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Populist Pressures and the Political-Administrative Relation: An Explanatory Research of the Perceptions and Expectations of Top Civil Servants

Toonder, Corneel den

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Populist Pressures and the Political-Administrative Relation

An Explanatory Research of the Perceptions and Expectations of Top Civil
Servants



Corneel den Toonder (s3380289)
Public Administration
International and European Governance
Leiden University

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Abstract

The influence of right-wing populist ideology on governments has increased over the past two decades and these developments are still ongoing in several countries over the world. Right-wing populist politics is often characterized by values of anti-pluralism and anti-elite, which threaten diverse, inclusive, and open societies. These influences in the form of populist pressures may lead to democratic backsliding and can have far-reaching consequences on the administrative apparatus and political-administrative relations. Top civil servants as main actors within the democratic constitutional state and the civil service are important in safeguarding day-to-day governance and in dealing with populist pressures and preventing democratic backsliding. This research, therefore, focuses on the perceptions and expectations of top civil servants regarding which strategies and actions a government with a populist signature will adopt and subsequently the response of civil servants to these pressures. The findings show that the absolute majority of top civil servants expect that a government with a populist signature will adopt strategies and actions about centralization of both structure and resources and regarding the politicization of both norms and personnel. Furthermore, most top civil servants are neutral regarding their expectations of whether civil servants will respond. They consider it most likely that civil servants will resign, closely followed by speaking out against the policy. They find it more likely that civil servants will have a response than not respond, and finally, expect that civil servants will not be loyal to a populist government when dealing with populist pressures.

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Chapter I

Populistic Pressures and the Political-Administrative Relation

"Hundreds of underage refugees are at risk of growing up without parents" was the title of a much-discussed article published by the Dutch newspaper NRC. This would be the result of a new policy of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND) in the country. The measure was intended to put an end to the forwarding of underage children by parents, who might be able to obtain asylum more easily. The result would be that it would be virtually impossible for single asylum children to be reunited with their parents if they have already been placed with (distant) relatives. The House of Representatives was not aware of the change and, with a critical tone, asked for further explanation (Julen, 2021). The intended policy changes were met with a lot of criticism from the Chamber and others, such as lawyers from the immigration service and the Dutch Council for Refugees, arguing that the policy was not legally feasible and contrary to European law (NOS, 2021). The State PoSecretary for Justice and Security, Broekers-Knol, who is responsible for the policy, pushed through the change despite strong advice from, among others, the IND top, other top civil servants, and lawyers not to do so. After research and much criticism from MPs and migration experts, the State Secretary decided to reverse the policy change.

A few months later, the politician was again discredited when she reacted to a previously widely supported motion drawn up after the Taliban occupation of Afghanistan, which implied that the Netherlands wanted to remove other employees from the country in addition to interpreters. The state secretary suggested that 100,000 Afghan refugees may want to come to the Netherlands, an unfounded statement that was not based on facts. MPs argued that the ruling, which the State Secretary later described as a 'hypothetical number', undermines support for the reception of refugees and goes against the wish of the House to receive Afghans who have worked for the Netherlands (Keultjes, 2021). The unfounded statement that called into question the legitimacy of the chamber can be seen as populist rhetoric, in this case, conducted by a politician who does not belong to a party that one would characterize as populist.

The example shows that a country such as the Netherlands is not immune from undermining policies that may be harmful to democracy and the rule of law. It indicates that populism (unconsciously) influences politics, bureaucracy, and thus society. Although officials criticized the State Secretary, they nevertheless took part in the implementation of the policy. Civil servants are part of the civil service which concerns the executive branch that takes care of the day-to-day functioning of the government and operates based on laws enacted by the government. It is therefore important that it functions according to the guidelines drawn up by politicians, but it also forms an important link as a safe guarder to prevent democratic backsliding. This points to questions about how civil servants should relate to democratically elected anti-rule of law populist politics and how they can refrain from supporting and implementing anti-rule of law populist policies (Yesilkagit, 2021).

Populism might be the most popular explanation for the difficulties governments currently have (Peters & Pierre, 2019). Furthermore, populists often use a negative rhetoric discourse towards certain topics. For instance, the populist discourse has often been strongly anti-immigration, resulting in the topic becoming a salient topic and sometimes even, like in the case of migration, referred to as a threatening problem, consequently fueling the public opinion. However, the question is whether and how politicians who display populist traits have an influence on the civil servants who implement the policy and how these servants deal with these forms of populist pressure. Populism affects politics and society as a whole, which implies that civil servants, who are responsible for day-to-day governance, also have to deal with these phenomena. It is therefore important that there is more knowledge about the rise of populism and its impact on political-administrative relations and about the perceptions, expectations, and response of civil servants in dealing with populist pressures from politics. Top civil servants are often the ones who are in direct contact with politicians and make the most important decisions within the civil service. Therefore, it is important to know how one of the most important actors within the democratic constitutional state, i.e. these senior officials, view developments regarding emerging populism. This research, therefore, uses the following research question:

'What is the impact of populist pressures from politics on the perceptions and expectations of top civil servants?'

In recent years, populism in politics has been on the rise – think of Bolsonaro in Brazil, Trump in the USA, and Wilders in The Netherlands. Internationally and nationally, scientific studies have recently been launched within public administration into the rise of populism and its impact on political-administrative relations. It is a rapidly growing theme and one of the central questions is how and in what way (top) officials in democratic systems react to the arrival of elements of populism in politics. Moreover, previous research has shown that populism can lead to a democratic deficit, democratic backsliding, and the weakening of (important) institutions. While these developments are concerning, previous studies often fall short in addressing the possible consequences for public administration and therefore civil servants and their activities. Additionally, literature on this topic does not sufficiently address populism in relation to public administration (Peters & Pierre, 2019). It is therefore important to look at the impact of populism on the public administration since, presumably, civil servants and their everyday execution of policies are affected by this. Furthermore, quantitative research regarding populism and public administration is little (Hollibaugh et al., 2020). Moreover, the rise of populism from politics comes with populist pressures, which civil servants must deal with, and which also influence the way they carry out their work, and thus their relationship with populist politicians. Research into the relationship between politicians and civil servants and populist pressures is still scarce, which makes this research theoretically relevant because it provides insights into this relationship. Lastly, this research provides additional understanding because it relates specifically to top civil servants, also called senior officials or top executives, as well as specifically to the Dutch civil service. This is especially relevant because previous literature does not focus on the Netherlands let alone Dutch top civil servants.

This research is also socially relevant since politicians and civil servants play an important role in the presence of populism. Previous studies have shown that populism is a common phenomenon and societies are affected by it. The development in which liberal democracies are confronted with the emergence of populist political movements and parties represents a challenge for the diverse, inclusive, and open society. It is therefore important to gain insights into how one of the most important actors within the democratic constitutional state, namely senior officials, view these developments. Furthermore, quite a bit has been written about political-administrative relations in relation to populism, however, insights into the expectations, perceptions, and responses of civil servants to

populist pressures are scarce, while these officials have an important task of properly implementing policies so that institutions function better and citizens' living conditions are appropriate. It is important to understand to what extent civil servants have to do with populist influences and pressures and what actions they take to limit these to an acceptable level since the prominent presence can have negative consequences for institutions, the public interest, and society in general. More insight into the relationship between politicians and civil servants regarding populist influences can reveal possible opportunities and weaknesses whereas these insights are important to establish and maintain a good relationship between politicians and civil servants.

The next chapter deals with the theoretical framework discussing relevant literature and the clarification and use of the important concepts concerning *populism, democratic backsliding, strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature, and response of civil servants to populist pressures*. Subsequently, the next chapter deals with the methodology, which in this study concerns a case study in which data is collected by means of a survey. This quantitative data is then analyzed in chapter four, which sets out the findings of the study. The research question is thereafter answered in the conclusion in chapter five. Finally, the limitations of the research and important follow-up research are discussed.

Chapter II

Theoretical Framework

Populism and Democratic Backsliding

Before examining the effect populist pressures have on civil servants, it is important to examine what populism is and how it relates to democratic backsliding. In addition, it must be discussed how public administration relates to the two concepts. As mentioned before, civil servants are part of the civil service - the administrative apparatus of the government - which is responsible for the day-to-day execution of tasks established by the government. In other words, the executive branch consisting of civil servants, operates based on laws and policies which are enacted by politicians and thus the government. This implies that the operation of policies generated by politicians depend on the implementation by civil servants and thus the public administration.

According to Müller (2016) public administrations and contemporary democracies have become pluralist institutions. Related to this Bauer and Becker (2020) argue that the term democratic backsliding refers to the reduction of political pluralism. Moreover, definitions of modern populism often involve the presence of a corrupt elite, the establishment, which in a sense oppresses the 'common people'. In addition, the populists identify themselves as embodying the 'will of the people', while placing their interests above the institutions that protect individual and social rights. From a populist perspective, one may say that these institutions are run by a self-serving ruling minority who seek to control the vast majority of the virtuous common people. Although populism has several definitions, causes, and consequences, this research only looks at its consequences and will use the definition of Muller (2016), which includes the aspects of anti-elite and anti-pluralism. This definition of populism reads: "A particular moralistic imagination of politics, a way of perceiving the political world that sets a morally pure and fully unified people against elites who are deemed corrupt or in some way morally inferior." (Müller, pp. 19-20, 2016). Since populism is considered the embodiment of the 'will of the people' and therefore speaks for a single selective people it has elements of anti-pluralism. Therefore, populism may be a possible

cause for democratic backsliding, whereby the latter, as mentioned, refers to cutbacks of political pluralism (Bauer & Becker, 2020). Moreover, the term refers to a government with a weak commitment to ethical values and the public interest (Inglehart & Norris, 2016).

Furthermore, from a liberal perspective, democratic backsliding refers to the threat of concentrating political power and the importance of civil rights, the rule of law, and checks and balances (Coppedge, 2017). Moreover, democratic backsliding can be seen as one of the biggest threats to our democracies (Bermeo, 2016). However, there are different views on the understanding of democratic backsliding and its relationship to populism. On the one hand, some authors argue that the urge for populists to takeover governments leads to democratic backsliding and especially to Western democracies (Norris, 2017). On the other hand, authors argue that the relationship is not that plain, and some even argue that populism can advance democracy (Mouffe, 2018). For example, populism can also ensure that citizens who feel excluded from politics feel heard again and use their voting rights. Despite differences regarding the possible effects of populism, depending on context and definitions, Bauer and Becker (2020) see populism as a potential danger to liberal democracies. Given that this research was conducted in the Netherlands, which concerns a Western country with many features of a liberal democracy, we assume that populist pressures generally have negative effects and potentially lead to democratic backsliding. In addition, as mentioned earlier, only populist pressures are considered that can have negative consequences for the diverse, inclusive, and open society, the latter due to the presence of elements of anti-pluralism and democratic backsliding.

Civil Service and Populism

Populism has been a prominent phenomenon and a concept that has been extensively researched in recent years (Bellodi et al., 2021). Levy et al. (2021) argue that populism is a way of doing politics where populist politicians strategically have an oversimplified view of policy problems and solutions whereas their proposed policies are unable to match the complexity of the world, or as Dahrendorf (2003) argued: "Democracy is complex, populism is simple". Politicians who display characteristics of populist politics try to change the state and its institutions according to their own preferences, which means that populist influences from politics can also influence the civil service and the people within it and their work. In other

words, populist politics is about attempting to occupy the State (Thompson, 2017), and this logically has an influence on actors who have to implement the presented policy and are responsible for the day-to-day management of the state, namely civil servants, and especially top civil servants because they have the most important powers within the civil service.

The success of politicians, therefore, depends on how civil servants carry out their work and thus how the civil service functions. In an ideal situation, from the point of view of politics, the civil servants carry out the proposed policy properly as described by the politicians. However, it may be the case that civil servants do not carry out the policy the way the politicians prefer leading to the civil servant being an obstacle for politicians in trying to pursue their ideals. Consequently, politicians pursuing populist politics may want to try to discard these obstacles to be able to implement their preferred policies. For instance, to push through their populist policies, politicians will want to replace officials with expertise with officials with loyalty since they will be less likely to oppose the political agenda (Peters & Pierre, 2019), which in return will give politicians a better opportunity to implement their preferred policy (Morelli & Sasso, 2020). In other words, populist politicians are less likely to admit officials with expertise into the civil service, because expertise in many cases competes with their populist policies. The absence of sufficient expertise in government is likely to have adverse effects on its performance and effectiveness (Bellodi et al., 2021). Accordingly, Bellodi et al. (2021) add that oversimplified politics in our complex world leads to welfare losses and find in their study that after a populist mayor is elected, there is a higher turnover of senior officials, involvement of more non-expert officials at the expense of expert officials, and lower performance. Furthermore, Morelli and Sasso (2020) look at the incentives of civil servants as an effect of the presence of populist politicians and argue that competent civil servants engage in strategic policymaking by pretending to be loyal or by still implementing what they believe to be appropriate policies despite the risk of dismissal. The research also points out that bureaucratic turnover is higher when the bureaucracy is strong and lower when it is weak.

There are several designations for people who work within the civil service. They are often referred to as 'bureaucrats', however, because the word 'bureaucrat' often has a negative connotation, the terms 'top civil servant' and 'senior official' are used in this study. Although populism can also have positive consequences, this study examines the possible negative consequences of right-wing populism. An important possible negative consequence of populism concerns democratic backsliding. In the remainder of this research, the possible

negative consequences of populism that are related to democratic backsliding will be further explained.

Populist Pressures on the Public Administration as a Pluralistic Institution

Pluralism is about the existence of different types of actors, who have different beliefs, opinions, and ways of doing things, and who take part within the same society. For instance, when implementing policy, the civil service must take into account different views, religions, and cultures. These considerations are important to uphold certain values of society such as its diversity, inclusiveness, and openness. Moreover, the modern bureaucracy has several roles in policymaking, and it consists of multiple and different actors operating in complex political environments (Bauer & Becker, 2020). Additionally, it has become largely responsible for providing common goods to citizens. This development regarding increasing and diverse roles and tasks such as ensuring accountability structures, citizen participation, and transparency indicate that the public administration concerns a pluralistic institution. To add to this, Dahl (1978) argues that a certain degree of pluralism is a necessary condition and a vital element of a democratic regime. Since public administration is considered a pluralistic institution and populists tend to take an anti-pluralistic position, they may want to transform policies and the functioning and operations of the civil service and its servants to align them with their populist ideals and preferences (Müller, 2016). The idea of the public administration as a pluralist institution is clashing with the ideology of the populists who perceives a single will of the people and who try to delegitimize pluralism.

These different ways of trying to change the bureaucracy according to their populist ideals can be regarded as populist pressures. According to Bauer and Becker (2020) populists may try to change the current public administration through various ways to transform it into one characterized as populist. These various ways translate into five different strategies the populist can use: (1) centralization of structure (also mentioned by Peters and Pierre, 2019), meaning reducing the autonomy in vertical and horizontal systems, for instance by removing existing organizations and creating new ones or giving power to organizations or actors that are more aligned with the populist ideals and leadership; (2) centralization of resources, reorganization of resources amidst administrative actors so that they have more or less resources and/or powers at their disposal; (3) politicization of personnel, by removing officials

and personnel and appoint advocates of the populist ideology in their place and/or by changing recruitment or promotion processes; (4) politicization of norms (also mentioned by Peters and Pierre, 2019), which details the reconstruction of bureaucratic norms and administrative culture whereby criticism on and opinions other than the leadership claims are seen as misconduct; (5) reduction of accountability, whereby the populist actors make use of extensive executive decrees that sideline legislative bodies and representative deliberation, possibly leading to full control over the bureaucracy and eliminating external forces.

The strategies that are used depend on what goals populist leaders have. For example, this can depend on the subject, such as when there is a strong focus on migration. Much of present populism is about controlling or eliminating migration and even to bar some naturalized citizens (Peters & Pierre, 2019). Furthermore, there is a difference in how populists view the current public administration, whereas this can be seen as essential or as an impediment. Populists will prefer certain goals according to how amenable a particular public administration is. In other words, the preferred goals depend on how *fragile* or *robust* the public administration in question is (Bauer & Becker, 2020). In addition, the model (Table 1) Bauer and Becker (2020) created, also argues that the preference of goals and therefore strategies depend on whether a populist has a positive or negative view regarding the state in question. This refers to whether the public administration in question is seen as necessary to pursue the populist ideals or is seen as something that needs to be diminished.

Thus, the populist positive or negative view of the state and the fragility or robustness of the public administration leads to the preference for particular strategy and goal, whereby the latter concerns either capturing, reforming, dismantling, or sabotaging the administration (Bauer & Becker, 2020). For instance, when a populist has a negative view on the bureaucracy his goal will be to dismantle it, which, however, is only possible when there is a fragile administrative order. If the administrative order is robust in this case, it is likely that the populist will want to sabotage the bureaucracy. Contrary to a negative view, namely in the case of a positive view of the state, the populist will want to capture the bureaucracy, although this is only possible if the administrative order is fragile. In this case, if the administrative order is robust, then the populist goal will be to reform the bureaucracy. However, what is important to keep in mind is that a certain goal is not fixed but may change. For instance, when there are a lot of populists' pressures, this may lead to a robust administrative order getting more

fragile changing the goal of the populist from reforming to capturing or sabotaging to dismantling.

Table 1. Populist Public Administration Goals

		Administrative order	
		Fragile	Robust
Populist view of the state	Positive	Capture	Reform
	Negative	Dismantle	Sabotage

Bauer & Becker (2020)

In line with Bauer and Becker (2020), Peters and Pierre (2019) propose four possible scenarios regarding governance and the role of bureaucracy when confronted by populist leaders. The first concerns that the bureaucracy is sidelined and that civil servants are being replaced or ignored. This happens through patronage, so for example, as mentioned earlier by Bauer and Becker (2020), when politicized officials are hired as opposed to expert officials. According to Bellodi et al. (2021), this has negative consequences for bureaucracy and thus the government. In this scenario, the populist politicians see the bureaucracy as part of the 'elite', which indicates a negative view of the state, where the goals of the populist will be either to dismantle or to sabotage the bureaucracy. Another way civil servants are getting sidelined is by technocracy. This may sound confusing, but politicians often claim that today's civil servants – usually referring to them as ‘bureaucrat’ giving it a negative connotation - and experts are corrupt and do not have the capabilities they need to do their jobs well. Populist politicians then claim that they are replacing today's ‘bureaucrats’, who are embodied as lazy and lacking in ability, with officials who are professional and have the right expertise.

The second possible scenario that Peters and Pierre (2019) outline concerns the empowerment of the bureaucracy. This means that officials “once in office may actually want to do something” (Peters & Pierre, p. 1531, 2019). The reasoning is that populists need civil servants because they are an effective means of potentially achieving their goals. Populists want to make use of useful administrative procedures since this can result in increasing their control. In other words, they need civil servants to pursue their ideals. Referring to Bauer and Becker (2020), this indicates a positive view regarding the state, where the goal of the populist

leader is either to capture or reform – depending on a fragile or robust administrative order – the bureaucracy.

Scenario three concerns using the bureaucracy, which is most prevalent in authoritarian regimes. The option to possibly govern transcends possible feelings of disgust towards civil servants and they start to confide in the bureaucracy. However, this scenario is not considered relevant in this study because it mainly concerns authoritarian regimes.

Response of Civil Servants

The various strategies and goals described used by populist politicians are intended to forge and direct the bureaucracy to their populist ideological needs. Either desirable or undesirable civil servants must deal with these changes as they are responsible to continue their work and implement the predetermined policies. In addition, civil servants must change their work and ways of doing things to act in accordance and alignment with the given populist policies. Therefore, they may have to deal with persuasion, influence, and even coercion from their populist superiors, which suggests that civil servants in this situation face populist pressures in carrying out their duties. These pressures can trigger certain attitudes, behavior, and actions of these officials, affecting the relationship between politicians and them.

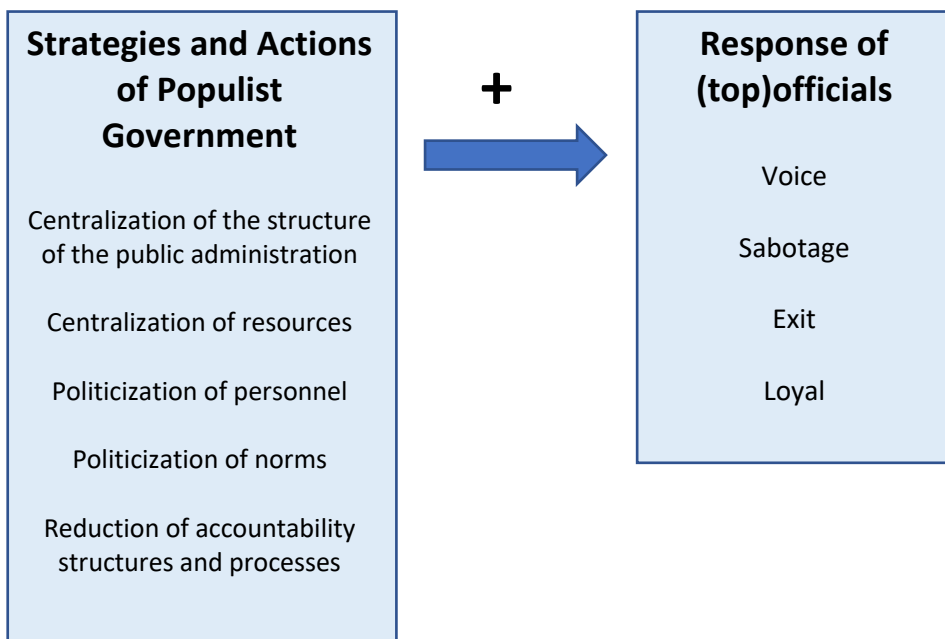
Elaborating on this, Schuster et al. (2021) state that democratic backsliding is, as mentioned earlier is – among other things – a consequence of rising populism and can result in a weak commitment of the government to the public interest. This may lead to dissatisfaction among civil servants because they do not want to follow and implement policies that go against the public interest. The officials that go against the wishes of politicians can be seen as what O'Leary (2013) describes as 'guerilla government', which the author defines as: "The actions taken by public servants who work against the wishes, either implicitly or explicitly communicated, of their superiors" (O'Leary, p. 6, 2013). In other words, the civil servants are able and willing to go against the aspirations of their superiors. The officials may see themselves as 'principled agents', trying to convince 'unprincipled' principals of 'principled policies, which is referred to as 'voice'. If unprincipled policies are nevertheless implemented, the civil servant tries to hinder them, which is called *guerrilla sabotage*, or just *sabotage* (O'Leary, 2006). The deliberate failure to implement policy, also called 'dissent shirking' (Brehm & Gates, 1999), also falls under 'sabotage' in this study. Inglehart and Norris (2016)

argue that democratic backsliding has increased unprincipled political principals. Moreover, next to *voice* and *sabotage*, a civil servant can also choose to resign, which is called 'exit'. Finally, a civil servant can of course also choose to simply implement the policy, which refers to *loyalty* (Hirschman, 1970). Schuster et al. (2021) discuss in their article what officials do - be it *voice*, *sabotage*, or *voice* - when dealing with unprincipled principals, also considering the degree of public service management of civil servants. Their study shows that civil servants that have a certain amount of public service, unlike those who do not, are more expected to undertake *voice*, *sabotage*, and *exit* when they have to implement policies they assess as going against the public interest and thus assess as unprincipled (Schuster et al., 2021). Furthermore, they are more willing to go against 'unprincipled' political principals and resign when they have to work with them.

According to O'Leary (2013) and Schuster et al. (2021), the response of civil servants to unprincipled policies is the least likely *sabotage*, while *voice* and *exit* are more common. The Schuster et al. (2021) study uses a scale in which respondents answer based on a 5-point Likert scale including 'never', 'rarely', 'sometimes', 'often', and 'always or almost always'. This study shows that between 24.4% and 38.3% of the civil servants surveyed are willing to sabotage policy, meaning they answer with either 'often' or 'always or almost always'. These two answers are most often given when it comes to speaking out against the policy in question to colleagues for not implementing the policy, at a rate of 38.3%. The next highest rate of *sabotage* is 30.4%, which means that respondents in the survey answered at least 'often' to whether they would, in private, attempt to inform outside groups or the media about the potential harm that the imposed policies could have in order to get these actors their support. Furthermore, the question of whether respondents in private will try to disobey and not follow the policy is answered by 25.1% with 'often' or 'always or almost always'. The question concerning whether respondents, in private, will try to find ways to undermine the implementation of the policy within the agency is answered by 24.4% with at least 'often'. This is the lowest percentage regarding the engagement of respondents in *sabotage*. It is notable that the officials are for the most part unwilling to engage in *sabotage*. However, when they do, they do so mainly by speaking out to colleagues not to implement the policy. In terms of the various forms of engagement of civil servants in *sabotage*, officials are the least likely to attempt to undermine policy within the agency.

The study by Schuster et al. (2021) shows that the majority of civil servants are willing to engage in *voice* when, in their view, they are dealing with unprincipled policies. Of the respondents, 64.3% answered 'often' or 'always or almost always' to the question of whether they are willing to engage in *voice*. This only concerns voice as in convincing management not to implement the policy in question and to put an end to the policy. However, contrary to the Schuster et al. (2021) study, this research also involves speaking out against the policy in question to colleagues not to implement it as part of *voice*. Furthermore, less frequent than *voice*, but more frequent than *sabotage*, the respondents of the Schuster et al. (2021) study answered 'often' or 'always or almost always' 33.7% of the time about whether they will leave their position when they have to deal with unprincipled policies. Civil servants willing to engage in a type of *sabotage* also engage for 73.7% in *voice* and 40.2% in *exit* (Schuster et al., 2021). This indicates that *sabotage*, *voice*, and *exit* are complementary when civil servants are willing to go against what they see as unprincipled policies. The research also shows that civil servants who have worked longer in their position and who are older are more likely to resign, indicating *exit*. The conceptual model below provides a visual representation of the variables and categories related to this study.

Conceptual Model



Chapter III

Methods and techniques

Case selection

As mentioned, right-wing populism is a common phenomenon that has gained a foothold or is on the rise in many parts of the world. The Dutch government, like many other governments, has been and still is affected and influenced by right-wing populist parties. For instance, in 2002 the populist party LPF almost won the elections, and the PVV of populist Geert Wilders became the second-largest party in the elections in 2017 and third in 2021. Forum for Democracy (FvD) is the most recently established Dutch right-wing populist party and currently holds eight seats in the House of Representatives. This indicates that the influences of populism on politics and thus the civil service is present in the Netherlands and there is a feasible possibility that these influences will increase. The Netherlands is therefore a good example of where these influences are noticeable, but where the associated right-wing populist ideology does not (yet) prevail. Presumably, Dutch top civil servants already have to deal with populism, although it is likely that many strong currents oppose it. The framework of this research is therefore applied to the Netherlands because its top civil servants can provide insights into how they view these developments as the main actors of the civil service and what perceptions and expectations they have.

Research sample

This quantitative study uses desk research in the form of a literature study and field research in the form of a survey. A survey was chosen because presumably, respondents are more likely to participate in a survey than, for instance, interviews. In addition, a survey is cost- and time effective, and its reach is relatively large (Boeije, 2014). Moreover, political-administrative relations and populism can be characterized as sensitive topics, which means that respondents are expected to be more willing to complete surveys since this is done remotely and respondents have the feeling that confidentiality and their anonymity are better guaranteed than with other forms of data collection. To ensure that this study provides

representative and reliable results, it was decided to hold a sample in which at least 25 respondents complete the survey. This number is based on the total population, which is ninety-four. This population concerns persons of the Topmanagementgroup of the General Administrative Service, which is part of the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. The research is about - in the eyes of civil servants - the expected strategies and actions of the Dutch government if it adopts a populist signature. Furthermore, it addresses the expectations of top civil servants regarding whether and how civil servants will respond.

In order to ensure that useful data is generated that aims at focusing on political-administrative relations, it is essential that the data is obtained from persons who concern top civil servants and who are in close contact with politics and politicians. Respondents who are considered to be suitable to answer the research question were selected deliberately to obtain useful data (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Therefore, the respondents concern top civil servants who are employed by the Dutch General Administrative Service. Senior civil servants are expected to have an affinity with politicians who formulate policy, the implementation of the policy in question, and other elements concerning political-administrative relations. The study focuses on elements of populism regarding political figures and the government, and how civil servants deal with these, leaving other actors such as the citizens out of consideration. Moreover, to make the research manageable and to ensure that enough respondents participate, it was decided to focus solely on top Dutch civil servants.

Operationalization

This study contains two main variables that consist of several categories. We now briefly discuss these main variables and categories, but these are explained more in detail in Appendix IV. The first main variable concerns 'strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature', which we will refer to as '*strategies*' in the following. This variable is about the possible strategies and actions that could be implemented by a government with a populist signature should it come into being. This main variable is based on the model developed by Bauer and Becker (2020) and consists of five categories. These categories are centralization of structure (CS), centralization of resources (CR), politicization of personnel (PP), politicization of norms (PN); and reduction of responsibilities (RR).

The other main variable concerns 'response of civil servants', which we refer to in the following as '*response*'. This variable is about the possible actions that civil servants might carry out as a response to populist pressures. This main variable is based on the model developed by Schuster et al. (2021), which consists of three categories. These categories concern *voice*, *sabotage*, and *exit*. Based on literature by Hirschman (1970), we have added one more category to the main variable *response*, concerning '*loyal*'. This main variable, therefore, consists of four categories. Furthermore, three control variables are included in this study, namely gender, age, and the number of working years.

Survey

As indicated, quantitative data was collected by sharing a survey, which was set up using the survey maker program Qualtrics. The contact details of the respondents regarding the ninety-four top civil servants who are part of the Dutch General Administrative Service were obtained via the latter's site. In addition to these contact details regarding e-mails, some respondents were also approached via social media including LinkedIn. In addition to the aforementioned advantages of data collection by using a survey, the disadvantages are that respondents can simply choose to not participate or to opt-out during the survey. Furthermore, presumably, data collection from top civil servants is difficult since it is likely that they will not participate quickly due to work pressure or the many requests they receive regarding participation in research or projects. Furthermore, the survey begins with a short introduction explaining the subject and purpose of the survey. The guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity is also mentioned, and respondents must give their consent to participate. If a respondent does not agree, his or her data will not be included in the survey.

The survey consists of 28 items divided into three main parts containing background/control questions, strategies and actions of a populist government, and response of civil servants. The parts *strategies* and *response* each start with a short introduction in which the meaning of difficult concepts is clarified. Additionally, the items do not contain ambiguous terms or jargon to avoid confusion. The first part contains 4 items and concerns background/control questions about gender, age, organization, and working years. The next section consists of 17 items and discusses possible strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature, giving a hypothetical statement. This category of strategies and

actions is linked to the Bauer and Becker (2020) scale. The possible answers to this category's hypothetical statement are based on a 5-point Likert scale with the possible answers 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'neutral', 'agree', and 'strongly agree', associated with scores from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The next section - response from officials - also contains a hypothetical statement and includes 11 items, which are also answered based on the above 5-point Likert scale. This category is linked to the scale used by Schuster et al. (2021) and Hirschman (1970). In the concluding section, the respondents are thanked, and they have the possibility to insert comments or questions. Lastly, the respondents can leave their contact details when interested in receiving the survey.

Analysis techniques

As mentioned, the survey contains a total of 28 items divided into three categories. The quantitative data from the survey was analyzed with SPSS, a statistical computer program. The main variables are 'strategies and actions of government with a populist signature' and 'response of civil servants. These variables are elaborated in the operationalization and Appendix IV. To make sure that the various items can form a single scale, the Cronbach's alpha per scale was tested before the scales were used to measure. The Cronbach's alpha shows whether several items together may form one scale and thus forms a reliability analysis (Salkind & Frey, 2021). The scale of the variable *strategies and actions of government with a populist signature* has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.937, which means that its internal consistency is excellent. The other main variable *response of civil servants* has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.588, which means that its internal consistency is poor. Because this Cronbach's alpha is unfortunately low, it is important that this is taken into account when interpreting the findings.

With the use of SPSS, the relationship and the linear coherence between variables are displayed, concerning the Pearson correlation (Field, 2013). A single regression analysis was also performed. This relates to the coherence and causal relationship between variables, determining the effects of the independent on the dependent variable and predicting the dependent variable from an independent variable (Field, 2013). Furthermore, an independent samples t-test and a one-way ANOVA test are used to identify differences between domains

(Field, 2013). In this research, 'domain' does not relate to a specific policy area, but concerns the various control variables, including *gender*, *age*, and *working years*. The independent samples t-test was performed to identify differences between gender. Moreover, a one-way ANOVA test was used to identify differences between age and working years. Subsequently, the Levene's test is performed when looking at the differences within a domain. Moreover, the findings are rounded to two decimals.

Validity, Reliability and Ethics

As mentioned, the survey starts with a short introduction to the content, what the information obtained is used for, how long it takes to complete, and the goal of the research is made clear. In addition, the meaning of the concepts used is discussed and unclear language is avoided. Respondents can stop filling in the survey any time and are obligated to nothing. Moreover, a pilot test was carried out to test the survey for validity and reliability and to discover any errors. The test survey was first completed by several test respondents and the researcher self. Concerning privacy guidelines (Creswell & Poth, 2017), essential practices regarding ethical conduct and privacy were taken into account. The data obtained is treated according to AVG protocols. The survey dataset, therefore, contains no names, only identification numbers known to the researcher only. Additionally, documents with respondents' names are kept secret and held temporarily on secure servers. After completion of the investigation, names or other information that could lead to identification will not be made public and obtained data will be destroyed.

The study measures the perceptions and expectations of top civil servants based on hypothetical statements, which implies that cautiously plausible conclusions can be drawn, although these are not foolproof. Furthermore, perceptions, reactions, and actions can also depend on factors other than those included in this study. In addition, it may be the case that the results of actual practice differ from the results that come from the presented hypothetical situations. Furthermore, the findings were obtained based on 27 completed surveys. If the findings were derived from the total population of 94 Dutch senior civil servants, the results may have been different. Nevertheless, the sample of 27 respondents, concerning 28.7% of the total population, is enough to state that the findings are relevant and valid. However, there is a possibility that respondents give desirable answers, which could lead to differences

between the obtained results and practice, which could influence the conclusion. Furthermore, the reliability of the findings is high. Repeating the study will yield the same findings, indicating that the data is reproducible and replicable. This is because the targeted target group and thus population are relatively small, and the data is obtained from an acceptable number of this population.

Chapter IV

Findings

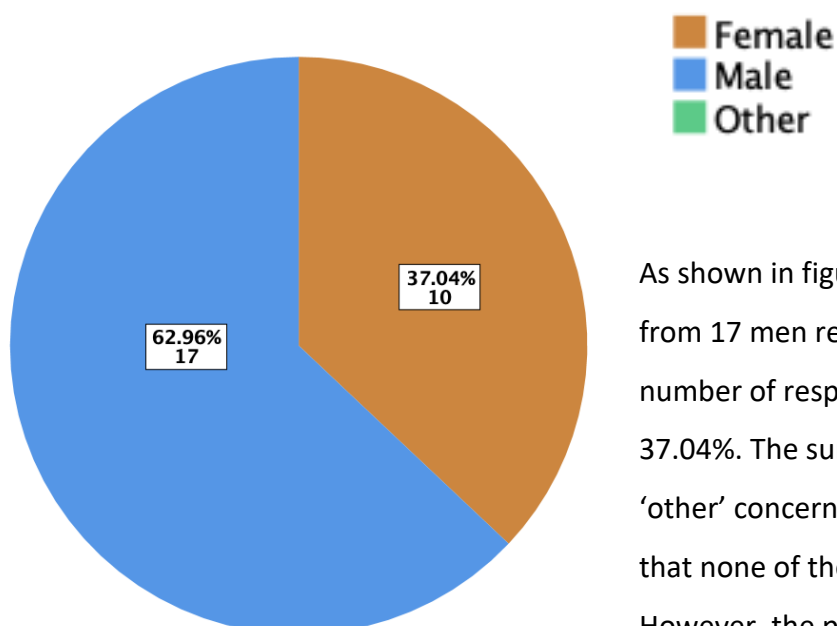
In this chapter the quantitative results are discussed and analyzed. First, the descriptive statistics of the sample and main variables are discussed. Furthermore, the differences in gender, age, and working years regarding the main variables are discussed. Subsequently, the correlations and regression analysis are presented. Regarding testing a significance level of 0.05 is used. This means that if a result is significantly proven, it can be stated with more than 95% certainty that the relationship did not arise from external chance factors (Salkind & Frey, 2021).

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

4.1.1 Control variables

Below are the descriptive statistics regarding the control variables. The control variables in this study concern gender, age, and working years. See below for the various graphical representations and tables that provide insight into the characteristics of the respondents involved in this research.

Figure 1. Statistics Gender



As shown in figure 1, this study obtained data from 17 men representing 62.96% of the total number of respondents and 10 women equal to 37.04%. The survey also included the option 'other' concerning gender, but the analysis shows that none of the respondents chose this option. However, the possibility of a gender other than

'man' and 'woman' is a much discussed and important topic, especially considering the importance of a diverse, inclusive, and open society, which is why we have included and show this option. Furthermore, figure 2 shows to which age category the respondents of this research belong, and figure 3 gives numbers regarding how many years they have been working in their current position.

Figure 2. Statistics Age

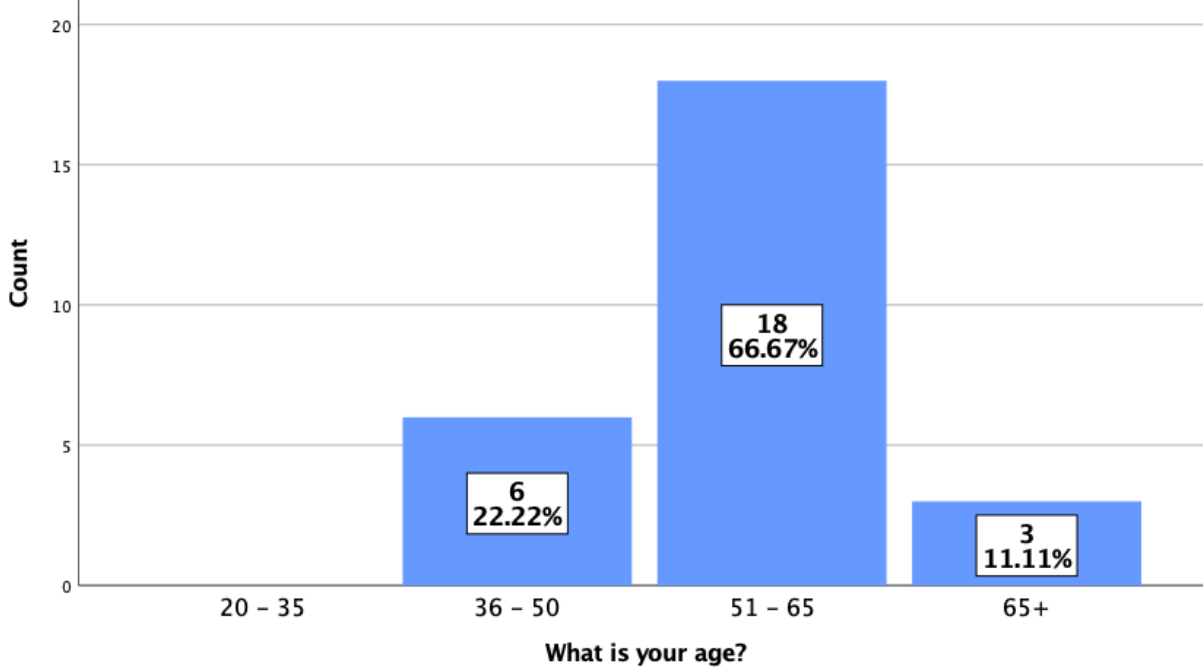
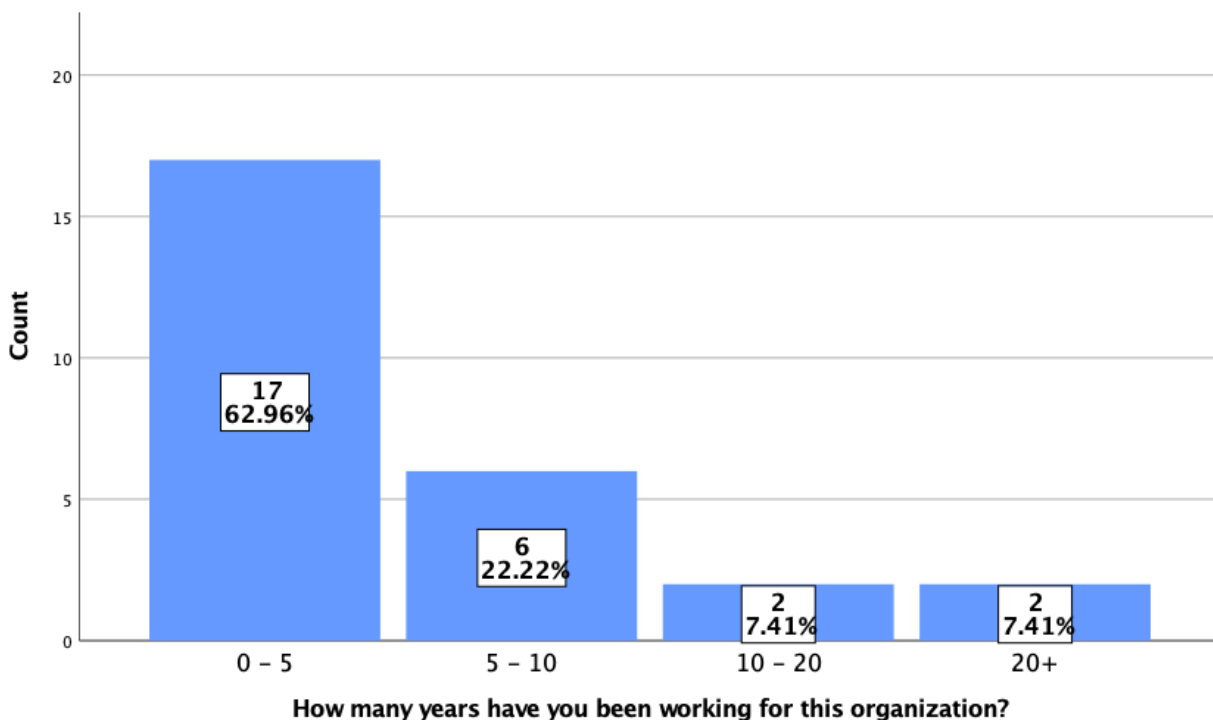


Figure 3. Statistics Working Years



It is somewhat expected that most respondents have an age belonging to the category of 51–65 years. Presumably, before someone takes up a position as a top civil servant, he or she already has some experience in the field. This category includes 18 respondents representing 66.67%, which is exactly two-thirds of the studied population. The category 36-50 years contains six respondents, which amounts to 22.22%. In addition, three respondents are 65+ concerning 11.11% of the sample, and finally, no respondent falls into the 20-35 years category. Furthermore, most respondents have been working for zero to five years in their current position, concerning 17 respondents with is a percentage of 62.96. Moreover, six respondents have been working in their current position for 5 to 10 years, corresponding to 22.22%. The category 10-20 and 20+ regarding years working both comprises two, corresponding to 7.41% of the studied population.

4.1.2 Main Variables

The table below shows the descriptive statistics of the two scales, concerning 'strategies and actions of government with a populist signature' referred to as '*strategies*' and 'response of civil servants' referred to as '*response*'. As mentioned earlier, 27 respondents were included in this study, which indicates n=27.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Main Variables

Scale	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Mode
Strategies and Actions	27	1.41	4.41	3.4379	0.63760	0.407
Response	27	2.18	3.82	3.1549	0.36347	0.132

As mentioned earlier, a low score concerns 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree', which respectively corresponds to a score of 1 and a score of 2. A score of 3 belongs to 'neutral'. Finally, a high score concerns 'agree' and 'strongly agree', which respectively corresponds to a score of 4 and a score of 5.

It is remarkable that the data shows that the mean minimum for *strategies* is lower than for *response*, while the mean maximum for the former is higher than for *response*. This is expressed in the standard deviation (SD), which concerns the mean variability, or the extent to which the answers of the respondents and thus the values deviate from each other. For example, *strategies* has an SD of 0.64 and *response* an SD of 0.36.

Therefore, there is more variation concerning the answers of respondents with regard to *strategies* than *response*. Furthermore, as can be seen in table 2, the average score concerning *strategies* is 3.44. This means that the top civil servants answer the questions regarding the expected *strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature* mostly with 'neutral' or 'agree', with the former appearing slightly more often, although the difference is little. The average score to questions about *response* is 3.15. This also means that the respondents mainly answer with 'neutral' and 'agree'. However, the difference in number between the two here is greater because the mean is significantly closer to 'neutral' than to 'agree'.

4.1.3 Strategies and Actions Government with Populist Signature

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of the main variable 'strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature' and its five different categories. The findings concern the expectations of top civil servants with regard to the likeliness of what strategies and actions a government with a populist signature will adopt.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics Strategies and Actions of a Government with a Populist Signature

Type of strategies and actions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance
Centralization of structure (CS)	27	2.0	4.33	3.4568	0.58579	0.343
Centralization of resources (CR)	27	2.0	4.33	3.4938	0.50103	0.251
Politicization of personnel (PP)	27	1.0	4.75	3.3519	0.86951	0.756
Politicization of norms (PN)	27	1.0	4.75	3.6019	0.79439	0.631
Reduction of responsibility structures and processes (RR)	27	1.33	4.67	3.2593	0.80242	0.644

The table above shows that the average minimum is higher and the average maximum is lower concerning items about *centralization of structure* and *centralization of resources* than items in the other three categories. These relatively close values correspond to the relatively low SD of the two categories. The SD of 'centralization of structure' is 0.59 and 'centralization of resources' represents an even lower SD, namely 0.50. The relatively low SD in these two categories means that the respondents' answers are relatively close to the mean, the spread is less, and their answers are therefore fairly similar here. Moreover, the mean for these two categories is 3.46 (CS) and 3.49 (CR), which means that these categories score highest after the *politicization of norms* (PN) category. Thus, the average answer to the questions about expectations regarding the deployment of strategies and actions of centralization by a government with a populist signature lies between "neutral" and "agree,"

and slightly closer to "neutral." The difference between the two categories of centralization is that the mean is slightly lower for *centralization of structure*, implying that a top civil servant is more likely to expect a government with a populist signature to deploy strategies and actions that are about centralizing resources than those that are about centralizing the structure.

Another notable and interesting finding is that the first item of both the centralization categories is most often answered with 'neutral', while the other items in these categories are most often answered with 'agree'. In other words, these first items score lower, which means that, in contrast to the items that follow in one of the centralization categories, respondents have less the expectation that these strategies and actions regarding these first items will emerge. While these first items essentially mean the same as the items that follow in the category in question. The only difference is that these first items are more compact and less specifically described. A possible explanation for this finding is that the respondents find the first items concerning 'centralization of structure' and 'centralization of resources' too vague and broad so that they answer these questions with 'neutral'. Another notable finding is that the items regarding the two categories of centralization are hardly answered with 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'. Only 12.3% answered the questions about centralization of structure with 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' and for centralization of resources this concerns 9.9%. The respondents, therefore, do not consider it unlikely that a government with a populist signature will use strategies and actions that are aimed at the centralization of either structure or resources. On the other hand, the answers 'agree' or 'strongly agree' are given by 51.9% of the respondents for the category *centralization of structure*. Additionally, this percentage is 53.1% with *centralization of resources*. More than half of respondents, therefore, believe it is likely that a government with a populist signature will adopt strategies and actions that are about centralizing the structure or resources.

Furthermore, unlike the first two categories concerning centralization, the SD for the other three categories is a lot higher, indicating more variety and thus more divergent answers and expectations. The standard deviations of these categories are 0.87 (PP), 0.79 (PN), and 0.80 (RR). The expectations of top civil servants that there will be strategies and actions that deal with *politicization of personnel* are therefore the most diverse, followed by expectations about *reduction of responsibility* and finally *politicization of norms*. The average score concerning the expected strategies and actions regarding the *reduction of*

responsibility structures and processes and the *politicization of personnel* is 3.26 and 3.35 respectively, which means that these scores are both between 'neutral' and 'agree' but closer to 'neutral'. In addition, regarding these two categories, the answers 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' are not given often. This concerns 15.7% of the respondents for *politicization of personnel* and 17.3% of the respondents regarding the *reduction of responsibility* category. In general, therefore, respondents do not find it improbable that a government with a populist signature uses strategies and actions that deal with the *politicization of personnel* and *reduction of responsibility*. Moreover, the answers 'agree' and 'strongly agree' are given by 51.9% (PP) and 40.7% (RR) of the respondents. This means that more than half of the respondents expect that strategies and actions will be used that are about the *politicization of personnel*. Of all five categories, *reduction of responsibility* scores the lowest, which means that of all possible described strategies and actions, respondents are least likely to see these happen when there is a government with a populist signature.

Corresponding to the other categories, the questions about the category *politicization of norms* are answered on average with 'neutral' or 'agree'. However, this category scores the highest average of all categories, representing 3.60, which is the closest average answer to 'agree'. This means that of all possible categories, respondents find it most likely that a government with a populist signature will adopt strategies and actions that are about politicization or norms. The questions in this category are relatively rarely answered with 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree', namely 11.1%. On the other hand, 64.8% of the respondents answered the questions in this category with 'agree' or 'strongly agree'. This means that almost two-thirds of the respondents expect that strategies and actions will be used that deal with politicization of norms when a government with a populist signature will emerge.

In conclusion, it can be stated that in all categories except reduction of responsibility, the absolute majority of the top civil servants surveyed have the expectation that a government with a populist signature will adopt the strategies and actions described. Only in the case of reduction of responsibility slightly most of the respondents did indicate that they are 'neutral' (42%) whereby the answer regarding at least 'agree' concerns 40.7%. In the other four categories, more than half of the top civil servants indicate that they expect a government with a populist signature to adopt the corresponding strategies and actions. Furthermore, they find it most likely that these strategies and actions are about politicization of norms (64.8% at least 'agree'), followed by strategies and actions regarding centralization

of resources (53.1% at least 'agree'), and in a shared third place centralization of structure and politicization of personnel (51.9% at least 'agree').

4.1.4. Strategies and Actions Government with Populist Signature per Control Variable

In this study, the respondents can be classified by gender, age, and working years. The statistics software SPSS is used to look at the differences between the female and male respondents with the help of an 'independent-samples T test'. An ANOVA test was used to find out differences between age and working years. This also applies to the other main variable 'response of civil servants', which will be discussed later.

Gender

Table 4 shows the results regarding strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature per gender. The results were obtained by performing an independent t-test.

Table 4. Strategies and Actions of a Government with a Populistic Signature and Gender

Strategies and actions	Gender	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	SD
Centralization of structure (CS)	Female	10	3.1000	2.00	4.33	0.66759
	Male	17	3.6667	3.00	4.33	0.42492
Centralization of resources (CR)	Female	10	3.2667	2.00	4.00	0.62460
	Male	17	3.6275	3.00	4.33	0.37048
Politicization of personnel (PP)	Female	10	2.7750	1.00	4.00	0.95343
	Male	17	3.6912	2.50	4.75	0.62205
Politicization of norms (PN)	Female	10	3.2500	1.00	4.75	1.09924
	Male	17	3.8088	3.00	4.75	0.47211
Reduction of responsibility (RR)	Female	10	2.7667	1.33	4.67	1.00677
	Male	17	3.5490	3.00	4.33	0.48507

As can be seen in table 4, the mean response in each category is lower for women than for men. The score of the average answer of the female respondents on all items together regarding the variable strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature is 3.03. This means that the female respondents answered on average with 'neutral' regarding the questions about their expectations of the strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature. The average score of men here is 3.68. This score is between 'neutral' and 'agree' with the score being closer to 'agree'. This means, on average, that male respondents find it more likely than female respondents that a government with a populist signature will use the different strategies and actions described.

Furthermore, 29.4% of the female respondents answered 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' regarding all the expected strategies and actions together, 34.4% answered 'agree' or 'strongly agree', and the majority, although this difference is very small, concerning 35.9%, replied with 'neutral'. A big difference can be noted concerning the male respondents who chose 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree': this percentage was only 3.8%. The percentage of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' in this group is also much higher, namely 64%. Finally, 32.2% of the male respondents gave 'neutral' as an answer regarding their expectations of strategies and actions when a government with a populist signature will emerge.

Building on the previous paragraph, for each of the five categories, the male respondents find it more likely than the female respondents that a government with a populist signature will adopt the described strategies and actions. Of the male respondents, an absolute majority answered with at least 'agree' regarding each of the five categories. Concerning female respondents, this absolute majority does not apply to any of the categories. In addition, in each category, except for the *reduction of responsibility*, the female respondents indicate they are more neutral regarding their expectations than male respondents. The female respondents, therefore, have less clear expectations than male respondents regarding whether a government with a populist signature will adopt the described strategies and actions. In addition, the female respondents answered significantly more often with 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' in each of the five categories. Therefore, they find it less likely than male respondents that a government with a populist signature will use the strategies and actions described.

The difference in the answers given is greatest for the items concerning the politicization of personnel. Here the average score of the female respondents is 0.92 below

the average score of male respondents. It is also noteworthy that the standard deviation for each category is higher among the female respondents. The mean standard deviation for all items together is 0.80 for the female respondents and 0.37 for the male respondents. This means that the different answers of the male respondents are closer together, the spread of their answers is less, and their answers are therefore more similar than is the case with the female respondents.

The t-test shows that the categories centralization of resources and politicization of norms respectively have a p-value of 0.070 and 0.077, which means that regarding these categories $p > 0.05$. This means that it is not significant and that the chance of error is too big, which means that we cannot make statements about the differences between gender with regard to these categories. The other categories have p-values of 0.012 (CS), 0.006 (PP), and 0.011 (RR), meaning here $p < 0.05$, meaning that the probability of error is very small, and we can assume that the groups differ here. This also means that we can assume that the male respondents, more than female respondents, expect that a government with a populist signature will adopt strategies and actions regarding centralization of structure, politicization of norms, and reduction of responsibility.

It is notable that concerning their expectation of strategies and actions regarding *centralization of structure* and *politicization of personnel*, most female respondents are neutral and most male respondents answer with at least 'agree'. The answers to *reduction of responsibility* are even more different between male and female respondents. Most male respondents answer here with at least 'agree' which concerns 50.1% of them. Of them, 2% answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'. Conversely, most female respondents gave these last two answers most often, at a rate of 43.3%. They answered the least at least 'agree', which corresponds to 23.3% of the female respondents surveyed.

Age

Table 5 shows the results regarding the expected strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature, taking into account the control variable *age*.

Table 5. Strategies and Actions of a Government with a Populistic Signature and Age

Age	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	SD
36 – 50	6	3.1765	2.35	3.88	0.54296
51 - 65	18	3.4444	1.41	4.41	0.68458
65 +	3	3.9216	3.82	4.00	0.08985
Total	27	3.4379	1.41	4.41	0.63760

As mentioned earlier, the table above shows that only two respondents belong to both the group 10-20 and the group 20+ concerning working years. This means that we cannot assume that there is a normal distribution, which means that we cannot make completely valid statements. Furthermore, the Levene's test shows that the significance value is 0.261. This indicates that it is not significant because $p = 0.261$ so $p > 0.05$. Because it is not significant, the ANOVA is considered. See table 6 below.

Table 6. ANOVA Strategies and Age

Strategies	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	1.113	2	0.556	1.412	0.263
Within groups	9.457	24	0.394		
Total	10.570	26			

The table above shows that $p = 0.263$, so $p > 0.05$. This means that there is no significant difference in the expected strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature based on age. In conclusion, we cannot demonstrate that there is an actual difference between age and the expected strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature.

Working years

Table 7 shows the results regarding strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature, taking into account the variable 'working years'. Presumably, this may yield interesting findings because it is expected that top civil servants who have been employed in the relevant position for a longer period also have more experience and knowledge regarding the influences of populism and responses of civil servants. It is expected that respondents who have been employed for a longer period will be able to better understand the possible adverse effects of populist pressure and have more knowledge than respondents who have been employed for a shorter period. The findings were obtained by performing an ANOVA test.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics Strategies and Actions of a Government with a Populistic Signature and Working Years

Working years	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	SD
0 - 5	17	3.3702	1.41	4.41	0.74167
5 - 10	6	3.5980	3.00	3.94	0.34182
10 - 20	2	3.0000	3.00	3.00	0.00000
20 +	2	3.9706	3.94	4.00	0.04159

The table above shows that only two respondents belong to both the group 10-20 and the group 20+ concerning working years. This means that we cannot assume that there is a normal distribution, which means that we cannot make completely valid statements. Furthermore, the Levene's test shows that the significance value is 0.093. This indicates that it is not significant because $p = 0.093$ so $p > 0.05$. The variances are therefore approximately equal. Because it is not significant, the ANOVA is considered. See the table below.

Table 8. ANOVA Strategies and Working Years

Strategies	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	1.183	3	0.394	0.966	0.426

Within groups	9.387	23	0.408		
Total	10.570	26			

Table 8 shows that $p = 0.426$, so $p > 0.05$. This means that there is no significant difference in the expected strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature based on the number of working years. In conclusion, we cannot demonstrate that there is an actual difference between the number of working years and the expectation that a government with a populist signature will adopt the described strategies and actions.

4.1.5 Response of Civil Servants

Table 9 shows the descriptive statistics of the main variable 'response of civil servants' and its four categories. The results concern the expectations of top civil servants with regard to what civil servants will do when dealing with a government with a populist signature.

Table 9. Response of Civil Servants

Types of response	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance
Voice	27	2.00	5.00	3.4815	0.75296	0.567
Sabotage	27	1.40	4.00	3.0815	0.57448	0.330
Exit	27	2.00	4.50	3.3889	0.64051	0.410
Loyal	27	1.00	4.00	2.7778	0.80064	0.641

The table above shows that, on average, the respondents score the highest on *voice*. Concerning this category, the average answer lies between 'neutral' and 'agree', as is the case with the other categories. However, for *voice*, compared to the other categories, the average answer is closer to 'agree'. Moreover, for *voice*, the score of the average minimum is 2.00 ('disagree'), which corresponds to the average minimum of *exit*, and which is the highest average minimum of the four categories. The second-lowest mean minimum is *sabotage* with 1.40, which is between 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' but closer to the former. *Loyal* scores the lowest average minimum, regarding 1.00 ('strongly disagree'). Furthermore, the average maxima of the different categories from high to low is *voice* with 5.00 ('strongly agree'), *exit* with 4.50 (between 'agree' and 'strongly agree') and for *sabotage* and *loyal* this is both 4.00 ('agree').

After *voice*, the second-highest average score is *exit* with 3.39. The average answer here, as also is the case with *voice*, lies between 'neutral' and 'agree', but the average answer in this category lies closer to 'neutral' than *voice*. *Sabotage* has the third-highest average with 3.08 which almost corresponds to 'neutral'. Finally, *loyal* has the lowest average score, of 2.78. The average score here lies between 'disagree' and 'neutral', but closer to 'neutral'. However, this category has the highest SD, namely 0.80, which means that the answers in this category vary the most, the spread is greater, and the answers are

therefore less similar than in the other categories. Moreover, the respondents' different answers are most similar concerning the category *sabotage*, which has an SD of 0.57. This is followed by *exit* with an SD of 0.64 and finally *voice* with an SD of 0.75.

It can be deduced from the analysis that 9.3% answered with 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' to the question of whether they expect civil servants to engage in *voice*. Additionally, 44.4% answered 'agree' or 'strongly agree'. Most respondents, although this difference is small, state that they are neutral about whether they expect civil servants to engage in *voice*. This percentage contains 46.3%. In general, it can therefore be stated that top civil servants do not find it plausible that civil servants will not engage in *voice*, although the findings show that they also do not expect that civil servants necessarily will engage in *voice*: the majority does not have a clear expectation of whether civil servants will engage in *voice*. Furthermore, most of the top civil servants also have no clear expectations about whether civil servants will *sabotage*. More than half of the respondents answer in this category with 'neutral', concerning 54.8%. Additionally, 26.7% of them answered with 'agree' or 'strongly agree' and 18.5% with 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'. Top civil servants, therefore, find it more likely that someone will sabotage than not, although most respondents are not sure whether civil servants will engage in *sabotage* at all.

Furthermore, notable in the *exit* category is that most respondents expect civil servants to resign their job: 46.3% give 'agree' or 'strongly agree' as an answer. Slightly less answered with 'neutral' containing 40.7% and a minority of 13% answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'. Top civil servants, therefore, expect that civil servants most likely will *exit* their job when there is a government with a populist signature, however, almost the same percentage has no expectations regarding whether civil servants will *exit*. On the other hand, the respondents show that their expectation is low regarding whether civil servants will not resign. As opposed to *exit*, top civil servants generally expect that civil servants will not be *loyal* to a government with a populist signature: 40.7% of the respondents expect that civil servants will not remain loyal and answered with 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'. Additionally, 33.3% stated to be 'neutral' and 25.9% answered with 'agree' or 'strongly agree' to the question whether they expect civil servant to be loyal.

To conclude, of all categories, the *exit* category scores highest on 'agree' and 'strongly agree'. In addition, regarding *exit*, these answers out of all possible five answers are the most given. Concerning *voice* and *sabotage*, most respondents give 'neutral' as an answer,

and regarding the *loyal* category most answer with 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'. Furthermore, in general, most respondents, in the case of *voice* and *sabotage*, have no clear expectations of civil servants. However, they find it more likely that civil servants will engage in voice and sabotage than that they will not. When it comes to *exit* their general expectation is that civil servants will resign their job. Additionally, the respondents consider it least likely, more than claiming to be neutral, that civil servants will not *exit*. Regarding the *loyal* category the respondents expect that civil servants will not remain loyal when dealing with a government with a populist signature that pursues anti-pluralistic and anti-elite policies. Concerning this category, they consider it least likely that civil servants will remain loyal.

In conclusion, it can be stated that, in all categories together, the surveyed top civil servants answered the most with 'neutral' (46.8%), followed by at least 'agree' (33.3%), and finally with 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' (19.9%). Of all categories, only *exit* scores highest on at least 'agree' (46.3%). Regarding *voice* and *sabotage*, the answer 'neutral' is the most given. However, regarding *voice*, the difference in 'neutral' (46.3%) with at least 'agree' (44.4%) is not big, where that contrary is the case with *sabotage*: 54.8% (neutral) and 26.7% (at least 'agree'). Finally, *loyal* scores highest on 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' (40.7%), followed by neutral (33.3%) and at least 'agree' (25.9%). Dutch top civil servants, therefore, find it most likely that civil servants will engage in *exit*, followed by *voice*, *sabotage*, and finally *loyal*. This is different than the findings of the study by Schuster et al. (2021), where civil servants state that they are most likely to engage in *voice*, followed by *exit*, and finally *sabotage*.

4.1.6 Response of Civil Servants per Control Variable

Gender

Table 10 shows the results regarding response of civil servants per gender. The results were obtained by performing an independent t-test.

Table 10. Response of Civil Servants and Gender

Response of civil servants	Gender	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	SD
Voice	Female	10	3.4000	2.00	4.00	0.69921
	Male	17	3.5294	2.50	5.00	0.79982
Sabotage	Female	10	2.8200	1.40	4.00	0.70206
	Male	17	3.2353	2.40	4.00	0.43724
Exit	Female	10	3.4000	3.00	4.00	0.45947
	Male	17	3.3824	2.00	4.50	0.74013
Loyal	Female	10	2.8500	1.50	4.00	0.74722
	Male	17	2.7353	1.00	4.00	0.84996

The table above shows that the average score of *voice* and *sabotage* is higher among the male respondents than among the female respondents. Regarding *voice*, the average for both men and women is between 'neutral' and 'agree', and closer to 'agree' for men and closer to 'neutral' for women. The variation of answers is greater concerning men with an associated SD of 0.80 compared to an SD of 0.70. Concerning *sabotage*, the average answers of the female respondents are between 'disagree' and 'neutral', and closer to the latter. For the male respondents, here the average score lies between 'neutral' and 'agree', whereby closer to the former. The variety of answers in this category is greater among women with an SD of 0.70 than among men, with an SD of 0.44. It is notable that concerning the categories *exit* and *loyal*, in contrast to *voice* and *sabotage*, the average scores are higher for the female respondents than for the male respondents. With regard to *exit*, the average score for both groups are between 'neutral' and 'agree', but closer to 'neutral'. The variety of answers here is greater among men than among women, with an SD of 0.74 versus 0.46. Finally, the average score of both male and female respondents for the category *loyal* lies

between 'disagree' and 'neutral', but closer to 'neutral'. The variety of answers here is greater for male than for female respondents, with an SD of 0.85 versus 0.75. This means that the answers of the male respondents are more diverse than those of the female respondents.

Furthermore, regarding the four categories together, it is notable that there are no big differences between female and male respondents regarding their expectations of the response of civil servants. Concerning female respondents, 23.6% answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree', whereas 17.6% of the male respondents gave these answers. Moreover, 28.2% of the female and 36.4% of the male respondents answered 'agree' or 'strongly agree'. In addition, 44.5% of female and 46% of male respondents said they were "neutral" in their expectations regarding the response from civil servants. Thus, in general, both male and female respondents are mostly neutral regarding their expectations of a response from civil servants. In addition, both groups expect that civil servants will have a response rather than not respond.

In addition, the findings indicate that the male more than the female respondents have a higher expectation that civil servants will engage in *voice*, *sabotage*, and *exit*. The percentages regarding the answers including at least 'agree' are for the male and female respondents respectively 47.1% against 40% (*voice*), 31.8% against 18%, and 50% against 40% (*exit*). The share that answers with at least 'agree' with regard to the *loyal* category is actually higher among female than among male respondents, namely 30% compared to 23.5%. This means that the female respondents find it more likely than male respondents that civil servants remain loyal. However, the independent samples t-test shows that for each category a significance value of > 0.05 applies. This means for *voice*, *sabotage*, *exit* and *loyal* that $p > 0.05$, meaning that it is not significant and that the chance of error is too big, which means that we cannot make statements about the differences between gender with regard to these different categories.

Age

Table 11 shows the results regarding the expected response of civil servants, taking into account the variable *age*.

Table 11. Descriptive Statistics Response Civil Servants and Age

Age	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	SD
36 – 50	6	3.1515	2.64	3.64	0.32862
51 - 65	18	3.0960	2.18	3.82	0.37349
65 +	3	3.5152	3.36	3.73	0.18924
Total	27	3.1549	2.18	3.82	0.36347

As mentioned earlier, the table above shows that only two respondents belong to both the group 10-20 and the group 20+ concerning working years. This means that we cannot assume that there is a normal distribution, which means that we cannot make completely valid statements. Furthermore, the Levene's test shows that the significance value is 0.675. This indicates that it is not significant because $p = 0.675$, so $p > 0.05$. Because it is not significant, the ANOVA is considered. See the table below.

Table 12. ANOVA Response and Age

Response	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	0.452	2	0.226	1.818	0.184
Within groups	2.983	24	0.124		
Total	3.435	26			

Table 12 shows that $p = 0.184$, so $p > 0.05$. This means that there is no significant difference in the expected response of civil servants based on age. In conclusion, we cannot demonstrate that there is an actual difference between age and the expectation regarding response of civil servants.

Working years

Table 13 shows the results regarding the expected response of civil servants, taking into account the variable 'working years'.

Table 13. Descriptive Statistics Response Civil Servants and Working Years

Working years	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	SD
0 - 5	17	3.1230	2.18	3.64	0.37059
5 - 10	6	3.2727	3.00	3.82	0.32012
10 - 20	2	2.8182	2.64	3.00	0.25713
20 +	2	3.4091	3.09	3.73	0.44998

As mentioned earlier, the table above shows that only two respondents belong to both the group 10-20 and the group 20+ concerning working years. This means that we cannot assume that there is a normal distribution, which means that we cannot make completely valid statements. Furthermore, the Levene's test shows that the significance value is 0.912. This indicates that it is not significant because $p = 0.912$ so $p > 0.05$. Because it is not significant, the ANOVA is considered. See the table below.

Table 14. ANOVA Response and Working Years

Response	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	0.457	3	0.152	1.175	0.341
Within groups	2.978	23	0.129		
Total	3.435	26			

Table 14 shows that $p = 0.341$, so $p > 0.05$. This means that there is no significant difference in the expected response of civil servants based on the number of working years. In conclusion, we cannot demonstrate that there is an actual difference between the number of working years and the expectation regarding response of civil servants.

4.3 Pearson Correlation

A correlation says something about the linear relationship and coherence between two variables. A correlation of -1 means it is a perfect predictor concerning a negative relationship. A correlation of 1 means it is a perfect predictor concerning a positive relationship. See below for the correlations between the variables 'strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature' and 'response of civil servants'.

Table 15. Pearson Correlation *Strategies and Response*

Independent variable	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Strategies and Actions	3.4379	0.63760	-	-
Dependent variable				
2. Response Civil Servants	3.1549	0.36347	0.539** (p = 0.004)	-

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table above shows that the correlation between *strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature* and *response of civil servants* is 0.539, or $R = 0.539$. This means that there is a moderate correlation between the two variables. The test shows that the correlation is significant with a p-value of 0.004, so $p < 0.05$. The correlation result is noted as: $R=0.539$; $p = 0.004$.

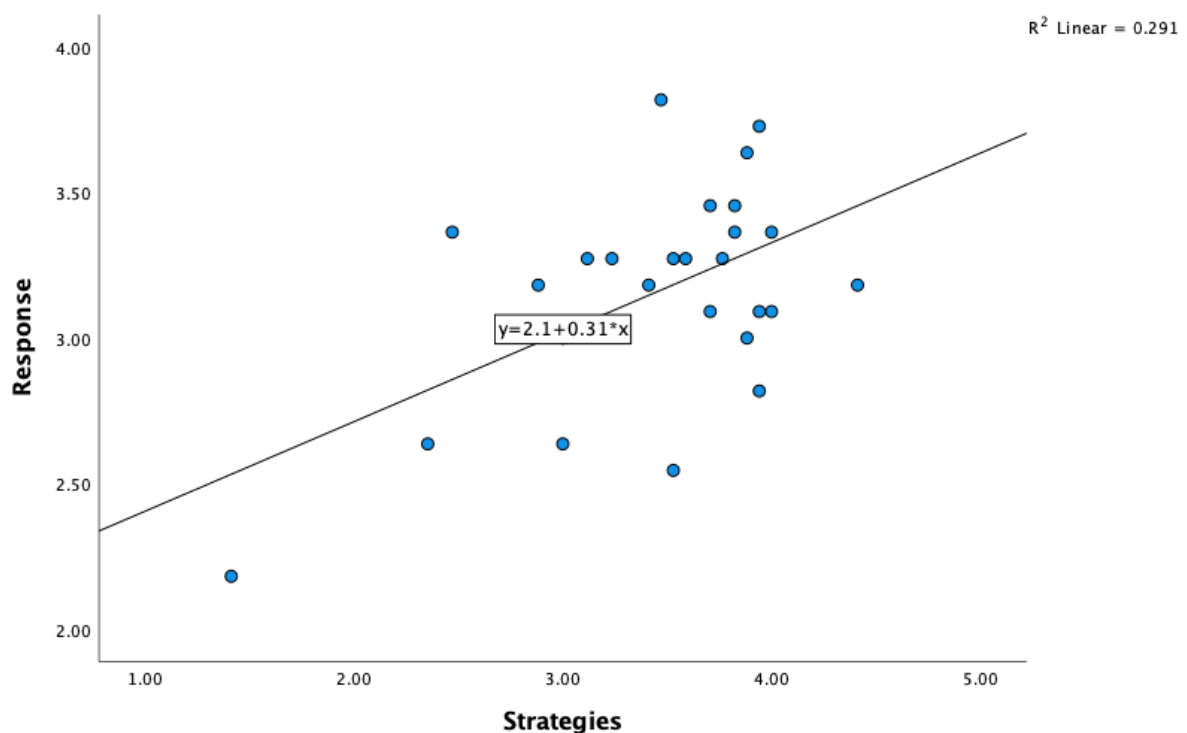
4.4 Regression

Now that we know that there is a correlation between the independent variable concerning *strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature* and the dependent variable concerning *response of civil servants*, it is useful to execute a regression that can provide more insights. A regression finds out the relationship and the causal relationship between the variables. In addition, it explains the effect of the independent variable (*strategies*) on the dependent variable (*response*).

Table 16. Coefficients Strategies and Response

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	2.098	0.336		6.253	<0.001
Strategies	0.307	0.096	0.539	3.201	0.004

Graph 1. Scatterplot Strategies and Response



As mentioned, the correlation coefficient (R) is 0.539. There is thus a positive and moderate correlation between *strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature* and *response of civil servants*. The scatter plot shows that R squared is 0.291, which means that 29.1% of the spread of the variable *response* is explained by the linear relationship with the variable *strategies*. In other words, 29.1% of the variation of the variable response is explained by the given linear model. Moreover, the analysis also shows that $p = 0.004$, so it is significant because $p < 0.05$. In addition, in table 16 it can be seen when looking at the

unstandardized regression coefficient that the estimated average effect of an increase of one regarding *strategies* leads to an increase of 0.307 in *response*.

In addition, the regression shows that the probability of observing a value of 10.248 or higher with a degree of freedom of 1 is smaller than 0.004. The regression model thus contains significant explanatory variables. It can therefore be concluded that strategies explain a significant part of the spread of response. Moreover, the unstandardized regression coefficient was tested with a t-test to determine its significance. The probability of getting a value of 3.201 or greater is less than 0.004, so the effect can be considered significant because $p < 0.05$. It can therefore be concluded that strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature increase the response of civil servants.

Chapter V

5.1 Conclusion

Although populism and its elements have been present in societies for some time, in recent years there has been a strong growth of populist governments and governments in which the public interest and the safeguarding of ethical values are given little priority, possibly leading to democratic backsliding. Moreover, a lot of countries and thus governments have increasingly been confronted with right-wing populist influences and pressures. These may have strong adverse effects on diverse, open, and inclusive societies. The civil service has an important role as a safe guarder to limit or prevent the adverse consequences that right-wing populism entails. Top civil servants, as the most important actors within the democratic constitutional state, therefore, have an extremely important function in anticipating and dealing with the adverse influences of right-wing populism. This research has therefore sought to gain insights into the expectations and perceptions of top civil servants regarding whether and which strategies and actions a government with a populist signature will adopt when it comes to power. Additionally, it outlines the expectations and perceptions of top civil servants regarding whether and what response civil servants will have in reaction.

Therefore, this study aims to answer the main research question, concerning: *'What is the impact of populist pressures from politics on the perceptions and expectations of top civil servants?'*

First, the findings show that the absolute majority of top civil servants expect that a government with a populist signature will adopt strategies and actions regarding the *centralization of both structure and resources* and regarding the *politicization of both norms and personnel*. Furthermore, they find it most likely that such a government will adopt strategies and actions that deal with *politicization of norms*. Thus, top civil servants mainly expect a change in bureaucratic norms and administrative culture, an increase in the importance of loyalty to the government, and suppression of dissent. Subsequently, they expect strategies and actions regarding the *centralization of resources*, such as reallocation of resources and administrative powers, especially in favor of civil servants who are consonant with the government. Of all strategies and actions, top civil servants find it the third most likely that strategies and actions will be used regarding both *centralization of structure* and *politicization of personnel*. The former is about the removal or installation of organizational units and the allocation of autonomy to a lesser or greater extent, and the latter is about the increasing importance of loyalty at the expense of expertise concerning personnel and selection and promotion criteria. In contrast to the four previously mentioned strategies and actions, a minority of the top civil servants find it plausible that a government with a populist signature will adopt strategies and actions regarding the *reduction of responsibility*. Here top civil servants indicate that they are mostly neutral. Of all five categories, the top civil servants, therefore, find it the least likely that a government will adopt strategies and actions concerning the *reduction of responsibility*. Which is about the exclusion of external actors and reconfiguration of power(s).

Additionally, the findings show that female top civil servants find it less likely than male top civil servants that a government with a populist signature will adopt the strategies and actions mentioned. In contrast to the male top civil servants, they indicate that they are mainly neutral. Only concerning the plausibility of politicization of norms, they indicate that they agree more than stating to be neutral. Moreover, for each of the five categories regarding the strategies and actions, the absolute majority of the male top civil servants expect that a government with a populist signature will adopt these. Conversely, this is a minority for all five categories concerning strategies and actions regarding the

female top civil servants. Finally, the findings show that it can be assumed that male top civil servants have a greater expectation that a government with a populist signature will adopt strategies or actions regarding centralization of structure, politicization of norms, and reduction of responsibility. Furthermore, the findings do not demonstrate that there is a difference between both age and working years and the expectation that a government with a populist signature will adopt the described strategies and actions.

Second, of all categories regarding response together, the findings show that the majority of top civil servants are neutral regarding their expectation of whether civil servants will respond. Of all four categories, top civil servants find it most likely that civil servants will exit. Additionally, only regarding exit do most top civil servants expect, more than claiming to be neutral, that civil servants will exit. Therefore, of all possible responses, they consider it the most likely that civil servants will resign or will try to be transferred. Concerning the categories voice and sabotage, most top civil servants state that they are neutral regarding their expectations of whether civil servants will have a response. Top civil servants, therefore, have no clear expectation of whether civil servants will speak out to their superior(s) or colleagues. However, out of all four categories, top civil servants find it second most likely that civil servants will engage in voice. Moreover, top civil servants also have no clear expectation of whether civil servants will be disobedient, try to undermine or hinder the implementation, or will try to inform external actors. Here, the absolute majority state that they are neutral regarding their expectation of whether civil servants will engage in sabotage. Regarding all four categories of response, top civil servants find it the third most likely that civil servants will engage in sabotage, although this concerns merely slightly more than a quarter of the respondents. Moreover, although most top civil servants are neutral regarding their expectation of civil servants to engage in voice or sabotage, they find it more likely than unlikely that civil servants will engage. Furthermore, most top civil servants expect that civil servants will not be loyal, although this does not concern an absolute majority. Most top civil servants, therefore, expect that civil servants will not be loyal and will not carry out the policy as given.

Additionally, the findings show that, in general, the male top civil servants find it more likely than the female top civil servants that civil servants will have one of the possible responses, although these differences are small. This also applies to the engagement of civil servants in specific voice, exit, and sabotage. However, in general, both male and female top

civil servants are mostly neutral regarding their expectations of whether civil servants will respond. In addition, both groups expect that civil servants will have a response rather than not respond. The difference is greatest concerning the category of sabotage: male civil servants find it more likely that civil servants will sabotage. On the other hand, female top civil servants find it more likely that civil servants will not remain loyal. However, the differences in this study regarding gender and response are not indisputable, so we cannot draw firm conclusions. Furthermore, the findings do not demonstrate a difference between both age and working years and the expectation that civil servants will have the described responses.

Finally, it can be concluded that there is a positive and moderate correlation between the strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature and the response of civil servants. Additionally, strategies explain a significant part of the spread of response. Furthermore, when top civil servants have higher expectations that a government with a populist signature will adopt the described strategies and actions, then the expectations that civil servants will have a response are also higher.

5.2 Limitations

This study also has limitations that must be taken into account. First, this research is a case study, which means that the data collected cannot necessarily be generalized to the wider population. The findings are not representative of all Dutch civil servants, they are just expectations. However, this research focuses on top civil servants' perceptions of how civil servants will respond when a government with a populist signature emerges. The surveyed questions are hypothetical because the study aims to measure the perceptions of top government officials regarding what strategies and actions they expect from a government with a populist signature and what expectations they have concerning how civil servants will respond to these strategies and actions. Thus, although the response of Dutch civil servants, in general, is mentioned and included in this research, it is about the perceptions and expectations of top civil servants regarding the strategies and actions of a government with a populist signature and the subsequent response of Dutch civil servants.

The number of respondents can also be seen as a limitation from a certain point of view. This research includes data from 27 respondents, while the entire population of Dutch top civil servants concerns 94. This means that 28.7% of the population has been questioned and the other 67 top civil servants have not been heard. This means that the small sample does not represent the population ideally, so there is a possibility that the reliability of the study is insufficient. The reason why the entire population was not tested is that not all top civil servants were willing to participate. However, from another point of view, it can be argued that the sample is representative and therefore reliable. The respondents questioned are a completely random selection from the total population. In addition, this research serves a very great social and scientific interest because democracies are increasingly confronted with populism, which can pose an enormous challenge and threat to our constitutional state and society. Additionally, it is extremely important to have insight into how top civil servants, as the most important actors, view these developments. Although this study deals with one of the fastest-growing themes in the field, there is still little research on this theme in connection with the consequences for the civil service, civil servants, and specifically, top civil servants. In other words, even though the sample is relatively small, data from top civil servants on this subject is still very scarce, so a small sample can also provide very valuable and useful insights.

Moreover, this research only concerns the perceptions and expectations of top civil servants. In practice, however, the reality may be different. For example, if a government with a populist signature would come to power in practice, (top) civil servants may act differently than the findings of this study suggest. Moreover, the Cronbach's alpha of the scale of one of the main variables concerning *response of civil servants* is low, which may have a negative influence on the reliability. Nevertheless, we still assume that the findings are relevant and not far from reality. Furthermore, top civil servants may have different views on what is or is not ethical, or what they see as unprincipled and what not. Additionally, top civil servants may consciously interact with unprincipled principals because it benefits them individually or enriches themselves, leading to them answering the questions in a certain way, regardless of whether it matches their actual expectations. Furthermore, respondents' answers may be biased because they have a certain mood at the time of filling in the survey, which may affect the choice of their answers. Finally, it is not possible to cover all aspects of the topics discussed. This research is based on the negative

consequences of populism and democratic backsliding, while some believe that these developments also have positive consequences. In addition, the causes, consequences, or perceptions of these concepts can be formulated differently.

5.3 Further research

First, research into the developments and influence of populism in relation to the civil service and political-administrative relations is scarce, but nevertheless very relevant and important. Therefore, follow-up research into this is very important because it can provide new and important insights. In addition, it is important to delve deeper into the findings by, for example, conducting interviews with top civil servants. With this qualitative method, the opinions, points of view, perceptions, and expectations of top civil servants can be observed even better. Additionally, more extensive information can be gathered, and it is easier to go deeper into given answers.

Furthermore, follow-up research can be carried out using the same framework but with a different context. In this way, the findings of the different contexts can be compared. In addition, it is relevant to apply the framework of this study to a larger sample. The findings may differ when the data of more respondents are taken into account. Building on this, the framework of this research can be applied to civil servants instead of top civil servants. The differences can provide interesting insights. Additionally, not only top civil servants, but also civil servants are important actors in the civil service and within the democratic institutional state. If the population concerns civil servants, the probability of a larger sample is also more likely, which can increase the reliability and validity. Finally, follow-up research may also involve other potentially relevant concepts that may influence the expectations of civil servants. These could be concepts such as Public Service Motivation (PSM), political preference, or policy domain.

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Appendix

Appendix I - Survey

1. Introduction

Dear participant,

This survey has been compiled to gain insight into the relationship between politicians and civil servants against the background of (the rise of) populism in the Netherlands. The research is carried out as part of the master's in International and European Governance at Leiden University.

Populism is a much researched and well-known phenomenon. Populism has a negative connotation, but in practice, it can also mean that politicians have succeeded in mobilizing citizens who had turned away from politics. In this research, however, we understand populism to be the negative variant: populism as a movement that pits 'the people' against 'the elite', is negative towards immigrants, and is prepared to undermine the principles of the rule of law. Everywhere in the world we see populist individuals or parties of the latter type coming to power, such as in Poland, Brazil, and the United States. Based on hypothetical situations, this research attempts to gain insight into perceptions and expectations of top civil servants regarding strategies of a government with a populist signature and the response of civil servants to these pressures.

With the help of this survey, we want to collect data on the perceptions of populism among top civil servants in the Netherlands. All persons belonging to the Top Management Group of the General Administrative Service have been contacted for this purpose. We are curious about your perceptions about how you think politicians of a populist signature will act towards the civil service and how civil servants will react when a populist party comes into government in the Netherlands.

All information obtained will be treated confidentially and the anonymity of participants is guaranteed. Information is only viewed by thesis supervisor Prof. dr. dr. Kutsal Yesilkagit (a.k.yesilkagit@fgga.leidenuniv.nl) and the master's student. Personal data that can lead to the identification of respondents will not be requested. The data obtained from this survey will be stored on SurfDrive, a password-protected storage location of the joint knowledge institutions in the Netherlands.

By submitting the survey after completing it, you agree to the applicable privacy regulations, and you consent to the processing of your answers in the survey. It will take a maximum of 5 minutes to complete this questionnaire. If you are interested, have questions, or would like to receive the thesis, please leave your email address at the end.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

- I give permission to participate in this research and hereby declare that I am 18 years or older, I work as a civil servant, and I am aware of the purpose of this research and the fact that my data will be processed anonymously.

2. Control variables

- What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Different

- What is your age?

- 20-35
- 36-50
- 51-65
- 65+

- What organization do you work for?
- How many years have you been working for this organization?

All the following questions are answered on a 5-point Likert scale ◊ ‘Strongly disagree’, ‘disagree’, ‘neutral’, ‘agree’, ‘strongly agree’.

3. Strategies and actions of populist politicians

Public administration can be seen as a pluralist institution and politicians with populist ideals and preferences tend to take an anti-pluralist and an anti-elite position, whereby they try to change the functioning and operations of the civil service and its civil servants to make them (partly) in line with their populist ideals and preferences. These different ways of changing the bureaucracy can be seen as populist pressures. These different ways translate into different strategies and actions that a politician can use. Fill in your answers based on the hypothetical statement below:

Suppose a government with a populist signature comes to power, then I expect the following strategies and actions from the government towards the civil service:

1. Centralization of the structure of the public administration
2. Reducing or removing autonomy and powers of existing organizational units that are not in line with the government's spearheads
3. Setting up new organizational units that are (more) in line with populist ideals, and are assigned power and/or powers
4. Centralization of resources

5. Reallocation of resources and administrative powers through budget and staff allocations while keeping the formal set-up intact
6. Actors who are more aligned with the government are given more resources and powers at the expense of those who are not
7. Politicization of personnel
8. Replacing existing officials with officials based on personal loyalty to the party or party leadership
9. Replacing existing officials with officials based on an ideological match with the new government
10. Expertise becomes less important as a selection and promotion criterion under a populist government
11. Politicization of norms
12. Changes regarding bureaucratic norms and administrative culture
13. Comments on the government or policy are seen as disobedient and dissenting opinions are suppressed
14. Loyalty to the government is more important than loyalty to the institution or constitutions
15. Reduction of (good) responsibility structures and processes
16. Decisions are made whereby legislative bodies and/or representative forms of consultation (external forces) are (partially) sidelined
17. Reconfiguration of power that gives authority over the bureaucracy to the executive and silences external pressures

4. Response of Civil Servants to Populistic Pressures

The aforementioned (populist) strategies and actions of politicians may have consequences on the activities of the civil servant who implements the policy. The latter has to do with changing work due to populist pressures and these pressures can trigger certain attitudes, behaviors, and actions of officials. Fill in your answers based on the hypothetical statement below:

Suppose a government with a populist signature comes to power, then I would expect civil servants to:

(Voice)

18. Speak out against the policy in question to superior(s) not to implement the policy
19. Speak out against the policy in question to colleagues not to implement the policy

(Sabotage)

20. In private, try to disobey and not follow the policy
21. In private, try to convince colleagues not to implement the policy
22. In private, try to find ways to undermine the implementation of the policy within the agency

23. In private, try to inform outside groups or the media about the potential harm the policy in question may have to get their support
24. Try to hinder the policy by implementing it differently

(Exit)

25. Leave their current position because they do not want to contribute to the implementation of the policy in question
26. Try to arrange for them to be transferred

(Loyal)

27. Implement the policy as indicated by the superior(s) without defense since that is the right way to do it
28. Implement the policy despite grudgingly and conflicting ideas, because as a civil servant he or she is required to do so

5. Closing Page

- **Please click on the arrow --> to process the answers. Thank you!**
- Do you have any remarks?
- If you are interested, have questions, or would like to receive the thesis, please leave your email address here: ...

Appendix II – E-mail (Dutch)

- *Onderwerp: Onderzoek populisme topambtenaren (max. 5 min) – Onderwerp tweede mail: Follow-up e-mail: onderzoek populisme topambtenaren (max. 5 min)*

Geachte heer/mevrouw,

Dit bericht betreft een follow-up e-mail omtrent een eerder verstuurd e-mail aangaande een verzoek tot het invullen van een enquête. Deze follow-up wordt verstuurd naar elke mogelijke respondent doordat door de waarborging van de vertrouwelijkheid en anonimiteit niet achterhaald kan worden wie de enquête al heeft ingevuld. Indien u de enquête al heeft ingevuld, beschouw deze mail dan als niet verstuurd. Mijn excuses hiervoor. (Deze alinea is enkel toegevoegd in de follow-up e-mail. **(Toegevoegd in tweede follow-up e-mail)**).

Allereerst wil ik u mededelen dat ik uw mail heb verkregen via de site van de Algemene Bestuursdienst. Daarnaast stel ik mijzelf graag aan u voor. Mijn naam is Corneel den Toonder, masterstudent Public Administration International and European Governance aan

Leiden Universiteit. Momenteel ben ik bezig met het laatste onderdeel van de opleiding, betreffende de masterscriptie.

Deze mail heeft dan ook betrekking op deze masterscriptie en op een verzoek tot het invullen van een enquête door topambtenaren. Het scriptieonderzoek is gericht op de relatie tussen politici en ambtenaren en op de ambtelijke percepties en reacties op populisme. Dit onderzoek is niet alleen interessant voor mij, maar ook voor de deelnemers en beleid in het algemeen. Het kan namelijk inzichten verschaffen aangaande de beschreven relatie en eventuele kansen en knelpunten blootleggen.

Het onderzoek zelf dient een groot maatschappelijk en wetenschappelijk belang. Het maatschappelijk belang uit zich doordat momenteel wereldwijd verschillende gevestigde liberale democratieën geconfronteerd worden met de opkomst van populistische politieke stromingen en partijen. Deze ontwikkeling is een uitdaging voor de stabiliteit en duurzaamheid van de rechtsstaat en vormt een bedreiging voor de diverse, inclusieve en open samenleving. Het is van belang te weten hoe een van de belangrijkste actoren binnen de democratische rechtsstaat, te weten topambtenaren, tegen deze ontwikkelingen aankijken. Ook kennen wij in Nederland populistische stromingen waarvoor dit onderzoek relevant is. We hebben zelfs kortstondig een regering gekend waarin een populistische partij (LPF, 2002-2003) was vertegenwoordigd.

In de tweede plaats dient het onderzoek een wetenschappelijk belang. Internationaal en nationaal zijn recent binnen de bestuurskunde wetenschappelijke onderzoeken gestart naar de opkomst van het populisme en de impact daarvan op politiek-ambtelijke verhoudingen. Het thema is een van de snelst groeiende thema's in het vakgebied. Een van de centrale vragen luidt hoe en op welke wijze (top)ambtenaren in democratische systemen reageren op de komst van populistische politieke partijen. Voor een recente publicatie die mijn scriptiebegeleider en tevens professor Yesilkagit heeft opgezet en uitgevoerd zie deze [link](#). Mijn onderzoek gaat over dit onderwerp. De vragen zijn hypothetisch gesteld omdat het doel van het onderzoek is de percepties van topambtenaren over dit thema te meten.

Het invullen van de enquête duurt **maximaal 5 minuten**, waarbij de anonimiteit van deelnemers is gewaarborgd. Daarnaast is het mogelijk om een e-mailadres achter te laten om het uiteindelijke onderzoek te ontvangen. Indien u wilt meewerken waardeer ik dat enorm. Zie de link hieronder voor de enquête.

https://leidenuniv.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ePvTFdtlv1TNSAe

[Enquête | Populisme | Topambtenaren](#)

Enquête | Populisme | Topambtenaren
leidenuniv.eu.qualtrics.com



Bij vragen of opmerkingen kunt u mijn scriptiebegeleider of mij altijd contacteren. Ik hoor graag van u en alvast bedankt!

Met vriendelijke groet,

Corneel den Toonder
0636164092

Prof. dr. A.K. Yesilkagit
a.k.yesilkagit@fgga.leidenuniv.nl
0613056107

Appendix III – E-mail (English)

- Topic first e-mail: Research populism top civil servants (max. 5 min) – Topic second e-mail: Follow-up e-mail: research populism top civil servants (max. 5 min).

Dear Sir / Madam,

This message is a follow-up e-mail to a previously sent e-mail regarding a request to complete a survey. This follow-up is sent to every possible respondent because the confidentiality and anonymity guarantee does not make it possible to find out who has already completed the survey. If you have already completed the survey, consider this email as not sent. My apologies. (This paragraph was only added in the follow-up email. (Added in the second follow-up email).

First of all, I would like to inform you that I received your e-mail from the site of the General Administrative Service. In addition, I would like to introduce myself. My name is Corneel den Toonder, a master's student of Public Administration International and European Governance at Leiden University. I am currently working on the last part of the training, concerning the master's thesis.

This e-mail, therefore, relates to this master's thesis and to a request for filling in a survey by top civil servants. The thesis research focuses on the political-administration relationship and the perceptions and expectations of top civil servants regarding the strategies of a government with a populist signature and the response of civil servants. This research is not only interesting for me but also for the participants and policy in general. It can provide insights into the relationship described and reveal opportunities and bottlenecks.

The research itself serves a great social and scientific interest. The social importance is manifested by the fact that various established liberal democracies worldwide are currently confronted with the rise of populist political movements and parties. This development challenges the stability and sustainability of the rule of law and threatens a diverse, inclusive, and open society. It is important to know how one of the most important actors within the democratic constitutional state, i.e. senior civil servants, view these developments. We are also aware of populist movements in the Netherlands for which this research is relevant. We even briefly had a government in which a populist party (LPF, 2002-2003) was represented.

Secondly, the research serves a scientific interest. Internationally and nationally, scientific studies have recently been launched within public administration into the rise of populism and its impact on political-administrative relations. The theme is one of the fastest-growing themes in the field. One of the central questions is how and in what way officials in democratic systems react to the arrival of populist political parties. For a recent publication that my thesis supervisor and professor Yesilkagit has set up and executed, see this link. My study is related to this topic. The questions were asked hypothetically because the study aims to measure the perceptions and expectations of senior officials.

Completing the survey takes a maximum of 5 minutes, while the anonymity of participants is guaranteed. In addition, it is possible to leave an e-mail address to receive the final survey. I would greatly appreciate it if you would like to participate. See the link below for the survey.

https://leidenuniv.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ePvTFdtlv1TNSAe

[Enquête | Populisme | Topambtenaren](https://leidenuniv.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ePvTFdtlv1TNSAe)

Enquête | Populisme | Topambtenaren
leidenuniv.eu.qualtrics.com

If you have any questions or comments, you can always contact my thesis supervisor or me. I look forward to hearing from you and thank you in advance!

Sincerely,

Corneel den Toonder
0636164092

Prof. dr. Dr A.K. Yesilkagit
a.k.yesilkagit@fgga.leidenuniv.nl
0613056107

Appendix IV – Operationalization

Strategies and Actions of a Government with a Populistic Signature (Based on scale by Bauer & Becker, 2020 & Peters & Pierre, 2019)		
Category	Items	Elaboration
Centralization of the structure of the public administration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Centralization of the structure of the public administration 2. Reducing or removing autonomy and powers from existing organizational units that are not in line with the government's spearheads 3. Setting up new organizational units that are (more) in line with populist ideals, and are assigned power and/or powers 	<p>The government controls and concentrates processes, powers, and activities in one place under its single authority</p> <p>The government reduces or removes autonomy or powers from actors or factors other than those who are part of the government</p> <p>The government creates new actors or factors that are prepared to pursue the wishes and leadership of the populist government, for instance, aimed at reducing pluralism. These established units are assigned important powers, at the expense of others</p>
Centralization of resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Centralization of resources 5. Reallocation of resources and administrative powers through budget and staff 	<p>The government controls and concentrates resources of units or actors that are part of it in one place under its single authority and then distributes these resources to the different administrative authorities according to its preferences.</p> <p>Certain actors and factors, for instance, those are aligned with the government wishes, receive more and important resources like budget or other assets, while</p>

	<p>allocations while keeping the formal set-up intact</p> <p>6. Actors who are more aligned with the government are given more resources and powers at the expense of those who are not</p>	<p>the formal set-up and organization's structure, such as embedded organizational processes or the working relationship between actors remain the same. Allocation of resources through more informal ways</p> <p>Actors who act in accordance with the wishes of the government and thereby strive for ideals about, for example, anti-pluralism and anti-elite are allocated more resources and powers, at the expense of actors who do not act in accordance with the wishes of the government</p>
<p>Politicization of personnel</p>	<p>7. Politicization of personnel</p> <p>8. Replacing existing officials with officials based on personal loyalty to the party or party leadership</p> <p>9. Replacing civil servants with civil servants based on an ideological match with the new government</p> <p>10. Expertise becomes less important as selection and promotion criteria under the populist government</p>	<p>The government tries to influence, control, and manage the working staff of the civil service</p> <p>Civil servants who are not loyal to the wishes and objectives of the government are replaced by civil servants to whom this does apply. The latter will at all times carry out what the government asks them to</p> <p>Civil servants who have different preferences and ideals than the government are replaced with civil servants who have the same preferences and ideals as the government, and who, for instance, support policies and activities aimed at anti-pluralism and anti-elite.</p>

<p>Politicization of norms</p>	<p>11. Politicization of norms</p> <p>12. Changes in bureaucratic norms and administrative culture</p> <p>13. Comments on the government or policy are seen as disobedient and dissenting opinions are suppressed</p> <p>14. Loyalty to the government is more important than loyalty to the institution or constitutions</p>	<p>The government tries to influence, control, and manage the norms of the civil service</p> <p>In influencing, controlling, and managing the norms of the civil service, the government changes the norms and ways of doing things in a way that they are aligned with the government's preferences and wishes. For instance, changes with regard to assumptions, behavior, interactions.</p> <p>Comments or criticism of policy or the way in which work according to the government should be carried out will not be tolerated. These dissents are inadmissible and opinions other than the government and other forms of opposition are not heard and suppressed.</p> <p>The government considers civil servants' loyalty to them and their new and charismatic leadership most important, while loyalty to and following regulations regarding other institutions and constitutions is not important</p>
<p>Reduction of (good) responsibility structures and processes</p>	<p>15. Reduction of (good) responsibility structures and processes</p> <p>16. Decisions are made whereby legislative bodies and/or</p>	<p>The government increasingly excludes actors or factors other than themselves that are part of responsibility structures and processes, so that the government increases its power and decreases the chance and consequences of criticism on its functioning and responsibilities</p> <p>The government increasingly excludes actors or factors other than themselves, such as</p>

	<p>representative forms of consultation (external forces) are (partially) sidelined</p> <p>17. Reconfiguration of power that gives authority over the bureaucracy to the executive and silences external pressures</p>	<p>legislative bodies (opposition parties) or other representative consultancy organizations, so that the government pursues its anti-pluralistic preferences and wishes and increases its power.</p> <p>By removing responsibility structures and processes and external actors and factors, there is a reconfiguration regarding powers and authority, whereby the authority over the civil service rests entirely with the executives and where there is no involvement of external actors and factors</p>
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Response of Civil Servants (Based on scale by Schuster et al., 2021 & Hirschman, 1970)		
Category	Items	
Voice	<p>18. Speak out against the policy in question to their superior(s) not to implement the policy</p> <p>19. Speaking out against the policy in question to colleagues not to implement the policy</p>	<p>Civil servants will speak out to their superior(s) against the strategies, actions, and policies of the government which has a populist signature to not implement the given policies</p> <p>Civil servants will speak out to their colleagues to not implement the given policies of the government with a populist signature because the implementation of these will do harm</p>
	<p>20. In private, trying to disobey and not follow the policy</p>	<p>Civil servants secretly will try to not comply with the given policies of the government which has a populist signature, and they will</p>

<p>Sabotage</p>	<p>21. In private, trying to convince colleagues not to implement the policy</p>	<p>decide on their own regarding their functioning and activities</p> <p>Civil servants secretly will try to speak out to their colleagues in trying to convince them to not implement the given policies of the government which has a populist signature</p>
	<p>22. In private, trying to find ways to undermine the implementation of the policy within the agency</p>	<p>Civil servants secretly will try to undermine the implementation of the given policies by the government which has a populist signature. In doing so, the civil servants will try to erode the base or foundation of the policies to weaken these and to weaken the position and objectives of the government</p>
	<p>23. In private, trying to inform outside groups or the media about the potential harm the policy may have to get their support</p>	<p>Civil servants secretly will try to reach out to external actors and inform them that the policies given by the government with a populist signature will do harm. The civil servants will want to try to convince and get the support of these external actors, such as the public, the media, or other relevant organizations, which is aimed at stopping the governments objectives.</p>
	<p>24. Trying to hinder this policy by implementing it differently</p>	<p>Civil servants will try to not execute the handbook and policies that the government with a populist signature has given, but instead will implement the policies different to obstruct the actual objectives of the given policies</p>
	<p>25. Leave their current position because they do not want to contribute to</p>	<p>Civil servants will resign their function because they do not want to be part of the execution of</p>

<p>Exit</p>	<p>the implementation of the policy in question</p> <p>26. Try to arrange for them to be transferred</p>	<p>policies that are set up by a government with a populist signature</p> <p>Civil servants will try to get another job inside the organization/unit they are already part of</p>
<p>Loyal</p>	<p>27. Implement the policy as indicated by the superior(s) without defense since that is the right way to do it</p> <p>28. Implement the policy despite grudgingly and conflicting ideas, because as a civil servant he or she is required to do so</p>	<p>Civil servants will implement the policies that are given by a government with a populist signature since that is the way it is supposed to be done and they do not necessarily oppose to the given policies</p> <p>Civil servants are against the policies given by a government with a populist signature but nevertheless implement these as prescribed because that is the way it is supposed to be done</p>