

# **Representation in Dutch Identity Politics: Exploring the Strategic Role of Political Parties**

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Word Count: 13135 words

Thesis  
Submitted to the Department of Political and Social Science  
Pompeu Fabra University  
In partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in  
European Politics and Society: Václav Havel Joint Master Programme  
14<sup>th</sup> of June 2023

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## **1. Abstract**

In recent years, Dutch identity politics has become a topic of increasing interest and scrutiny, as various political parties seek to represent and promote the interests of different identity groups. In this context, understanding the strategical role of political parties in shaping representation is crucial. This thesis explores how the strategy of Dutch political parties influence their ability to shape representation in identity politics. Using qualitative methods, including process-tracing and the analyses of relevant documents and media, this thesis examines the strategies employed by political parties in order to achieve political representation. Specifically, this thesis analyses the ways in which political parties impact the effectiveness of representation efforts, and identify key factors that contribute to successful political representation. The findings suggest that the approach of the political party is a critical factor in shaping representation in Dutch identity politics, and that an identity-based approach is necessary in order to effectively advocate for marginalised identity groups. This thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics of Dutch identity politics and provides insights for policymakers, activists and scholars seeking to engage with the issue.

Keywords: Identity Politics, Netherlands, DENK, BIJ1, FVD, Representative Democracy, Left-emancipatory and Right-nationalist, Majoritarianism, Consensus.

## **2. Introduction**

A concept like identity politics has become an increasingly prominent factor in the political debate. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, the increasingly contentious discussion surrounding ethnic minorities had become an integral component of a broader debate concerning Dutch national identity (Oostindie, 2012, p. 116). This mostly occurred when pointing out political groups like the ‘Black Lives Matter’ or ‘LGBTQ+’ movements that emphasised themselves based on identity attributes, such as ethnicity or gender. Moreover, identity politics also occurs where identity plays a significant role in societal discussions. Even though this is a relatively recent political idea, it is somewhat inconceivable to think about politics without considering the present political discussion.

Francis Fukuyama, a political scientist from the United States, released a book called ‘Identity’ in 2018. Fukuyama argued that identity politics nowadays has become increasingly prominent in the public discourse in Western societies since the 1960s (Fukuyama, 2018, p. 15). Examples of such are the second feminist movement, the LGBT movement or activists

who campaigned against prejudice and socioeconomic inequalities based on race and religion. The subject that continues to be hotly debated in society and that can be traced to its origin as a concept, can be explained as a ‘demand for recognition of one’s identity’ (Fukuyama, 2018, p. 23). As a result, identity politics has developed into a concept that offers a wealth of information for understanding contemporary events. Therefore, the desire for acceptance can be used to explain the rise of identity politics. These motives, according to Fukuyama, gave rise to what might be called ‘the politics of resentment’ (Fukuyama, 2018, p. 5). Identity-based groups are increasingly concerned that their identity, such as their race, religion or gender, is not respected, or rather, that they are not adequately represented by the politicians of the country in which they reside.

Despite the fact that Fukuyama’s contributions in the field of identity provided a solid account of Western political history since the 1960s, the phrase ‘identity politics’ remains ill-defined, nor is its historical genesis clearly constructed (Moya et al., 2002, p. 205). Identity politics is largely used as a descriptive phrase to refer to political processes that seem to have something to do with identity or a particular cultural struggle but are unrelated to specific qualities in other political science literature. The contentious discussion over the last several decades over whether identity politics has a positive or negative impact on Western democracies is even more apparent. There are many different normative viewpoints held by both supporters as well as opponents of a political evolution that political science does not yet fully comprehend. American sociologist and prominent contributor to political literature on identity Mary Bernstein noted that there are too many proponents and opponents of identity politics, yet simultaneously too few experts (Bernstein, 2005, p. 61). As a result, it is unclear what precisely identity politics entails. Therefore, this thesis will avoid weighing in on the argument over whether identity politics has either positive or negative effects. Instead, it will focus on addressing the research question: How does the strategy of Dutch political parties influence their ability to shape representation in identity politics? By exploring the strategies employed by Dutch political parties and their impact on representation in identity politics, this thesis aims to provide valuable insights into the potential characteristics of identity politics. The study will examine three distinct Dutch political parties that are actively engaged in identity politics, classifying them as a political organisation that enforces identity politics or prioritise identity-based profiling.

The hypothesis posits that Dutch political parties who prioritise identity-based profiling as part of their strategy will have a higher ability to shape representation in identity politics compared to parties that do not prioritise identity. This hypothesis suggests that when parties

actively prioritise and address the concerns and aspirations of identity-based groups, they are more likely to garner support and effectively represent the interests of these groups in the political arena. Parties that adopt specific policies and rhetoric that resonate with the identities and concerns of these groups are likely to mobilise their support and ultimately shape representation in identity politics.

### **3. Research Methodology & Design**

This academic research adopts a comprehensive and multi-method approach to research the influence of Dutch political parties' strategies on their ability to shape representation in identity politics within the Netherlands. The research question, 'How does the strategy of Dutch political parties influence their ability to shape representation in identity politics?', sets the foundation for a valuable contribution to the ongoing political discourse surrounding identity politics. This thesis employs a process-tracing method to explore the strategic role of political parties in shaping representation and aims to identify the causal mechanisms underlying successful political representation. By tracing the sequence of processes through which parties formulate and implement their strategies, one can identify specific actions, decisions and interactions that shape the ability to address identity-based concerns and ultimately affect representation outcomes. The research findings presented herein predominantly rely on data collected from 2021 onwards, chosen to capture the latest Dutch parliamentary election. However, to provide a comprehensive analysis, additional data from both earlier and later dates will be incorporated, allowing for a broader temporal perspective and a more nuanced understanding of the representation in Dutch identity politics.

This thesis predominantly relies on primary source materials, considering that identity politics is fundamentally a political phenomenon. A significant portion of the primary sources are derived from Parliamentary debate, which provides a comprehensive record of the oral discourse delivered by Members of Parliament and officials during parliamentary sessions. The thesis focuses on the analysis of various sources, including maiden speeches, fragments from committee meetings and extracts of general considerations. Maiden speeches, in particular, offer insights into the motivations of Members of Parliament for assuming their representative positions and outline their intended course of action while in office. Additionally, political interviews and websites employed by political parties serve as additional means of communication and provide manifestations of the objectives and desired approaches of politicians and political parties. These sources collectively contribute to understanding the strategies and perspectives political parties have in relation to identity politics. To enhance the

qualitative analysis, this thesis also incorporates parliamentary surveys, which have been widely employed in prior political-scientific research to explore the perspectives of Members of Parliament on representation. In this thesis, these surveys primarily serve as corroborative perceptions and attitudes of political representatives towards identity politics and their strategies for representation.

The thesis is structured into multiple sections to ensure a thorough and comprehensive analysis. The first section examines the theoretical framework from both an international and Dutch perspective, providing a contextualisation of the processes of political representation. This section aims to identify the relevant political entities, personalities and parties that possess the necessary qualifications or exhibit a proclivity towards identity politics within the Netherlands. It offers a concise account of the notion of identity politics and examines the distinct attributes that serve as a foundation for the subsequent analysis. The second part of the thesis presents three selected cases for in-depth analysis, each pertaining to a present-day political party in the Netherlands that falls under the category of identity politics or asserts its implementation. The analysis of these cases aims to identify the causal mechanisms linking the approach of political parties to successful representation. By examining the strategies employed by these parties and their outcomes, this research seeks to develop a nuanced understanding of the factors contributing to successful representation. The final part of the thesis summarises the findings, emphasizing the ongoing political discourse surrounding identity politics. It sheds light on the distinctive features of the phenomenon and underscores the dynamic nature of political representation. Ultimately this leads to an answer of the research question. Furthermore, it also highlights any new knowledge generated from the research, provides several recommendations and considers the implications for future advocacy efforts.

## **4. Theoretical Framework**

### **4.1 Political Representation**

The delineation of what constitutes identity politics is essentially contingent upon issues of political representation. The qualification of identity politics relies on a specific viewpoint regarding the suitable representation of individuals and the manner in which political leaders should represent them. The intricate nature of the political representation of ethnicized, gendered or otherwise categorised identities arises from the complex interplay between the construction, shaping and legitimisation of identities, which are influenced by conflicting demands from diverse collectivities with distinct definitions (Ray, 2003, p. 854-855). The literature on political representation and representative democracy has provided diverse

responses to these inquiries. Particularly the work of Hanna Pitkin provides the definition of representation with several implications. She notes that the representative is neither the emissary of his constituents nor a national leader without a local connection: it is the interaction between local representatives that enables the formation of a national interest (Pitkin, 2013, p. 37). Moreover, the classical representation concept of Edmund Burke has been a prominent theme in this field of literature for a considerable period of time. Burke's concept of political representation reveals the intricate nature and logical consistency of his ideology, which diverges from current interpretations of identity politics within society (Chiantera-Stutte, 2015, p. 115). Burke posited that the British parliament ought not to be swayed by concerns of diverse electoral constituencies and their respective electorates. Burke argued as follows, 'the parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest resulting from the general reason of the whole' (Burke, 1774, ch. 13). The portrayal of Burke as such, has become a prevalent occurrence on the European continent. The Dutch constitution, mandates that representatives are obligated to represent the entirety of the Dutch population and are required to cast their votes without any undue influence (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007, p. 13-14). The underlying concept is that the mechanism of political representation serves to validate the practise of representative democracy. Yet, representation can make a large society relatively democratically governable, but it will undoubtedly be less democratic than a small polity can be, since that is a matter of judgement (Pitkin & Rosenblum, 2015, p. 5). Which is why in the scenario where representation originates from the lower echelons of society, the preferences of the general population are considered exogenous (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2011, p. 511). In such a case, the system of representative democracy can be characterised as populist. The aforementioned representation therefore suggests that the general public's preferences may be influenced by their interactions with politicians, leading to the characterisation of representative democracy as elitist. The issue of incongruity between the elite and the masses towards political representation has therefore significant implications for the legitimacy of representative democracy.

Since the 1990s, there has been mounting pressure on the legitimacy of representative democracy. Western societies experienced a democratic transformation that saw changes in the interaction between actors of the policy and the public (Kriesi, 2013, p. 610-611). A process that resulted in new participatory demands of the public as new collective actors. Political science discourse emphasises a crisis of representative democracy and of mainstream political parties, which are increasingly incapable of mobilising voters and structuring political conflict (Martinelli, 2016, p. 17). Recent trends indicate diminishing public engagement with formal

electoral politics in both national and local elections, while trust in political figures and parties is diminishing (Kyroglou & Henn, 2017, p. 1). Concurrently, non-governmental organisations are gaining more influence and there is a growing call for improved representation of marginalised communities. It is therefore no surprise that the concept of representation has a problematic relationship with democracy, with which it is often thoughtlessly equated (Pitkin, 2004, p. 355). The issue of a disconnect between politics and citizens, as well as inadequate representation of social minority groups, is a recurring concern in academic investigations of the efficacy of representative democracy, including those conducted within the Netherlands. The Dutch government, under Cabinet Rutte II, tasked the State Committee on Parliamentary Systems in 2018 with providing recommendations on enhancing the long-term durability of the Dutch parliamentary system (Meijer, 2017). After careful consideration, the Committee arrived at the conclusion that the significant societal and technological advancements of the past century have rendered the regulations and customs of our parliamentary system insufficient and unsuitable (2018, p. 15-18). While the Dutch electoral system of proportional representation may be deemed successful, it falls short of adequately representing a significant portion of the population.

The purported crisis of legitimacy in representative democracy has initiated scholarly discourse on the subject of political representation. Scholars from various disciplines have deliberated on ways to enhance the efficacy of the political representation system in meeting the ever-growing demands of the population. Michael Saward's 'The Representative Claim' is considered to be one of the most significant studies in this particular field. The author posits that the conventional electoral viewpoint towards political representation is no longer tenable and should be reevaluated. Saward argued that political representation should be seen as a dynamic process of claim-making instead of a static fact of electoral politics, which in turn can help governments to make sense of significant changes in the daily politics of representation (Saward, 2010, p. 3). Saward's analysis of political representation encompasses a wider perspective, wherein various interest groups are represented not solely by the government, but also by representatives of civil society and non-governmental organisations. However, revisited empirical research showed that explicit claims of representation are rather rare in relation to real-world cases (Guasti & Geissel, 2019, p. 108). Consequently, conceptual frameworks that can be applied to the systematic empirical analysis of real-world cases are required. Despite the pioneering work of Saward, the majority of political science research continues to adopt an electoral lens when examining political representation.



Andeweg and Thomassen contend that the Dutch constitution is exemplary for showcasing political representation, as evidenced by their surveys into the perspectives of Members of Parliament in the Netherlands. The surveys revealed that Members of Parliament interpret the scope of constitutional articles differently. The provisions of Article 50 of the Dutch Constitution, states that Members of Parliament ‘shall represent the entire people of the Netherlands’ (2018, p. 13). Furthermore, according to Article 67.3, ‘the members shall not be bound by a mandate or instructions when casting their votes’ (2018, p. 15). The aforementioned vision is in alignment with the conventional notion of representation envisioned by Burke. Yet, the emergence of party politics has resulted in a notable trend where surveys showed that around six out of ten members of the Parliament perceive themselves as representatives of their party’s electorate rather than as representatives of the entire Dutch population (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007, p. 15). While Article 50 and Article 67.3 have remained largely unaltered, it is important to note that the perspectives of Members of Parliament regarding their roles are susceptible to modification. After the introduction of universal suffrage, representing the entire Dutch population no longer entailed that each individual Member of Parliament promotes the general interests of the entire Dutch population at their own discretion, thereby disregarding the specific interests of its own constituency. Instead, the meaning of Article 50 becomes increasingly aligned with the ideals of party politics, in which the representative acts in the interests of its constituencies (Disch, 2012, p. 603). From this vantage point, individual Members of Parliament and their party members advocate for the ideals and interests of their electors. The determination of which individuals or groups should be represented by whom and the manner in which such representation should occur is thus inherently mutable. Therefore, the diverse views on representation do not indicate that any government is representative, instead to qualify as representative, political parties must institutionalise its responsiveness to the people (Pitkin, 2013, p. 40). Thus, parties that engage in identity politics position the identity of another group in relation to one’s own group, also known as the ‘social identity theory’ (Liu & Hilton, 2005, p. 545). From this standpoint, the aforementioned perspective proves useful in delineating identity politics or, at the very least, in reassessing particular trends.

#### **4.2 International Landscape**

The concept of identity politics gained recognition in the Anglo-Saxon sphere during the 1960s with the United States serving as a significant incubator for its development. During the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a multitude of political movements surfaced that centred around allegations of unjust treatment towards particular societal factions. Whilst established

unions have lost their ability to mobilise and influence policy, new forms of identity politics have emerged to combat exploitation (Yashar, 2007, p. 165). The concept of identity politics was formulated by political scientists as a means of elucidating the emergence of contemporary social movements. In the United States, the term identity politics is widely used to describe phenomena as diverse as multiculturalism, the women's movement, civil rights, lesbian and gay movements as well as separatist movements (Bernstein, 2005, p. 47). Identity politics can also be defined as a political logic whose objective is to combat alienation through the creation, expression and affirmation of collective identities (Armstrong, 2002, p. 57). Armstrong juxtaposes the rationale of identity politics with that of interest group politics, which aims to modify laws and policies, and redistributive politics, which aims to revolutionise the economic and political frameworks of a given society. In contrast, postmodernists arrived at the opposite conclusion and defined identity politics as reformist political activism as opposed to transformative cultural activism (Bernstein, 2005, p. 66). Generally speaking, however, identity politics is the tendency for individuals of a particular religion, ethnic group or social background, to form exclusive political alliances, departing from traditional broad-based politics. The objective of contemporary social movements is to attain a position of significance within society, whereby they are accorded equitable treatment and are entitled to commensurate rights. The political landscape in the United States encompasses a wide range of movements that fall under the umbrella of identity politics. Both the Republican and Democratic parties have utilised social movements associated with identity politics to varying degrees. These movements have been perceived as a threat to individual liberty by some on the Right, while others on the Left view them as a potential challenge to the progressive coalition and victimisation (Alcoff et al., 2007, p. 157). Consequently, identity politics has been adopted by political actors across the ideological spectrum, reflecting its influence on American politics.

Scholarly work in political science has predominantly focused on movements striving for cultural recognition and social justice within Western democratic societies. Yet, identity politics works differently in either a majoritarian or consensus democracy. Lijphart argues that the majoritarian-consensus contrast arises from the literal definition of democracy: government by the people or, in representative democracy, government by the representatives of the people (Lijphart, 1999, p. 1). The American democratic system operates on a majoritarian model, commonly known as the Westminster model. Unlike proportional representation systems, which allows for the formation of distinct identity-based parties, the majoritarian model in the United States does not inherently generate new political parties based on identity (Colomer, 2005, p. 4). One key characteristic of the majoritarian model is its emphasis on winner-takes-

all outcomes. In the United States, this manifests through a two-party system dominated by the Republicans and Democrats. The winner of an election, be it at the presidential, congressional or local level, is typically determined by a plurality of votes in a specific geographic constituency. As a result, smaller parties that do not command broad-based support across constituencies often struggle to gain significant representation. In contrast, countries with proportional representation systems, such as the Netherlands, are characterised by inclusiveness, compromise and bargaining, and therefore offer a more favourable environment for the emergence of identity-based parties (Lijphart, 1999, p. 3). Proportional representation ensures that the composition of the legislative body reflects the overall distribution of votes received by political parties (Moral, et al., 2015, p. 56). This system enables smaller parties to secure representation even if they do not achieve a majority of votes in any particular constituency. Consequently, it is more feasible for identity-based parties to form and advocate for the interests of specific demographic groups or communities. The Republican party, traditionally associated with conservative ideologies, has leveraged identity politics to appeal to a predominantly white, Christian and socially conservative base (Noel, 2016, p. 182). This includes emphasizing issues such as national identity, cultural heritage and traditional values. By framing political debates around these identity-based themes, the Republican Party aims to mobilise its base and attract voters who identify with these values. On the other hand, the Democratic Party has embraced a more diverse coalition, incorporating various identity groups such as racial and ethnic minorities, women, LGBTQ+ individuals and marginalised communities (Noel, 2016, p. 185). The party's platform includes policies and initiatives aimed at addressing systematic inequalities, promoting social justice and advancing civil rights. While the Democratic Party's approach to identity politics may be more inclusive and progressive, it still operates within the constraints of the majoritarian model. By concentrating power in the hands of the majority, the Westminster model of democracy sets up a government-versus-opposition pattern that is competitive and adversarial (Lijphart, 1999, p. 18). However, this does not imply that identity politics is absent from American politics. Rather, it operates within the framework of the existing two-party system, with parties incorporating elements of identity politics to mobilise their constituencies and advance their policy agendas.

In recent decades, the topic of identity politics has sparked a contentious debate, featuring various normative perspectives on the societal effects of such politics. Notably, the analyses frequently incorporate a normative assessment regarding the definition of identity politics. Eric Hobsbawm posits that there exists a consensus within the field of political science that politics and identity are intrinsically intertwined (Hobsbawm, 1996, p. 41). Fundamentally,

the crux of the matter pertains to cohorts of individuals who collectively hold a particular social status and subsequently seek a political resolution to their predicaments. Throughout history, identity has frequently been employed as a political tool to rally various groups of individuals. The divergence of identity politics from traditional political forms lies in its assertion of identity as an impartial perspective, a fixed and unchanging classification (Collins, 2009, p. 265-266). Hobsbawm argued that political movements that engage in identity politics tend to define themselves exclusively based on a single identity (Hobsbawm, 1996, p. 43). The adaptation of an essentialist perspective towards identity can result in the phenomenon of ‘othering,’ which in turn can lead to polarisation. This appears to be a paradoxical situation, given that the emerging social movements purport to advocate for the eradication of social inequality and prejudice. Being both generalising and reductionistic, processes of othering can contribute to the formation of what has been termed institutional identities, that is: the identification of a specific characteristic signifying a deviation from the perception of normality (Atgones & Storm, 2022, p. 478). The issue at hand refers to the formulation and implementation of identity politics. In practice, identity politics in the United States often manifests differently depending on the ideological alignment. Yet, the dynamic nature of identities is often overlooked, as they are socially constructed and subject to constant evolution, rendering them devoid of objective and absolute categorization. This critique has resulted in a pessimistic perception of identity politics, particularly within the realm of public discourse. Therefore, the adaptation of identity politics has been in conflict with prevalent conceptions of social justice. Race, gender and other identity categories are frequently regarded as remnants of bias or dominance, that is, as inherently negative frameworks through which social power works to exclude or marginalise those who are distinct (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242). According to this view, the goal of liberation should be to strip such categories of any social significance. This is why the notion of identity politics has predominantly been employed as a negative construct for social movements that presuppose a collectively disadvantaged status. Nonetheless, it is implicit in certain feminist and racial liberation movements that social power in defining difference does not need to be a source of domination, but rather of social empowerment and reconstruction (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242). Ultimately, this would result in an imperative for politicians to increase their awareness of marginalised groups.

Upon closer examination, certain defining features of identity politics consistently emerge in its usage. Primarily, the subject matter pertains to political movements that prioritise the concerns of a specific demographic. The political trajectory and stances adopted by an organisation, or, to a lesser degree, an ideal or vision, are influenced by a shared identity trait.

Political entities may attempt to employ singular identities for tactical political objectives, but the mere invocation of a common identity trait does not necessarily engender political unity and mobilisation (Minow, 1996, p. 654). The shared traits among individuals do not necessarily contribute to the greater good, but rather stem from the acknowledgement and validation of their shared abilities to effect change. This is the reason why political parties that are centred around identity strive to cultivate political influence by bolstering the capacity for self-governance and collaborative governance through diverse communication and interaction initiatives, and networks (Bang, 2009, p. 132). Political movements that are associated with identity politics tend to portray the groups they represent in a particular manner. In spite of the fact that proponents of identity politics hold the view that identities should not be fixed, it is still the case that in practise, this often takes place (Hekman, 1999, p. 15). A differentiation may exist between identity politics that align with left-emancipatory and right-nationalist ideologies. The directional motivations of identity-based political parties are contingent upon various identifications, thereby rendering the identities that influence the interpretation of a particular political information subject to the issue in question (Boyer et al., 2022, p. 387).

#### **4.3 Dutch Context**

The term identity politics emerged in the Netherlands during the early 2000s, primarily in relation to the political representation of cultural minority groups, including the Muslim community, gender discourse and political controversies surrounding the nation's colonial history. The present discourse evinces several resemblances to the concept of multiculturalism, both in its definition and practical application. Indeed, the headscarf as a symbol of multiculturalism in the Netherlands has multiple meanings in different contexts, and it is argued that in the process of Islam's ethnicization, the headscarf became the symbol of the newly emerging identity politics of the headscarved Dutch Muslims (Koyuncu-Lorasdagi, 2013, p. 59). However, it is important to contextualise identity politics within the historical framework of the past Dutch society, which was based on a system known as pillarization. Particularly Lijphart emphasised the importance of pillarization in addressing a key question in political science: whether stable democracies are limited to majoritarian systems like the United States or can they exist in deeply divided countries like the Netherlands (Lijphart, 1986, p. 71). This societal structure was prevalent in Dutch society until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and could arguably be regarded as an early form of identity politics. Under the pillarized society, Dutch society was divided into distinct pillars or segments, primarily based on religious or ideological affiliations. Each pillar had its own institutions, political parties, media outlets and social organisations.

This system aimed to ensure representation and autonomy for each group, but also resulted in social segregation and limited interaction between different pillars (Hellemans, 2020, p. 126). Amidst the prevailing political climate, the central issue relates to the power disparity among diverse cultural groups within the democratic framework. Identity politics, as it exists today, is therefore just one component of this old pillarization system. While pillarization focused primarily on religious affiliation, contemporary identity politics encompasses a broader range of social identities, such as race, gender, sexuality and ethnicity. However, both systems share an underlying tenet, which says that democratic political entities can operate effectively only when a satisfactory level of representativeness is established (Ensel, 2003, p. 157). One similarity between the old and new identity politics is the emphasis on representation and recognition. In both cases, marginalised groups sought political and social empowerment by asserting their unique identities. Whether through religious pillars in the past or diverse categories today, the goal has been to ensure a satisfactory level of representation. However, there are also significant differences. Pillarization promoted social segregation and limited interaction between different groups, perpetuating a fragmented society. In contrast, contemporary identity politics seeks to challenge power structures, dismantle systematic inequalities and promote inclusivity and social justice. It recognises the importance of specific identities, but also emphasises the need for collaboration and solidarity across different groups. Despite the differences, there are concerns about the potential process of re-pillarization in Dutch society (Ellemers, 1996, p. 534). The rise of identity politics, while aiming for representation and empowerment, may inadvertently contribute to the formation of exclusive identity-based communities. This re-pillarization, though different from the past, could create barriers and hinder social cohesion. Nonetheless, Lijphart argued that stable democracy is possible in divided countries, provided that the political elites are willing to compromise on the most divisive issues (Lijphart, 1968, p. 206).

Multiculturalism has been instrumental in addressing the historical underrepresentation of cultural minorities in the Dutch democratic system. While mainstream political parties have made efforts to embrace diversity, emerging political parties like DENK and BIJ1 have emerged as prominent proponents of identity politics, particularly within the framework of left-emancipatory politics. These identity-based parties prioritise the representation and empowerment of specific identity groups that face marginalisation and discrimination. DENK, for example, places a strong emphasis on the Islamic identity of Dutch Muslims, seeking to provide a platform for their concerns and aspirations. By foregrounding identity rather than solely focusing on political ideology, these parties aim to challenge existing power structures,

address systematic inequalities and promote social justice. It reflects a shift towards acknowledging and valuing the diverse experiences, cultures and perspectives that make up the Dutch population. While identity politics garnered support from those who see it as a means of rectifying historical injustices, it has also sparked debates and criticisms. Identity politics could potentially lead to increased divisions and polarisation against other traditionally ideologically based parties, as it places a strong emphasis on group identities rather than fostering a sense of collective solidarity (Mason, 2018, p. 871). Critics also contend that identity-based parties may prioritise specific identity issues at the expense of broader societal concerns, potentially fragmenting political discourse. Nevertheless, the emergence of identity-based parties like DENK and BIJ1 highlight the evolving landscape of Dutch politics. They provide alternative platforms for individuals and communities who feel that their interests and perspectives have been overlooked or marginalised by the mainstream parties.

In addition to left-emancipatory identity politics, right-nationalist parties in the Netherlands, have also embraced elements of identity politics. These parties tap into the concerns and anxieties of certain segments of the population, particularly regarding globalisation, immigration and the preservation of a distinct national identity. In particular Forum for Democracy, hereinafter known as FVD, has gained prominence by articulating opposition to globalisation and expressing hostility towards immigration (Noury & Roland, 2020, p. 423). They emphasise the protection of what they perceive as traditional Dutch values and cultural heritage. However, it is worth noting that FVD has taken a different approach in framing its position, attempting to distance itself from the label of identity politics. In doing so, the party aims to present itself as a defender of society against what they perceive as the divisive nature of identity politics (Eppink, 2020). The complexity of identity politics becomes apparent when examining the strategies employed by different parties. While left-emancipatory parties like DENK and BIJ1 explicitly centre their political agenda on the empowerment and representation of specific marginalised identity groups, right-nationalist parties may employ similar tactics to mobilise support by focusing on a particular national identity. The engagement in identity politics by these right-wing parties reflects a desire to appeal to a sense of cultural belonging and protection of traditional values, as perceived by their supporters. This emphasis on identity as a defining characteristic of the majority population is often associated with right-nationalist parties, as they prioritise the interests and concerns of the majority and may advocate for policies that restrict or limit the rights and opportunities of minority communities. The interplay between identity politics and mainstream parties in the Netherlands is complex and multifaceted. While identity-based parties have gained traction and appeal among specific

segments of the population, mainstream parties have also grappled with the implications of these evolving dynamics. Some mainstream parties have responded by incorporating elements of identity politics into their platforms or by engaging in discussions surrounding national identity and cultural values (Catalano & Allen, 2022, p. 2). This response reflects the recognition of the significance of identity-related issues in shaping political discourse and public sentiment. The interplay between identity politics and mainstream parties is a complex and evolving phenomenon, with mainstream parties responding to these dynamics in various ways.

Identity politics in the Netherlands today encompasses a broader range of identities compared to the era of pillarization. While the pillarization system primarily focused on religious or ideological affiliations, contemporary identity politics recognises and prioritises diverse identity markers such as race, gender and ethnicity. This shift reflects the changing societal landscape and a growing emphasis on inclusivity, diversity and social justice. The diverse response of mainstream parties in the Netherlands to the emergence of identity politics reflects the contextual nature of identity formation processes (Versteeg, 2012, p. 59). Some mainstream parties have acknowledged its importance and have actively incorporated diversity and inclusivity into their party platforms. For example, the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) has made efforts to engage with minority communities and promote equal opportunities (Stereberg, 2019). Another example is the Democrats 66 (D66), who has actively championed LGBTQ+ rights and played a crucial role in the legalisation of same-sex marriage (Koenders, 2015). These parties recognize the need for diverse representation within the political system and strive to address the concerns and interests of different identity groups. However, other mainstream parties have criticised identity politics, expressing concerns that it may lead to societal division and polarisation. For example, the Socialist Party (SP) has expressed concerns about identity politics overshadowing economic issues and class struggle (Kok & Soest, 2022). They emphasize the need for solidarity and collective action based on shared economic interests rather than divisive identity-based politics. Another example is the Christian Democrats Appeal (CDA), which has voiced reservations about identity politics, emphasizing the importance of shared values and a common Dutch identity that transcends specific identity characteristics (Janssens, 2022, p. 21). The response from mainstream parties reflects the ongoing debate surrounding the role of identity in politics. It is noteworthy that many mainstream parties in the Netherlands have their roots in the old pillarised groups (Drabiuk, 2019, p. 26). For example, the CDA emerged from the fusion of several Christian parties, representing the Protestant and Catholic pillars in the 1970s. It aimed to bring together

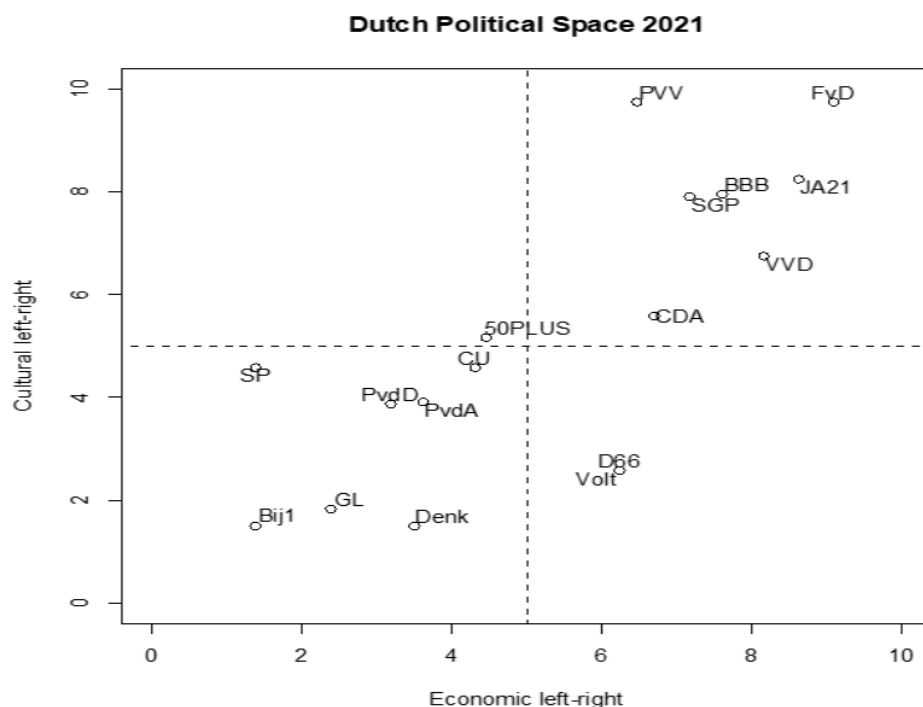


different segments of Dutch society and promote Christian democratic values. Similarly, the Labour Party (PVDA) has its origins in the social-democratic pillar. It represented the interests of the working class and emerged as a political force in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. While the contemporary identity politics landscape differs from pillarisation, the legacy of the old pillarised groups can still be observed in the composition and ideologies of mainstream parties. This historical connection highlights the complex relationship between the old pillarisation system and the current dynamics of identity politics in the Netherlands.

## 5. Data Analysis

### 5.1 Dutch Political Landscape

The Dutch political landscape is characterised by a multi-party system that reflects the diversity of ideologies, interests and societal groups within the country. Understanding the composition and positioning of political parties is essential for comprehending the dynamics of political representation and identity politics in the Netherlands. This section will provide an overview of the broader political landscape and the relationships between parties, with a particular focus on three notable parties: DENK, BIJ1 and FVD. Additionally, to capture the ideological diversity within the Dutch political space, a scale will be employed, encompassing both cultural left-right and economic left-right dimensions (Otjes, 2021, p. 2). This scale allows for a comprehensive assessment of parties' positions on social and cultural issues, as well as their economic policies, providing insights into the broader ideological landscape.



The Dutch political spectrum encompasses a range of parties that span the ideological continuum. At one end, left-wing parties such as the PVDA and Green Party (GL), which advocate for social justice, equality and progressive policies. These parties typically focus on issues such as income redistribution, social welfare and environmental sustainability. In contrast, right-wing parties like the VVD and the CDA prioritise individual liberty, market-oriented solutions and conservative values. Within the diverse landscape, DENK, BIJ1 and FVD have emerged as distinct political players. DENK positions itself as a party representing the interests of the Islamic communities in the Netherlands, particularly that of the Dutch Turks. For clarification, the Islamic demographic of the Netherlands is for almost 70% represented by Turks and Moroccans (CBS, 2016). BIJ1, on the other hand, adopts a broader left-emancipatory approach, seeking to challenge various forms of marginalisation and discrimination of underrepresented communities, including people of colour and LGBTQ+ individuals. FVD, a right-nationalist party, differentiates itself by focusing on Euroscepticism, opposition to globalisation and the protection of Dutch national identity. While these parties share a common emphasis on identity-related issues, their ideological positions, policy agenda and relationships with other parties vary. The relationship between these identity-based parties and mainstream political parties are complex. While some mainstream parties may engage in discourse related to identity and representation, they often have broader policy agendas and large support bases. The interactions between DENK, BIJ1 and FVD with mainstream parties can range from cooperation on specific issues to ideological clashes and political polarisation. Understanding the positioning of DENK, BIJ1 and FVD within the broader political landscape provides insights into the dynamics of identity politics and political representation in the Netherlands. Examining their ability towards political representation illuminates the complexities and interplay between different ideological, societal and cultural forces within Dutch politics. By analysing these parties and their interactions, one can gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with identity-based politics in the Dutch democratic system.

## **5.2 DENK**

The political party DENK is frequently associated with discussions surrounding identity politics in the Netherlands. The media and politicians frequently make a direct connection between DENK and identity politics (van Galen, 2020). However, as immigrants become increasingly assimilated into society, their proclivity towards engaging in identity politics diminishes, as their political preferences become more diverse and varied (Elliott, 2020, p. 2).

The party was established in 2015 by Tunahan Kuzu and Selcuk Öztürk. DENK, as an identity-based party, was able to secure 3 seats in the Dutch parliament despite receiving only 2.03% of the votes (Kiesraad, 2021). This can be attributed to their ability to mobilise strong support from the Dutch Islamic community and consolidation of their votes. How is the implementation of identity politics within the political party DENK carried out in practice and simultaneously to what extent does it align with the party's purported interests?

Indeed, the Turkish community has exhibited a robust sense of communal identity since the 1990s and their various organisations have likewise exerted significant influence in the realm of local politics (Fennema & Tillie, 1999, p. 708). As a result, a thriving political party has arisen, which derives its name from the Dutch word for 'think' and the Turkish word for 'equal.' The party advocates for the welfare of immigrants, particularly those of Muslim origin, who have been subject to various forms of inequality (Madueke & Vermeulen, 2020, p. 30). Moreover, the objective of the electoral campaign 'Thinking of the Netherlands' centred on combating institutional racism and fostering an all-encompassing community founded on diversity and acceptance. DENK is advocating for the implementation of additional measures by the government to combat discrimination and racism. These measures, according to their website, include a digital task force to combat racism and discrimination using a so-called racism detector, as well as the establishment of quotas for individuals with an immigration background (DENK, 2023). Furthermore, DENK believes that there exists a significant disparity between the realm of politics and the general population (DENK, 2017, p. 59). The Parliament would exhibit inadequate representation of individuals with a migration background and other cultural minorities. It is crucial to note that although DENK enjoys significant backing from Dutch-Turkish voters, a majority of the Dutch-Turkish electorate either refrains from participating in the electoral process or casts their vote in favour of an alternative political party (Aydemir & Vermeulen, 2023, p. 164). Nevertheless, DENK responds to the polarisation characterised by the Netherlands, maintains a stable vote from other Islamic groups and thus fills a hole in the Dutch political electorate (Magendane, 2016). DENK is a political party that prioritises the representation of individuals who feel marginalised and underrepresented in the political sphere. Hence, the political party embodies a manifestation of political engagement for individuals with a migration background, thus becoming the foremost political party that is established, led and supported by citizens with a migration background to attain national parliamentary representation (Otjes & Krouwel, 2019, p. 1149).

The party's dedication to the Muslim community is evident in the proposals and motions presented, the topics of debate requested and the oral inquiries posed in the Parliament. DENK

is primarily focused on issues related to discrimination in the labour market, ethnic profiling by government agencies, immigration policy and the diplomatic relationship between the Netherlands and Turkey. DENK's political stances are underscored by its Islamic identity, because within its participation in political discourse, it regularly refers to its identity. In the following fragment, which concerns the debate on racism and discrimination in the Dutch police organisation, party leader of DENK: Farid Azarkan, challenges institutional racism.

Mr. Azarkan (DENK): Thank you Madam Speaker. Discrimination on the basis of religion or any other basis is not permitted. It is actually strange that we are talking about discrimination within the police organization today. Madam Speaker. What we see is the tip of the iceberg. This is contrary to Article 1 of our Constitution. [...] Following the documentary 'Blue Family,' the police acknowledges that there is an institutional problem. Is it because they are Muslim? The group of DENK believes that someone who discriminates cannot be in any way part of the organisation that has the monopoly on violence. I would therefore like to ask the Minister to always report discrimination and racism within the police.<sup>1</sup>

Despite not explicitly advocating for the exclusive support of the Muslim community in the Netherlands, Azarkan staunchly upholds the interests of this specific demographic. The manner in which DENK presents its arguments and viewpoints creates a dominant platform within the Parliament. The stance adopted by DENK on matters such as the diplomatic ties between the Netherlands and Turkey and the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is indicative of their practise. Support for Erdogan among the Dutch Turks is divided, with significantly higher support observed among DENK voters compared to other Turkish voter groups (Ipsos, 2017, p. 4). The divided support for Erdogan among Dutch Turks is partly responsible for the majority's choice to either abstain from voting or select parties other than DENK. Although the entire Parliament exhibits a firm opposition to President Erdogan's policies, DENK expresses a reluctance to disassociate itself from the present Turkish administration. A debate over the Turkish attack on Syria shows that Tunahan Kuzu continues to support Erdogan's Turkey.

Mr. De Roon (PVV): Erdogan's Turkey acts and rejects the values that are important to us. [...] It is time for a policy of weapons to stop.

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<sup>1</sup> Report TK 78. 'Plenair Debat over Racisme en Discriminatie in de Politieorganisatie.' *Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal*, May 9, 2023.

Mr. Kuzu (DENK): After the war began, tensions in the Netherland increased. [...] There were several attacks on Turkish organisations.

Mr. De Roon (PVV): It is awful. It should not. Just like intimidation of otherwise-thinking people, as is happening in Turkey.

Mr. Kuzu (DENK): In any case, I am pleased that Mr. De Roon resigns from the attacks of PKK supports.

Mr. De Roon (PVV): The level of this debate is failing. But I understand exactly where Mr. Kuzu wants to go. Mr. Kuzu, or let me say, his political following. [...] The PKK is on the list of terrorist organisations, but the YPG not. Your great example, Mr. Erdogan, sat at the table with this organisation. [...] I just talked about Palestine and in some eyes the actions of girls like Ahd are also terrorist.

Mr. Kuzu (DENK): Ahd is not on the list of internationally recognised terrorists.

Mr. De Roon (PVV): The YPG is not.

Mr. Kuzu (DENK): Yes, exactly the PKK is.<sup>2</sup>

Upon analysing the political strategy of DENK, several discernible patterns of identity politics become apparent. Despite DENK's purported aim to represent all cultural minorities in the Netherlands, the party's actual emphasis is predominantly on the Islamic community, particularly that of the Turkish. Yet, as mentioned earlier, DENK clearly does not represent all Turkish voters in the Netherlands. This can be explained by its leftist views regarding integration, whilst being morally conservative (Carlak & Wiegman, 2018). The primary objective is to combat various manifestations of stereotyping, marginalisation and discrimination. However, the available source material does not provide conclusive evidence to support the assertion that DENK is primarily concerned with the promotion of self-defined Muslim culture within the Netherlands. Nevertheless, it is evident that the party is actively opposed to the propagation of negative stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes, which may be interpreted as a manifestation of its commitment to self-determination. In numerous instances, the Islamic identity serves as a determining factor of how DENK situates itself within the political discourse, while political ideal or vision plays a comparatively minor role. From this standpoint, it can be argued that DENK exhibits characteristics of a left-emancipatory identity agenda.

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<sup>2</sup> Report TK 53. 'Plenair Debat Turkse Aanval op Syrië.' *Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal*, February 15, 2018.

### 5.3 BIJ1

The political party BIJ1 is frequently linked to identity politics, alongside DENK. This political party is among the limited number of parties that assert their commitment to implementing identity politics (Wiegman, 2021). The party receives itself as a successor to the new social movements that emerged in the 1960s. BIJ1 is a political party that espouses a programme characterised for left-emancipatory parties. Sylvana Simons established the political party known as Article1 in 2016. BIJ1 managed to secure 1 seat in the parliament with just 0.84% of the votes (Kiesraad, 2021). BIJ1's emphasis on issues like systematic racism resonated with communities who felt underrepresented in mainstream politics, leading to their success in securing a seat in the Parliament. The primary objective of the establishment of BIJ1 is to address and mitigate social inequality. Cultural minorities frequently encounter instances of discrimination, intimidation, stereotyping, exploitation and marginalisation, something which Simons herself frequently encounters (Kesic & Duyvendak, 2019, p. 455). What is the manifestation of identity politics within the political party BIJ1, which purports to advocate for the interests of specific demographics, and how is this implemented in the realm of politics?

BIJ1's 2021 election programme situates the party at the left end of the political spectrum in the Netherlands. The party endeavours to establish a societal framework that upholds principles of parity, impartiality and cohesion while eschewing the exploitative tendencies of capitalism and racism. According to the website of BIJ1, the Netherlands still notices the effects of colonial and racist processes (BIJ1, 2023). Decolonisation and anti-racism, therefore, are central themes throughout their electoral program. BIJ1 aims to eradicate racist elements from society from expanding Article 1 of the constitution to encompass gender identity, ethnicity, origin, nationality and limitations, among other measures (Caljé, 2019, p. 73). Furthermore, the party proposed the implementation of quotas for women, cultural minorities and sexual minorities as a means of ensuring a government that is representative. The political orientation of the party is centred not on a particular demographic but rather on a specific issue (Angopa, 2017). Simons, the sole representative of BIJ1 in the Parliament, frequently employs the themes of discrimination and racism in her rhetoric. In Simons' maiden speech, she explicitly delineates the issue and corresponds to her own experiences.

Ms. Simons (BIJ1): Thank you, Mister Speaker. It is my maiden speech, so allow me to add a personal note. In front of you stands a proud woman, a woman born in the colony. Despite the Dutch passport given at birth, I never had the feeling of belonging here. [...] As no other I see, I know, I feel and I have experienced how difficult it can be to overcome exclusion. [...] It is

not just the parents of the allowance scandal about who it is today, it is everyone who became a victim of institutional racism. [...] The solution will have to be found in a structural institutional change of the governance structure.<sup>3</sup>

Simons' interventions in debates and the issues she raises are characterised by a notable recurrence of the problem of racism. This is why BIJ1 is often labelled as a one-issue party (Simons, 2021). In contrast to BIJ1, DENK is commonly perceived as a political party that does not solely focus on a single issue, despite its notable emphasis on matters related on discrimination (Goksu & Leerkes, 2022, p. 9). Typically for a one-issue party, is that their objectives are centred on a solitary political motif or a specific demographic. The degree to which this can be regarded as a distinctive feature of identity politics is a challenging inquiry. Simons' political views are not derived from a particular identity, rather, she adopts a particular perspective when addressing various social issues. The fight against various forms of exploitation and discrimination is often associated with the implementation of identity politics, a notion that Simons also posits.

The political party BIJ1 tends to link various social issues with discriminatory practises. Consequently, there have been numerous discussions surrounding the use of certain terms and characterisations. These debates centre on whether such language is appropriate or not. The party is consistently grappling with the task of defining a specific identity or challenging stereotyping and prejudice. The following parliamentary fragment showcases this.

Minister Grapperhaus: Madam Speaker. With this I have outlined the urgency of fighting against all forms of organised crime. [...] Criminals have no free play. We are not a narco-state either. To those who say that we are, I say: no, because otherwise there would have been someone with an exotic background standing here.

Ms. Simons (BIJ1): I have a problem with the assertion that drug crime automatically means that in the place of the minister would be someone with an 'exotic background.' In my opinion, we are talking about Dutch drug problems generally.

Minister Grapperhaus: That means foreigners. This means that here simply ... Ms. Simons is right.

Ms. Simons (BIJ1): Let it be very clear. This is a racist connotation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Report TK 73. 'Bericht dat het Kabinet Informatie over de Toeslagenaffaire voor de Tweede Kamer achterhield.' *Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal*, April 29, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Report 27. 'Begroting Justitie en Veiligheid 2022.' *Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal*, November 25, 2021.

In this instance, Simons describes how Grapperhaus associates the adjective ‘exotic’ with drug offenders. She asserts that Grapperhaus means that drug perpetrators would only originate from distant countries and not from the Dutch population, a characterisation Simons will defend substantially in the remainder of the debate and future discussions. Why does the Minister associate ‘exotic’ populations to drug criminality, but not the Dutch? In this instance, the question is not whether Simons is correct, but rather how she handles the argument. In this style of argument, identity concerns are frequently raised.

Upon examining BIJ1’s political orientation with respect to identity politics, it becomes particularly apparent that the party advocates for the interests of groups that experience marginalisation, exploitation or discrimination in various forms. BIJ1 exhibits distinct characteristics of a left-emancipatory identity politics. Upon examining Simon’s political approach, it becomes apparent that it involves numerous discussions from a perspective that highlights the existence of disparities or inequalities among diverse demographics. This phenomenon often results in the transformation of numerous discussions into matters of identity, where the process of defining oneself or characterising particular cultures is frequently observed. The political approach of BIJ1 exhibits distinct characteristics of left-emancipatory identity politics.

#### **5.4 Forum for Democracy**

FVD was founded in 2015 as a think tank following a Ukrainian-related referendum in the Netherlands. FVD, under the leadership of Thierry Baudet, participated in the 2017 parliamentary elections and secured two seats, marking the party’s inaugural foray into the electoral contest. FVD’s achievement of securing 5.02% of the vote and 8 parliamentary seats in 2021 can be attributed to their ability to tap into the concerns and frustrations of a substantial portion of the electorate through their emphasis on opposition to globalisation, hostility towards immigration and the protection of national identity (Kiesraad, 2021). FVD self-identifies as a liberal-conservative political party, however, it is commonly perceived as being aligned with right-nationalist ideologies, and on occasion, even far-right perspectives (Schimmelpenninck, 2021). However, Baudet is attempting to distance himself from the conventional far-right image of primitive nationalism that caters to the uneducated or working class, and create an image of himself and his followers as informed nationalists who value artistic and intellectual excellence in the future (Talay, 2019, p. 54). FVD defines itself as the largest political and cultural movement in the Netherlands, emphasising identity and nationalism (van Buuren, 2023, p. 94). Although, FVD distances itself strongly from accusations concerning the practice of identity



politics. In what manner can one discern the manifestations of identity politics in the political orientation and approach of FVD?

The primary objective of FVD is the revitalisation of the democratic system in the Netherlands. According to FVD, the prevailing system can be characterised as a political cartel, wherein the dominant political parties dictate the allocation of power, not only within the government and legislative bodies, but also across other governmental entities, such as local municipalities, the public broadcasting corporation and the tax authority (van Holsteyn, 2018, p. 1370). FVD aims to disrupt the established political party system by implementing measures such as referendums and people-driven initiatives, as well as the direct election of mayors and the promotion of e-democracy. In the following fragment, party leader Baudet, explains the necessity of referendums and their benefit towards improving political representation through its inherent aversion against the so-called political cartel.

Mr. Baudet (FVD): Thank you, Madam Speaker. After walking around here for six months, I can say with conviction: the contempt for the voter is total. Democracy is not functioning. The parties of the cartel keep their ranks closed and are focused on continuing their own interests. [...] Binding referendums and popular initiative are the only way to seriously bring back the influence of the party cartel and break the power of the party elites. [...] Today I make an appeal to all people in the Netherlands. Never again vote for the parties that today vote against the referendum, those who want to take away your voice.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, FVD holds strong doubts regarding the European Union. In his book *'De Aanval op de Natiestaat'*, Baudet writes that democratic rule of law assumes central decision-making power and therefore needs social cohesion, in other words, sovereignty and nationality (Baudet, 2017, p. 259). According to this reasoning, supranationalism and multiculturalism are through the European Union accordingly incompatible. In the context of this framework, it is to be expected that the political representatives in the Netherlands will advocate for the interests of the entire Dutch population. The representation concept employed by FVD is analogous to the classical representation perspective that was prevalent during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to FVD, politicians today represent the party and party ideology rather than the citizens of the Netherlands. Baudet further writes that democratic rule is inherently dependent on national sovereignty, which can only exist within a nation-state (Baudet, 2017, p. 345). Empirically, it

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<sup>5</sup> Report TK 5. 'Initiatief-Van Raak inzake het Correctief Referendum.' *Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal*, September 27, 2017.

is evident that FVD focuses on addressing the concerns of a specific demographic. Similar to the PVV in the Netherlands, FVD also taps into the apprehension about the potential loss of cultural identity to incoming foreigners. However, a distinct difference lies in their ideological orientation (Otjes, 2021, p. 135-139). While the PVV is often associated with right-wing populism and a strong anti-Islam stance, FVD adopts a broader ideological framework that includes elements of conservatism, nationalism and Euroscepticism. This broader ideological scope allows FVD to appeal to a wider range of voters and tackle a broader range of issues beyond immigration and Islam, making it distinct as a party that practises identity politics in a multifaceted manner. In his book *'Oikofobie'* Baudet argues that as a result, multiculturalism and the European project force an unrecognisable living environment, where foreign groups of people deprive the national identity (Baudet, 2013, p. 10). Moreover, according to the website of FVD, the Netherlands has experienced a systematically high influx of disadvantaged immigrants and asylum seekers from non-Western countries in recent decades (FVD, 2023). Something which FVD believes has a negative impact on society and leads to the undermining of the cultural identity of the Netherlands. With FVD there is a discernible inclination to exclude certain groups from Dutch society, in contrast to left-emancipatory parties. The rhetoric employed by FVD frequently exhibits a marked dichotomy between Dutch and non-Dutch individuals. The manifestation of this phenomenon is evident in a recent discourse pertaining to the habitation of individuals with an immigration background, featuring Freek Jansen of FVD and Caroline van der Plas of the Farmers Party (BBB).

Mr. Jansen (FVD): Thank you, Madam Speaker. While hundreds of thousands of Dutch people cannot get housing, today we are talking about housing even more immigrants. In 1947, the Dutch population was still more than 99% Dutch. Meanwhile, we have slipped to 74%. The gradual but steady replacement of our population continues.

Ms. Van der Plas (BBB): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can Mr. Jansen give us the definition of being 'Dutch'?

Mr. Jansen (FVD): I think largely everyone has a sense of whether someone is Dutch or not. They are the people who have always been here, although that group is constantly decreasing and becoming a minority.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Report TK 32. 'Plenaire Debat Huisvesting van Statushouders.' *Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal*, December 8, 2021.

Jansen participates in the discourse surrounding the dual challenges encountered by the conservative nationalist electorate. The topic at hand pertains to the impact of migration flows on social security within the housing market, as posited by Jansen. Specifically, Jansen suggests that immigrants are responsible for this phenomenon. Additionally, Jansen contends that Dutch ethnicity is also experiencing pressure as a result of these migration flows. Supposedly, a difference exists between the Dutch population and the immigrant community.

Upon examining the political orientation of FVD with respect to identity politics, it becomes apparent that the party directs its attention towards a subset of Dutch citizens who perceive themselves as marginalised due to two primary factors: social instability and apprehension regarding the potential erosion of their distinct cultural identity. Furthermore, the political party places emphasis on being Dutch and possesses a distinct understanding of the precise characteristics that comprise Dutch ethnicity. In this regard, FVD exhibits features of a right-nationalist identity politics. FVD can be perceived as practicing identity politics due to its emphasis on cultural preservation, national identity and Euroscepticism, which align with identity-based issues. The party's controversial statements and populist rhetoric further contribute to the perception that FVD appeals to specific identity-based grievances and fears.

## **6. Conclusion**

The notion of identity politics as a political phenomenon, a theoretical construct or a means of enacting political strategies is exceedingly difficult to conceive of within the contemporary political milieu. The discourse surrounding the terminology is replete with normative perspectives and delineations that prompt an inquiry into the attributes of identity politics. This paper, therefore, attempted to answer the following research question: How does the strategy of Dutch political parties influence their ability to shape representation in identity politics?

The findings of the research reveal the presence of distinct recurring characteristics that are structurally evident in political movements and individuals who are categorised as, or assert themselves to be, proponents of identity politics. Initially, the subject pertains to political movements that place significant emphasis on advancing the interests of a specific group. The political trajectory and perspectives of a given movement are determined by one or more shared identity characteristics. This phenomenon is readily observable in practical applications. The political party DENK prioritises the concerns of the Islamic community residing in the Netherlands, particularly that of the Dutch Turks and derives its political ideology from an Islamic identity. Political movements that seek to implement identity politics are inherently

involved in a cultural conflict, whereby they establish a distinct definition of the group they represent, thereby creating a division between themselves and the wider society (Naseem & Stöber, 2014, p. 3). Yet, it can also give meaning to conflicts within societies. A distinction can be made between the identity politics of the left-emancipatory and right-nationalist parties. Left-emancipatory identity politics pertains to political movements that resist various forms of marginalisation, exploitation, discrimination and stereotyping experienced by specific groups within society. Individuals affiliated with a particular movement do not exhibit opposition towards the distinctiveness of their collective, but rather repudiate the notion that such distinctiveness would result in a diminution of their identity. These groups aspire to attain greater cultural acknowledgement for their unique identity. This process is particularly evident in the case of BIJ1. Within the realm of political discourse, it is not uncommon for political parties to centre their discussions around the propagation of prejudicial attitudes and stereotypical beliefs towards various demographic groups. This type of discourse is distinguished by the act of positing and refuting assertions regarding the nature of a specific collective. Left-emancipatory identity politics typically entails the incorporation of specific groups, whereas right-nationalist movements generally engage in the exclusion of certain groups. This process can be observed within the context of FVD. This political party exhibits a staunch resistance towards foreign cultural influences that they perceive as being incongruous with the Dutch cultural identity. The rhetoric employed by these political parties exhibits a distinct contradiction between the Dutch and the 'Other' identity.

Furthermore, the distinction between majoritarian and consensus-based democracies sheds light on the disparities in representation within political systems. Majoritarian democracies like the United States prioritise winner-takes-all outcomes, leading to a dominant two-party system that hinders the emergence of identity-based parties. On the other hand, consensus-based democracies with proportional representation, such as the Netherlands, provide a more inclusive environment for the formation of parties representing specific demographic groups. While identity politics operates within the framework of the existing two-party system in the United States, the majoritarian model poses challenges for the establishment of new parties solely based on identity. Acknowledging these differences is crucial for understanding the nuances of representation and the role of identity politics in contemporary democratic societies. Moreover, the research findings have also provided support for the hypothesis, indicating that Dutch political parties that prioritize identity-based profiling are indeed more likely to shape representation in identity politics. This qualitative study has demonstrated that parties actively addressing the concerns of identity-based groups through

specific policies and rhetoric tend to mobilise support and effectively represent these groups' interests. By prioritising and engaging with identity-based issues, these parties have shown a greater ability to shape representation, both in terms of electoral success and policy outcomes. These findings highlight the importance of parties aligning their strategies with the concerns of identity-based groups in shaping representation in Dutch identity politics.

When formulation assertions regarding the favourable or unfavourable effects of political developments, it is crucial to ensure that the precise nature of these developments is unambiguous. The ongoing discourse on identity politics is particularly noteworthy, as proponents and opponents alike posit various assertions regarding the impact of this political phenomenon. This thesis aimed to enhance comprehension of identity politics, particularly in the context of the Netherlands. It highlighted the importance of understanding the role of political parties in shaping political representation in Dutch identity politics. By examining the strategy of political parties, this thesis demonstrated that their approach is a critical factor in effectively advocating for marginalised identity groups. The findings suggest that an identity-based approach is necessary for successful representation, especially democracies based on the principles of proportionality, as well as key factors that contribute to effective representation have been identified. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this research. The focus on Dutch political parties and their approach to identity politics may not fully capture the complexities and nuances of the phenomenon in other contexts. Furthermore, the findings may not capture the full diversity of political parties and their strategies within the Dutch political landscape. Future research should aim to explore a broader range of political parties and their engagement with identity politics to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. Based on the insights from this study, several recommendations can be made. First, political parties should strive to adopt an inclusive approach to identity politics, ensuring that the interests and concerns of marginalised groups are adequately represented. This requires a commitment to addressing social inequalities and creating platforms for meaningful participation. Second, policymakers should prioritise dialogue and understanding between identity-based movements to foster social cohesion and mitigate potential conflicts. Finally, scholars should continue to examine the implications of identity politics and its impact on democratic processes, ensuring that research informs policy discussions and promotes a more inclusive and equitable society. This will thereupon enable the construction of informed evaluations regarding the favourable or unfavourable consequences of this political development in Western societies.

Finally, the implications of these findings are crucial for policymakers, activists and scholars engaged with Dutch identity politics. It is evident that political parties have a significant role to play in shaping political representation in identity politics. The strategic choices made by these parties have far-reaching consequences for the effective advocacy of marginalised identity groups. By prioritising specific group interests and addressing the concerns of marginalised communities, political parties can contribute to a more inclusive and representative political landscape.

## **7. Bibliography**

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### **7.2 Literature**

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