasingly restrictive immigration and integration standpoints, there is a continuity between the behaviour of the CDA in this chapter and in the previous one. However, the electoral reality changed drastically for the Christian Democrats during this new phase.

When the election results of the 2010 Second Chamber elections came in on the night of June 9th, the CDA was shocked. The Christian Democrats lost as much as twenty parliamentary seats, meaning that in the course of a mere four years, almost half of the CDA electorate did not recast their vote. The harsh reality was that a fifth tenure of Balkenende as party leader was apparently not a very popular option. After the humbling defeats of the 1990s, a new electoral all-time low was experienced by the party that had just spent the last decade leading the executive branch of government. The liberal VVD, that had spent the last four years being part of the opposition, became the largest party, as they went from 22 to 31 parliamentary seats, thus gaining nine. Biggest winners were the right wing populist PVV, that, with its xenophobe rhetoric, apparently appealed to a large part of the electorate. Wilders' PVV went from their, already massive, nine seats on their election debut in 2006, to a total of 24 seats in the 2010 elections, almost equalling the LPF's peak amount of parliamentary seats of 2002. With their 15 seats gained, the PVV became the Netherlands' third largest party in 2010. Second largest was the CDA's coalition partner: the labour PvdA. The Social Democrats, as the Christian Democrats, also lost seats, but significantly less than

their previous coalition partners. With a loss of just three parliamentary seats their total amounted to 30. This meant the CDA merely became the fourth largest party in the 2010 Second Chamber elections.¹⁴³

Immediately after the election results came in, panicked CDA members tried to explain the devastating loss of their party. Here, again, the pervasiveness and persistence of the 'Donner-doctrine myth' became clear. The striking loss of parliamentary seats of the CDA was assumed by many to be connected to the, equally striking, electoral win of the PVV, contributing to the conception that CDA voters en masse switched to Wilders' populist xenophobe party.¹⁴⁴ In order to evaluate the unprecedented electoral low and provide a course of action to regain societal and electoral relevance, the CDA instated an internal commission whose objective it was to provide an answer to the newly arisen questions. This commission was to be led by then-governor of the Limburg province, Leon Frissen.¹⁴⁵

While the Commissie Frissen (Commission Frissen) did its research, the CDA had to deal with rapidly changing reality. First of all, on the night of the elections, Jan Peter Balkenende resigned as party leader and the CDA, strangely enough, proved not prepared for this scenario as the party did not have a replacement ready. In the end, it was Maxime Verhagen, minister of Foreign Affairs during Balkenende-IV who was deemed worthy to replace the former prime minister. Verhagen tried his best to calm the party and, initially politely declined a role for the CDA in the coalition-to-be, as it would not befit the election results.¹⁴⁶

Secondly, it were these, difficult, formation talks that the party initially wanted to stay out of, that stirred up unrest within the CDA. After different informateurs persistently kept insisting that the CDA needed to consider taking part in a new coalition, the party proved divided on the subject. Reason for the division was the possibility of forming a coalition that also included Wilders' PVV. Verhagen proved not to be ideologically opposed to this idea, as he represented his party during rapid and fruitful negotiations to form a minority cabinet construction with the PVV and the VVD. With this, the new leader of the CDA obviously represented the more Conservative side of this party. This led to dissatisfaction among the more Christian Social wing of the party, resulting in some (semi-)prominent party members expressing their opposition to the proposed right wing cabinet both internally and externally. This, in turn, led to doubts about the potential viability and longevity of a collaboration with the CDA from the side of the PVV and Wilders asked Verhagen to guarantee the unanimous support of the CDA party if a coalition that contained the two parties would come into being. When Verhagen could not give this guarantee, negotiations stagnated. After other coalition

¹⁴³ Election data derived from Parlement.com, consulted on 28-05-2021.

¹⁴⁴ Commissie Frissen, *Verder na de klap. Evaluatie en perspectief*, (The Hague 2010), p. 7.

¹⁴⁵ Ibidem, 72.

¹⁴⁶ Parlement.com, consulted on 28-05-2021.

options also proved to be unviable, a new formateur attempted again to form a VVD-PVV-CDA coalition and came to a draft version of a coalition agreement. Because of the internal division that was especially unwanted in these times of crises, the CDA held a party conference to discuss whether this draft agreement could be accepted by its members.¹⁴⁷ The conference accepted the draft agreement, but only after long and heated discussion among the party members,¹⁴⁸ proving again that the CDA was an internally divided party, at least on this subject. This division is exemplified by the fact that two ex-Prime Ministers and one then-current Minister; Piet de Jong, Dries van Agt and Ernst Hirsch Ballin, expressed themselves as opposed to the approval of the draft agreement. When Wilders, once again, demanded the unanimous approval of the CDA, Verhagen was faced with a difficult task. In the end, however, Verhagen got the (often reluctant) acceptance of the entirety of his party.¹⁴⁹ This resulted in the minority cabinet Rutte I, consisting of the VVD and the CDA, with support of the PVV: the most right-wing cabinet since Balkenende I. In fact, the first cabinet under Minister President Mark Rutte was even more right winged than the first cabinet under Jan Peter Balkenende had been, since the position of the CDA had shifted to the right in the previous eight years,¹⁵⁰ the PVV was more extreme than the LPF had ever been and, quite probably, the VVD had shifted to the right too during the last decade.

This formation of the executive branch of government is empirical evidence that what is deemed 'normal' and 'acceptable' obviously shifted since the inauguration of the first Balkenende cabinet. Triggered by external events of great violence, fear and distrust of Islam and immigrants were bolstered or sparked. This led to the dominance of frames that portray immigrants and Muslims as negative or scary. Capitalized upon by populist politicians who were successful in either influencing public opinion or rivaling political elites' perception of public opinion, forced other political parties to accommodate to their rhetoric and thus, partially, normalizing extreme ideas. With this, less extreme ideas seemed even more acceptable and finally what was deemed normal, shifted in the direction of the frame-pioneering populist political elites. A further indicator of this is the fact that increasingly right-wing policy proposals were deemed acceptable and even implemented during the Balkenende cabinets.

The parliamentary support agreement of cabinet Rutte I, an appendix to the coalition agreement that contained points that minority cabinet supporter PVV would support the coalition parties CDA and VVD in, proves that the new coalition would constitute another

¹⁴⁷ Parlement.com, consulted on 28-05-2021.

¹⁴⁸ Napel, ten, H., 'CDA Partijgeschiedenis', *Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen*.

¹⁴⁹ Parlement.com, consulted on 28-05-2021.

¹⁵⁰ At least on the subject of immigration and integration, as can be inferred from the previous chapters.

step to the right on the subject of immigration and integration. This subject also seemed to be of the highest importance, as roughly two-thirds of their parliamentary support agreement covered this topic.¹⁵¹ In the document, the three political parties vow to ‘urgently’ further minimize the influx of migrants “to reduce the societal problems that it causes”.¹⁵² To achieve this, the document contains policy proposals like the penalization of illegal stay in the Netherlands and promises to expedite the expulsion of migrants who have broken the Dutch law.¹⁵³ Furthermore, on the topic of integration the authors of the document sternly state “It is their (migrants) own responsibility”.¹⁵⁴ As I have shown in previous chapters, in the documents that have been referenced throughout this thesis so far, integration was always a two-way street, with variations to what party, government or immigrant, should take most responsibility and initiative. Taking away the government's responsibility on this issue thus is a first. One of the policy proposals that accompanies this stern statement reads “The (temporary) residence permit will be retracted if a Civic Integration Examination is not passed”.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, the three parties state in the document that it is their intention to alter and modify existing European treaties on immigration to further reduce the influx of refugees.¹⁵⁶ This is also a first, as in all documents that featured in the studied period thus far (that the CDA was at least part of), it stated that, albeit maybe reluctantly, the party (or parties) vowed to follow European regulations regarding these topics.¹⁵⁷ This increased sternness and restrictiveness on the topics of integration and immigration can quite possibly be largely attributed to the influence of the xenophobe PVV. However, one could argue that the CDA of a decade or two back would never have agreed to a support agreement that contained language and policy proposals like this one.

Why would the CDA of 2010 agree to a document that included such harsh policy proposals? The explanation is threefold. Firstly, similar to the situation that came to be because of the electoral losses during the reign of the purple cabinets, the CDA was in a crisis and thus more susceptible to (extreme) external influences. Those influences, just like during the purple cabinets, came from political adversaries on the right. Secondly, as CDA expert and historian Pieter Gerrit Kroeger and the Commission Frissen both concluded, the CDA lived in - and acted out of - the delusion that they lost a large part of their electorate to the right and thus opted for an accommodation strategy to re-win the votes of ‘their’ displaced electorate.¹⁵⁸ Finally, as the Christian Democrats were consequently taking an

¹⁵¹ VVD, PVV and CDA, *Gedraagkoort VVD-PVV-CDA*, (The Hague 2010).

¹⁵² *Ibidem*, 4.

¹⁵³ *Ibidem*, *ibidem*.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, *ibidem*.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, *ibidem*.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, *ibidem*.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, 4-5.

¹⁵⁸ Kroeger, P.G., *Tand des tijds.*, 384-387 and Commissie Frissen, *Verder naar de klap. Evaluatie en perspectief*, 7.

increasingly restrictive approach to integration and immigration for eight years now, the support agreement is better viewed as a continuation of an existing trend than as a sudden jolt to the right.

Shortly after the 2010 formation was completed with the acceptance of the parliamentary support agreement, the Commissie Frissen published its evaluation and advice report *Verder na de klap* (Continue after the blow). An important component of the report was the evaluation of the 2010 election results. The authors of *Verder na de klap* dedicate a large part of their work to 'myth busting' as they explicitly state that they want to combat 'myth making'. They continue by stating "(Myth making) can pose a danger to the conclusions that the party should draw on them (election results). Already on the night of the elections, the narrative was created that the CDA had lost in the south of the country, and that the PVV would be the main cause of this. The numbers show a different reality."¹⁵⁹ With this, the master narrative that had led the CDA for almost a decade by now, the Donner-doctrine, was falsified. At least, it was in the case of the 2010 and 2006 election results.¹⁶⁰ The numbers had shown that the exchange of voters between the CDA and PVV was minimal. The premise of the Donner-doctrine, that right-wing populist party-voters would be displaced CDA voters, was proven now to be nothing more but a, once perhaps persuasive, fairytale. Moreover, this fairytale had caused the CDA to lose its own identity.

One, logical, conclusion that featured in the report was that the CDA did too little to present itself as having an unique ideological identity, implicitly criticizing the accommodation strategy that the CDA had employed in the previous years. By constantly accommodating, and thus appropriating components of the ideology of its political adversaries (on the right) the CDA did not distinguish itself. Moreover, this could have been a reason for their electoral downfall, as the report shows that the CDA did not lose as many voters to the right wing PVV as it did to the VVD, that, since the departure of the less succesful, self-proclaimed Fortuyn-electorate-heir Rita Verdonk, presented itself less as xenophobic, and more as a classic liberal party. The CDA also lost many voters to Labour party PvdA, the progressive leftist D66 and to non-voters. The profile of the part of the electorate that the CDA lost since the last election, was exactly the profile of the part of the electorate that it won compared to the election that came before that one: educated homeowners with above average salaries.¹⁶¹ So, the CDA did not have to win back angry citizens who became populist voting xenophobes out of malcontent, they had to win back the decent folk and the bourgeoisie. The strategy of continuously propagating increasingly restrictive approaches to immigration and integration did not help minimize the electoral losses, it actually boosted them. The party

¹⁵⁹ Commissie Frissen, *Verder na de klap. Evaluatie en perspectief*, 7.

¹⁶⁰ Ibidem, 7-10.

¹⁶¹ Ibidem, ibidem.

that was to blame for the worst electoral results in the history of the Christian Democrat party was not the PVV, it was the CDA itself.

Furthermore, the report features critiques on the internal quarreling between the Social wing and the Conservative wing of the Confessional party, as it reads: "Discussions on... themes like how to deal with the (lacking) integration of immigrants and public debate on Islam prevented the party top from moving forward."¹⁶² The report did not spare the course the CDA had taken in the previous years, as its authors really wanted to change the way their party operated.¹⁶³ According to the advice that featured in *Verder na de klap*, what was needed by the CDA was an ideological reorientation, based on facts instead of myths and legends and active dialogue with members of their party which would result in a conscientious and distinguishably unique party line. With this, the CDA could manifest itself as a broad party of and for 'the people'.¹⁶⁴

The CDA was placed in a difficult situation, as the commission's report was published very shortly after party leader Verhagen did his best to convince the members of his party to agree to taking part in a coalition with very restrictive policy proposals regarding the subjects of immigration and integration. With the conclusions of the commissie Frissen seeming to suggest the preferability of an opposite party line, the CDA was faced with a tough choice. On one hand, the party could not turn its back on the newly formed coalition. On the other hand, ignoring the advice of the commissie Frissen was also a hard thing to do. Paradoxically, the report that wanted to combat the internal divisions of the Christian Democrat party now placed that party on the horns of a dilemma.

Political Scientist André Krouwel wrote about this dilemma in his paper 'De kwetsbaarheid van het CDA voor het populistisch appèl' that appeared in the journal of the CDA's scientific institute, *Christendemocratische Verkenningen*.¹⁶⁵ Krouwel, in line with the commissie Frissen, advised the CDA to take a unique standpoint and with this, regain an recognizable profile. However, he doubts whether this is possible because of the CDA's participation in a coalition with the PVV. The persistence of the Donner-doctrine myth becomes clear when it becomes clear it has even influenced an outsider and scholar like Krouwel, as his work reads: "When the CDA succeeds in gaining an unique position on this important issue (immigration) that differs from Wilders' anti-Islam rhetorics, potential CDA-voters might be won back."¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, Krouwel notes that with its partaking in the

¹⁶² Commissie Frissen, *Verder na de klap. Evaluatie en perspectief*, 29-30.

¹⁶³ On page 63 of *Verder na de klap*, the Commissie Frissen states that 'The members of the commission do not want to be soft healers, but true healers', this is a play on the Dutch proverb 'Zachte heelmeeesters maken stinkende wonden' which roughly translates to 'Soft healers make for smelling wounds' meaning that half measures often do not solve problems.

¹⁶⁴ Commissie Frissen, *Verder na de klap. Evaluatie en perspectief*, 56-59.

¹⁶⁵ Krouwel, A., 'De kwetsbaarheid van het CDA voor het populistisch appèl', *Christendemocratische Verkenningen*, vol.31(1) 2011, p. 104-112.

¹⁶⁶ Ibidem, 111.

VVD-PVV-CDA coalition, the CDA “consolidates its position on the right wing, being led by right wing Conservatives like Verhagen, Van Haersma Buma...”¹⁶⁷ This in turn, according to Krouwel - again in line with the conclusions of the commissie Frissen - can lead to further losses of the more left leaning part of the CDA electorate.¹⁶⁸ Despite Krouwels' (justified) concerns with the negative effects that working closely together with the PVV can have on the CDA, even he was influenced by the leading ill-conceived narrative of the PVV electorate essentially being displaced CDA voters.

At first sight it appeared that the recommendations of *Verder na de klap* would be ignored. After all, the CDA had already ratified the parliamentary support agreement with the PVV and could not turn its back on this now. During the tenure of cabinet Rutte I the coalition did as promised and introduced increasingly restrictive policies on the topic of immigration. For instance, legislation was introduced that assured integration procedures were to be wholly paid for by the immigrants themselves, instead of partly being subsidized by the Dutch government. Attempts to change European legislature in favor of a more restrictive shared immigration policy, however, did not succeed.¹⁶⁹ That the CDA was not ‘trapped’ in a coalition by their ratification of the parliamentary support agreement, while the party actually wanted to pursue a line closer to the line proposed in by the commissie Frissen, becomes clear when one looks at a speech party chairman Verhagen gave on the topic of populism.¹⁷⁰ In this speech, titled ‘Volkspartij als antwoord op het populisme’ (People’s Party as an Answer to Populism), it becomes clear that the commissie Frissens' warning about the myth making of the Donner-doctrine fell on deaf ears with Verhagen, as he argued that by taking the malcontent citizenry seriously, they could win back their trust.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, the then-vice-Prime Minister with this speech proved to be guilty of populist-like language himself, as he glorified and romanticized the national past and stated (identical to Fortuyn’s rhetoric) that “the multicultural society has failed”.¹⁷² Moreover, Verhagen argued that it is not unreasonable to portray the Islam as uncivilized and that “A large part of the people who voted for the PVV, are our people.”¹⁷³ According to Verhagen, the CDA should return to a hierarchical view of cultures, with the Western culture as the *Leitkultur*.¹⁷⁴

When, after the untimely demise of Rutte I in 2012, the party congress could vote for the new party chairman for the upcoming elections, the CDA members voted en masse for

¹⁶⁷ Krouwel, A., ‘De kwetsbaarheid van het CDA voor het populistisch appèl’, *Christendemocratische Verkenningen*, 111.

¹⁶⁸ Ibidem, ibidem.

¹⁶⁹ Parlement.com, consulted on 31-05-2021.

¹⁷⁰ Verhagen gave this speech on the topic of populism during a symposium organised by the journal of the CDA’s scientific institute on the same topic. The speech was held on 19-06-2011.

¹⁷¹ Parlement.com, consulted on 31-05-2021.

¹⁷² Anon., ‘Het antwoord van het CDA op het populisme is nog onbevredigend’, *Trouw*, 29-06-2011.

¹⁷³ D. Zom, ‘Toespraak Maxime Verhagen over populisme’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 18-06-2011.

¹⁷⁴ Ibidem.

the right wing Conservative, van Haersma Buma,¹⁷⁵ it appeared that the trend to the right of the CDA would not stop anytime soon. However, freed from the minority cabinet that included the PVV, the CDA - remarkably - seemed to show a slightly more social face than before. It seemed that the institution and work of the commissie Frissen had not been in vain after all. In line with the course suggested in the report *Kiezen en Verbinden* (Selecting and Connecting), which was the result of a Strategic Deliberation commission - which, in turn, is in line with the recommendations that featured in *Verder na de klap* - the CDA, for the first time in ten years, published a party programme - *Iedereen* (Everybody) - that did not propose a severely more restrictive approach to immigration and integration than the programme that came before it (*Slagvaardig en Samen*).

Because of the premature fall of cabinet Rutte I, the coming elections were held early. During these elections, the CDA's stance was heavily influenced by the report *Kiezen en Verbinden*, due to the fact that the party programme *Iedereen* was based on this report.¹⁷⁶ An important theme of *Kiezen and Verbinden* - as the title suggests - is connecting and engaging. For instance, the document reads "... notions the CDA rejects, like... the sowing of division".¹⁷⁷ This is an obvious reference to the more xenophobe parties like Wilders' PVV. The CDA thus explicitly distances itself from the right wing populists. The message of *Kiezen en Verbinden*, on the topic of the multicultural society - although it does not use that word explicitly - seems to be that it is not all that bad. For instance, the authors of the document state that:

After years of looking away from the problems that the reception of newcomers brought to our country, there is no reason to now go to the opposite extreme. The integration of new Dutch people sometimes seems to only have given us problems, but that ignores that most of them successfully earned, or will earn, their place in Dutch society. Where new Dutch people cause troubles, these are rarely caused by a single factor. Sometimes it is a shortage of education, work, or social or cultural isolation... The majority of the new Dutch want to participate and are an addition to the Netherlands, also in economic terms.¹⁷⁸

However, for a document that is supposed to be "the translation"¹⁷⁹ of *Kiezen en Verbinden*, *Iedereen* also contained a surprising amount of nuances to this newly found return to the Christian Social face of the party. For instance, introducing the topic of 'Identity and Pluriformity' in the party programme, the authors state: "We are strict when it comes to

¹⁷⁵ Napel, ten, H., 'CDA Partijgeschiedenis', *Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen*.

¹⁷⁶ CDA, *Iedereen* (The Hague 2012), p. 2.

¹⁷⁷ CDA Strategisch Beraad, *Kiezen en Verbinden* (The Hague 2012), 14.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, 23-24.

¹⁷⁹ CDA, *Iedereen*, 3.

immigration of people with little sight on successful participation, open for real refugees...¹⁸⁰. The same section reads: "Freedom of speech is important... also minorities should be able to have different ideas. But it is no excuse to say anything you want... Violence that is caused by cultural or religious background... female circumcision or violence against homosexuals... should be combatted... Extremism shall be fought with force."¹⁸¹ This might not seem to be anything out of the ordinary, but these nuances - probably not entirely coincidentally - coincide with the pet topics of populist xenophobic parties like Wilders' PVV. This is underlined by the fact that in the following section, *Iedereen* still proposes relatively strict and restrictive policies on immigration and stern ones on integration. For example, the authors of *Iedereen* propose that immigrants who do not participate in the job market, will not be eligible for a residence permit. Followed by the populist feeling sentence: "Who acts rejecting or negative, gets fined or less social benefits"¹⁸² Furthermore, the document pleads for an increased barrier for the admittance of marriage migrants.¹⁸³ With this, the Christian Democrats did not fully break with their trend of 'rightification', however the trend seems to have stagnated as the party, for the first time since 1994 and 1998, objectively does not move to a significantly more Conservative or right wing approach on the topic of immigration and integration. Was the maximum of the CDA's accommodating potential achieved or was new party leader van Haersma Buma receptive to the message of the commissie Frissen? Or should we attribute the consolidation of the CDA's position to the lack of external stimuli as the PVV, as, in some ways, a governing party, could not up the ante like they used to because the parliamentary support agreement they signed made it hard to oppose the executive branch of government?

Whatever the reason behind this might have been, the 2012 elections were another unsuccessful one for the CDA. In the first Second Chamber elections under van Haersma Buma, the CDA lost another eight parliamentary seats, reducing its total to just 13. This was the umpteenth 'all-time low' in just a mere couple of years.¹⁸⁴ A newly instated internal evaluation commission attributed this new low to basically the same causes the commissie Frissen had attributed the 2010 low to. The findings and advice of the 2012 commission were entirely in line with those of the commission that came before them as well.¹⁸⁵ This means the electoral loss was not achieved thanks to, but rather despite, the return to a slightly more social profile of the Christian Democrats. For a moment, it seemed that finally

¹⁸⁰ CDA, *Iedereen*, 9.

¹⁸¹ Ibidem, 11-12.

¹⁸² CDA, *Iedereen*, 12.

¹⁸³ Ibidem.

¹⁸⁴ Election data derived from Parlement.com, consulted on 01-06-2021.

¹⁸⁵ In the report: Rapport Commissie Rombouts, *Om Eenheid en Inhoud. Evaluatie Tweede Kamerverkiezingen 2012*, (The Hague 2012), 2, the commission Rombouts states their conclusions are in line with the previous instated commission and argues in favor of implementing the recommendations made by the Commissie Frissen.

the realisation of the fact that the party's accommodation strategy had not done them any good since 2003, had set in and the persistent myths of the Donner-doctrine were overcome.

However, as we have seen before, electoral lows often make the CDA look inward, but also make them look outward. In the years after 2012, when the PVV was again 'upping' the xenophobe ante from the opposition benches and a new populist party emerged on the xenophobic right: Forum voor Democratie¹⁸⁶, the conclusions of the two evaluation committees that had urged the party to do away with their accommodation strategy were quickly forgotten. It seems that the Conservative wing of the CDA still had the upper hand and, under Conservative leader Buma, the shortly stagnated trend to the right continued. It seems that new habits die hard. Even in the light of ample proof that supports contrasting strategies. In the 2017 election document *Keuzes voor een Beter Nederland* (Choices for a Better the Netherlands), the CDA reprioritized immigration and integration issues. On the topic of integration, the programme reads: "The integration of newcomers is back on the nationwide political agenda, because too many newcomers are not, or insufficiently, successful in finding a place in our society."¹⁸⁷ and "Meanwhile the lacking integration of newcomers creates tensions and raises fundamental questions about our own identity."¹⁸⁸. Furthermore, the party states that it is their wish that it remains the migrants own responsibility to successfully finish their integration process and that those who do not finish it will risk being expelled.¹⁸⁹ With this, the CDA was back on the same track it had been on since the first wave of modern Dutch populism in 2001.

What compelled the CDA to disregard the advice of the two committees after all? The answer is given by Conservative party leader van Haersma Buma soon after the publication of *Keuzes voor een Beter Nederland*. The CDA's leader gave a speech 'Verwarde tijden! Die om richting vragen' (Confused Times! That Ask for Direction) during an event organised by Conservative scientific magazine *Elsevier* on the 4th of September, 2017.¹⁹⁰ In his speech, van Haersma Buma proved himself still convinced by the persistent myth of the dislodged CDA electorate that flocked to populist parties. The CDA leader expressed his understanding for the 'discontent citizen' who was threatened by immigration as he stated: "His (the discontent potential populism-voter) job is taken by an immigrant or Eastern European,... the coarsening of society enters his living room with great violence through his television"¹⁹¹, "The hope that an European enlightend version of the Islam would emerge has

¹⁸⁶ Parlement.com, consulted on 01-06-2021.

¹⁸⁷ CDA, *Keuzes voor een Beter Nederland* (The Hague 2017), p. 25.

¹⁸⁸ Ibidem, 9.

¹⁸⁹ Ibidem, 25-26.

¹⁹⁰ Hirsch Ballin, E. and P. van Geest, 'Buma's Schoo-lezing Maatschappelijke scheidslijnen mogen geen breuklijnen worden', *Christendemocratische Verkenningen*, vol.26(3) 2011, p. 18-23.

¹⁹¹ R. Abels, 'Het CDA hoopt dat Buma het niet zo bedoelde', *Trouw*, 13-10-2017.

proven to be in vain”¹⁹² and “Immigration and globalisation brought a clash of civilizations in ‘our house’”¹⁹³. The ultimate confirmation that Buma’s ideology was shaped on the ill-conceived ‘dislodged voter myth’ came when he stated that the emergence of Wilders, Trump, Brexit and other populist phenomena should not be seen as “irrational belches... but as a serious charge”.¹⁹⁴ Apparently, the conviction of the truthfulness of the Donner-doctrine was so ingrained in the dominant Conservative CDA wing, even contrasting facts could not challenge its narrative. This can be attributed to the fact that the successful framing of public opinion by the populist right created a blind spot for the CDA, as its perception of the public opinion differed from reality.

Of course, Buma’s speech sparked outrage among some, more Socially leaning, CDA members and multiple of its members expressed their discontent or even left the Christian Democrat party.¹⁹⁵ These seem to be recurring occurrences after the CDA consolidates its Conservative ideology. As it happened so many times already, this time over, it almost feels like a broken record replaying the exact same fragment of music over and over again. But each time it replays it seems to get a little louder. The CDA’s relatively new habit of accommodation seems a hard one to kill as is its underlying assumption about the electorate. Apparently, a good story is more convincing than uncomfortable and confronting facts to the dominant Conservative wing of the CDA.

¹⁹² M. Stellinga, ‘Buma: Gewone Nederlander blijft verdweesd achter’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 04-09-2017.

¹⁹³ Ibidem.

¹⁹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁹⁵ R. Abels, ‘Het CDA hoopt dat Buma het niet zo bedoelde’, *Trouw*, 13-10-2017.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued that the CDA's shift from a social to a more restrictive and Conservative stance on the topics of immigration and integration between 1994 and 2017 is caused by a combination of factors. In my analysis, I have taken into account a multitude of internal and external factors.

Most internal factors, like the party's (changing) ideology, reception of reports of internal party commissions, discussions about party courses, leading narratives and the (contested) election of party leaders, can be related to the existence of different wings or ideologies within the CDA itself. As was stated in the introduction of this work, the history of the CDA indicated that party-internal ideological discussions were likely to exist. I have tried to show that these discussions were sometimes heavily influenced by external factors and, in the end, led to increasing dominance of the more Conservative wing of the CDA over the more Social wing, resulting in increasingly restrictive standpoints on the topic of immigration and integration.

Most external factors that contributed to the CDA's shift to a more restrictive and Conservative stance on these topics, like election results, changing standpoints of rivaling parties, events that lend themselves well to a right wing interpretation of politics and a shifting public opinion, are related to the two theoretical concepts that were presented in the introduction of this thesis: framing and accommodation. It were these two concepts that proved pivotal in the ideological reorientation of the CDA. In the end, it were the (perceived) newly dominant frames that led the CDA to pursue an accommodation strategy that led to the lasting dominance of the Conservative wing of the Christian Democratic party.

Hence, the question "Why did the CDA take on an increasingly restrictive approach to the topic of immigration and integration between 1994 and 2017?" can not be answered without taking both internal and external factors into account. What I tried to show is, how under certain circumstances, certain factors mattered more than others. By structuring this thesis around the three phases that correspond with the chapters of this work, I tried to show which factors - internal and/or external - were most important during each phase.

In the first chapter (and the first phase), *A new face*, I have shown how the CDA went from a Christian-Social stance on the immigration and integration topic to a more Conservative one between 1994 and 2002 by juxtaposing the election programmes *Wat echt telt: werk, veiligheid, milieu* (1994) and *Samenleven doe je niet alleen* (1998) to the 2002 election programme *Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid*. This shift was caused

because the CDA proved to be very receptive of the external influences of the newly dominant frames and corresponding *zeitgeist* that portrayed immigrants and Muslims in a more negative manner. This receptiveness of external influences was due to the CDA's 1994 and 1998 poor election results, which resulted in an introspective quest and identity crisis. It was thus this internal factor that opened the CDA up to the external factor of changing frames and *zeitgeist*.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the subsequential new, anti-Islam, frames became dominant and capitalized upon by populist Pim Fortuyn, the CDA jumped on the proverbial bandwagon of more restrictive immigration and integration policy proposals and accommodated to the populist party on their right. With this, the CDA contributed to the normalization and consolidation of these new frames that dominated the public opinion.

In the second chapter *The Balkenende era: retaining power* I have argued that with its reentrance to the executive branch of government, the CDA entered a new phase; namely that of trying to retain its newly gained political power. During the years this phase entailed, a number of polarizing events occurred. These external factors led to a turbulent political landscape. The internal factor that proved to be of most importance during these times was the CDA's willingness to adapt its standpoints and ideological views to the - perceived - 'spirit of the times' in order to retain its political power. This new phase was accompanied by a strategy that meant further accommodation to populists who claimed Fortuyn's heritage. Initially, this worked well for the CDA, as electoral results were positive: it became the largest party twice in a row and successfully marginalized the populist danger on their right. The fact that even the populist SP on the CDA's left proved receptive to the influence of the right's stern immigration and integration rhetoric, contributes to the validity of the theory that the CDA's more Conservative course - initially - was on the favorable side of public opinion and the *zeitgeist*. Furthermore, this contributed to the CDA's decision not to accommodate to the populist left's (still) more lenient approach to the topics of immigration and integration and, in line with the Donner-doctrine, continue down the path of accommodating to the right.

However, as I show in the third chapter, by continuing its accommodation strategy, the CDA strayed too far from its confessional identity and in the 2006 and 2010 elections this misconception of the public opinion cost them a significant amount of parliamentary seats. Even though this was concluded by internal party commissions that pleaded for a return to a more Christian Social party ideology, the dominant Conservative wing did not adhere to this advice. It was during these years that it became evident that the dominance of the Conservative wing of the CDA was here to stay. This was also the most dominant factor of influence during this phase. Hence, the name of the phase and corresponding chapter *Conservative consolidation*.

These internal commissions also concluded that the Donner-doctrine was based on a false premise and that the part of the electorate that voted for the populist right were not displaced CDA voters, nor could they be 'won back' by accommodating to anti-immigration political adversaries. Illustrated by publications of the CDA's scientific institute, utterances by party leaders Verhagen and van Haersma Buma and internal party commissions, I have shown that even though the CDA was provided a clear alternative to their accommodation-course by the internal party commissions, their newly acquired habit of accommodating to the populist right proved a hard one to get rid of and the more Conservative party line would be continued. With this, the CDA finalized the metamorphosis the party had initiated in 2001 and confirmed itself as a Conservative, right wing party with no intention of giving up its newfound ideology in favor of a more social one in the foreseeable future.

With this case study, I have given a clear and cohesive narrative on how a once-centre party positioned itself as increasingly right wing. By taking into account the influence of internal factors as well as external factors related to the theoretical concepts of framing and accommodation, I have shown that the perceived trend to the right that was mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, at least in the case of the CDA, can be empirically substantiated. The theory that was put forward in the introduction of this thesis that entails that the agency of this ideological reorientation lies with populist politicians who, consciously or unconsciously, contribute to the normalization of extreme ideas can, in light of the evidence presented in this thesis, to a certain extent be validated. However, as I have tried to show, political parties - at least in the case of the CDA - always have agency of their own, whether they realize it or not, and to attribute the normalization of increasingly restrictive approaches to immigration and integration entirely to actors on the edges of the political spectrum, is false and an oversimplification of reality, as party-internal factors and mainstream parties will also play a pivotal role in this process.

As for the universal trend to the right that was mentioned in the introduction, the significant ideological changes that (once-centre) party CDA made and the corresponding change in frames and public opinion that occurred in recent years might very well be indicative of a broader trend. However, the scope of this work is too small to come to a definitive verdict on this matter. What this work further contributes to historiography on this topic, apart from uncovering the path the CDA took during its transformation into a Conservative party, is how the theoretical concepts of framing and accommodation can prove to be useful tools in contextualising and qualifying political parties' (changing) ideological courses over the years.

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An Example from Education Policy

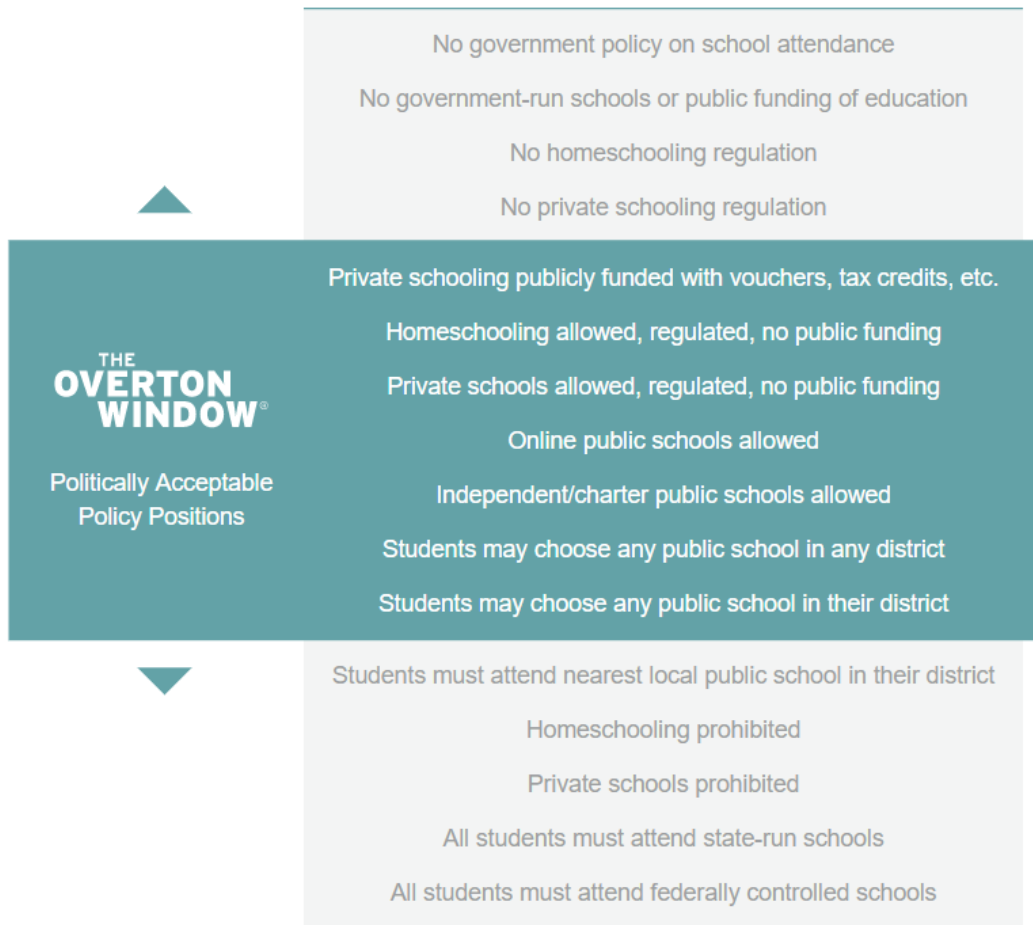


Figure 1: An example of the Overton window with policies on education. Image obtained from the Mackinac center of public policy on 24-01-2021.