



**The political relevance
of the migration issue
at the 2017
Czech, Dutch and
German elections**



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Daniel Mikecz

On April 8 2018 the right wing-conservative Fidesz government could win more than two-third of the seats in the Hungarian parliament for the third time in a row. It was a surprising victory for many correspondents and analysts, since many thought that they cannot mobilize more than 2,3 million voters. As it turned out, there was no glass ceiling for Fidesz; they had around 2,6 million domestic votes and more than 200 thousand from abroad. After the results, it was obvious that the Fidesz party was not overestimated in the opinion polls. Since the 2015 migration crisis pollsters measured the governing party between 45 and 50% among likely voters. However, many opposition voters were very disappointed since the general opinion was that the high turnout (70.22%) favors the opposition. Thus, after the election, the question was: how could Fidesz mobilize a surplus of 450 thousand voters compared to their 2014 results? Various factors led to the triumph of Viktor Orbán and his party, but one of the most important issues remained migration since the crisis in 2015. Fidesz could display herself as the only party which could protect Hungarians. Nevertheless, Fidesz also needed the backing from state owned and state subsidized private media. The government's communication machine could successfully present migrants as a real threat. The message resonated well in areas where jobs and subsidies are scarce.

After the election, similar debates started over the polarization of the country and the contradictions and conflicts between rural and urbanized Hungary as in the USA after the presidential campaign and in the UK after the Brexit vote. However, Fidesz could already establish herself as the strongest party in small villages already in 2002. They could even get a higher proportion of votes in 2010, as they were still in opposition and lacked the present-day media support. Nevertheless, the Fidesz campaign, which built on the uncertainty caused by the migration crisis, worked very well in rural areas, where many of the surplus votes in 2018 stemmed from. Similarly, Donald Trump appealed to the angry white working and middle classes, which were dissatisfied even with the Republican Party elite. Jeb Bush fell out early during the primaries thanks to this anti-elite sentiment. From this aspect, the US presidential election, Brexit and Viktor Orbán's victory in 2018 are part of a general rise of populism.

However, as it turned out, not only did the white working class vote for Trump, but the white middle class as well. Similarly, Viktor Orbán's victory at the 2018 parliamentary election depended not only on the rural underclass. The tax policy and the support of families through tax reduction favored the upper middle class. Moreover, we can also assume that the migration issue resonated well in this latter social stratum. Migration can cause anxiety and uncertainty among the wealthier as well, just like in Hungary, where the electoral success of the radical right wing Jobbik party in 2010 could be explained only partly by welfare frustration. Thus, the electorate of populist right wing parties are not created solely by the fear of a loss of economic status, but also by a perceived threat to one's lifestyle, system of self-evaluation, and integrity of reference groups. Tastes, emotions, and cultural representation have always had an effect on politics through individual and collective identities, but the internet and especially social media amplified this impact.

While in the 2008 Obama campaign internet was celebrated as a tool to bring people together into the digital citizens' hall, at the time of the Trump campaign social media was deemed responsible for the spread of fake news and the intensification of political polarization. Nevertheless, with social media, generating and disseminating content were drastically democratized. However, social media did not bring rational debates of citizens into politics as it was hoped by the supporters of deliberative democracy; instead, many locked themselves into digital echo chambers. While for Donald Trump social media was an instrument to directly communicate with his voters, Viktor Orbán could dominate the mainstream media as well through government friendly media outlet owners and through the Fidesz controlled national broadcasters.

Still, fake news had an important role in the Hungarian campaign as well. The government initiated a national consultation of the so called 'Soros plan'. In this consultation different statements from George Soros on the resettlement of migrants in Europe and on migration in general were selectively and deceptively used to prove the government right. While the public sphere was democratized through social media, the media literacy of users could not keep pace with this trend, thus fake news and different types of misinformation became viral on both sides of the Atlantic. Neither Donald Trump nor Viktor Orbán had an election program. The new politician of the post-fact era does not offer policies like a professional, but makes demands and mobilizes. Statistics and expertise do not matter; the point is if a political

community is able to act; if it could have an impact on politics or not. The new populists wished to prove their political competence through questions like national sovereignty and the borders of the political community. Other such issues include the relationship to supranational organizations, regimes, agreements (NAFTA, EU) and migration.

It was not just Donald Trump or Viktor Orbán who wished to demonstrate political competence with a hard-line stance on the migration issue. In this volume we show that in other European countries migration was a serious risk for mainstream politicians, but also an opportunity for challengers. The refugee crisis polarized Czech politics and fragmented the party system, as it is demonstrated in the first chapter by Tereza Chmelíková and David Březina. During the 2018 Czech presidential elections fake news spread via emails was used to dishonor the rival of incumbent president Miloš Zeman. While migration was not a new topic in Western Europe, the 2015 refugee crisis had a significant political impact in these countries as well. As Niels Back, Claudia Elion and Marthe Hesselmanns write in chapter 3, in the Netherlands migration was such a crucial issue that it also made it more difficult to form a government after the elections. Mainstream parties are losing ground, just like in Germany. As Stefan Maximilian Drexler noted in his chapter, the migration issue contributed to the rise of the Alternative für Deutschland Party (AfD), which is the first extreme right wing party in the German Bundestag since 1945. This success of the AfD was also the consequence of Angela Merkel's failed attempt to create a new political consensus on migration since the 1990s.

Tereza Chmelíková and David Březina

Over the last few years, the Czech Republic, alike other central European countries, has been affected by a quite massive migration influx to Europe. The migration issue has become omnipresent. Various media have started to report about the migration influx every day, and thus, minds of Czech citizens have been influenced by this new situation on the continent. If not by migrants themselves, then at least by the fear of the newcomers. As a result, Czech politicians and political parties have reflected the issue in their daily public statements as well as in their written programs.

It seldom happens that so many countries are affected by the same problem at the same time. The migration issue involved not only Southern EU states which create Europe's sea border, but all European states without exception. Consequently, European societies have begun to radicalize themselves. This trend has begun to be promoted especially in all countries of the V4 but neither the state like Austria remained behind. Therefore, the far-right-wing political parties with xenophobic and anti-immigration rhetoric have thrived on the migration topic, especially across states in Central and Eastern Europe. The issue ingrained in these countries in 2014 and since then it has been used as a target of massive fake news and disinformation propagators. The Czech Republic can be viewed as a part of this phenomenon, even though each political party in the Czech Parliament has rifled a slightly different attitude toward the migration issue. Notwithstanding, there are still many common points through their political programs.

The Policy Positions of Major Political Parties The Movement ANO 2011

The Movement ANO 2011, party with the highest number of seats in the Czech Parliament, presents itself as clearly pro-European party. Nevertheless, the party's chairman and current Prime Minister of the Czech Republic of the resigning party, Andrej Babiš has sworn allegiance to the V4 Group, which garners strongly anti-EU position in the matter of immigration. From this perspective, ANO's position on the matter is purely pragmatic. Their political program's stance to migration starts with a claim that the Movement ANO

2011 will be unambiguously turned towards a free and democratic world and that the main pillar of their foreign policy will remain the protection of human rights. At the very same time, towards their EU policy, party's program speaks about the necessity of focusing on the area of border protection (the inner borders of the EU). Protection of inner borders of the EU should be strengthened via the creation of new operational police forces, specially trained to protect the Schengen area. The protection of the EU borders should also be secured by NATO forces, and an open border policy is unacceptable. According to the Movement ANO 2011, the only reasonable solution of the migrant crisis is restriction of migration flows to Europe in the countries of its origin through developing programs and international humanitarian and police operations backed by NATO or the EU (ANO 2017). One key thing to remember is that ANO 2011 is balancing its position between the policy of the V4 countries and the pro-European countries.

The Pirate Party

Another pragmatic political party in this matter is the Pirate party, a newly elected party in the Parliament. Migration policy of this party is sliding with the previously discussed political party. The intersection of those two party's programs occurs in many aspects. It is mainly due to the need of protection of the Schengen area and its borders. As the Movement ANO 2011, the Pirate party also supports more intensive international cooperation in particular European policies such as the CFSP and CSDP. Precondition for this international cooperation is development of common and compatible combat units and forces. Another similarity with ANO 2011 party is the criticism of contemporary migration policy of the EU. According to Movement ANO 2011 and the Pirate Party, the quota system is ineffective, and the Dublin system must be replaced. Notwithstanding Pirate Party's criticisms of the Dublin system, the party is detached from others by saying that it is impossible to criticize something without bringing any alternative. Pirates agree on a united system of asylum process, where the member states would define preferred groups of refugees and migrants define preferred destinations (The Pirate party 2017).

The Civic Democratic Party

Civic Democratic Party is the second largest party in the Czech political arena. Since Mr. Václav Klaus' (former president of the Czech Republic) leadership, the party has been going through inner clashes about party's attitude towards the EU and its policies. What they all agree on is the refusal of a

quota system and that the asylum process of the Czech Republic should remain pragmatic. Pragmatic in a way that migrants with a better background should be accepted much more easily than migrants who have less potential to contribute to the system. Those migrants who will not respect the Czech laws, traditions and values should meet a stricter asylum policy. On the one hand, the aim of Civic Democratic Party is to gain an exception from common asylum and migration policy of the EU, on the other hand, they are supporters of the European neighborhood policy and its strengthening to secure the lands of Mashriq and Maghreb and provide them chance to rise prosperity (ODS 2017).

The Social Democratic Party

The Social Democratic Party is a typical example of a party which criticizes the Dublin system and quotas but provides no alternative to it. Social Democrats are in favor of saving all advantages of the Schengen area which should remain under control in order to scan who is entering the area. Likewise, the two previous political parties, Social Democrats are states that Schengen borders must be protected by police forces, and if they are missing, European states must create them. Social Democrats as other pragmatic parties are willing to support humanitarian aid programs which should be the main solution to stopping illegal immigration (Social Democratic Party 2017).

The Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People’s Party

Christian Democrats are, unlike their German companions, not strongly grounded in this matter. According to their political program, one of the priority of Czech foreign policy should be the regulation of migration flows as well as the elimination of illegal immigration. The party program brings nothing new and it hold the line with supporting humanitarian aid in developing countries and securing the Schengen borders (KDU-ČSL 2017). Before the last parliamentary elections, which were held in October 2017, the party was in coalition with Mayors and Independents Party. Thus, it is not a big surprise that Mayors’ policy positions towards migration almost did not differ from Christian Democrats at all (Mayors and Independent Party 2017).

The TOP09 Party

The last pragmatic party on political spectrum is TOP09 (a liberal conservative party whose name is derived from Tradition Responsibility Prosperity). The party highlights the need of cooperation in this matter on European lev-

el. It cannot be done without a successful common approach among other member states. As the only political party, TOP09 declares in its program that the main pillar of the European neighborhood policy should create the investments of Union's member states in the third world countries. Via this policy the EU could achieve not only limitation of migration influx, but also restrictions on the rising influence of China in Africa. Coupled with the humanitarian aid and investments, TOP09 suggests the creation of safe zones in countries where migrants are most endangered, such as Libya. Additionally, TOP09 stands against illegal immigration and quota system. Nevertheless, the Czech Republic should help the most affected EU countries in the south of the continent, such as Greece, Italy, Malta or Spain (TOP09 2017). None of these parties with a pragmatic approach is supporting the current quota system. In conclusion, all the mentioned political parties have a similar attitude in this matter. On the one hand, there is a dire need to show strength and call for the protection of the Schengen borders and the creation of special police forces trained to stop illegal migration. On the other hand, mainstream Czech political parties are willing to help with humanitarian aid in most affected countries which are the countries of origins of immigrants. If not as an act of solidarity, then because of the fear that situation will get only worse. If there will be no stable state beyond the Mediterranean Sea, there will be no one to sign a treaty similar to the EU-Turkish agreement.

The Communist Party

By contrast, there are several political parties which seems to align with EU-skeptical ideology. Amongst other things, they regard the membership in the EU as in many other international organization (e.g. NATO) as having a negative effect on the prosperity of the Czech Republic. The Communist Party is one such example of a Eurosceptic party. The Communist Party claimed that EU member states (Germany, France and the UK) should hold more responsibility in the migration crisis issue due to the reason that it was their failure to stabilize these lands. The Czech Republic cannot obey the quota system by any conditions (The Communist Party 2017).

The SPD Party

The last political party which holds seats in the Czech Chamber of Deputies is strongly Eurosceptic and anti-immigration SPD Party (Freedom and Direct Democracy). The SPD's migration policy could be summarized as pure scaremongering. According to its program, immigration constitutes the big-

gest threat: the SPD indicates a “massive migration of millions of people”. The SPD promotes those people who are coming to Europe incompatible with Europeans due to the lack of common cultural, social or historical values and background. The SPD presents migrants’ manners as absolutely inconsistent with the European way of life, and the rising migration as a palpable menace to our European civilization. According to their political program, the massive illegal migration is tied to radical Islam. To put it simply, the migration is presented as a tool for radical Islam attempting to destroy and eradicate the European civilization (SPD 2017).

The Czech General Election 2017

The Movement ANO 2011 won the parliamentary elections in October 2017, led by billionaire businessman Andrej Babiš, they obtained almost 30 % of casted votes. The Civic Democratic Party (ODS) came in second with 11.32 % of election votes. It should be pointed out that for the very first time since 1996, two mainstream parties (ODS and ČSSD) were defeated by anti-establishment party. Nevertheless, the fall of mainstream parties, which have dominated national political scene for decades, is certainly not a phenomenon unique to the Czech Republic. The third place was occupied by the Pirate party (new non-ideological party in the Czech Parliament) with 10.79 % of votes. Pirates were followed by a protest party with a highly nationalistic theme, Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) which gained 10.64 % of votes. The fall recorded not only traditional democratic parties, but also the Communist Party (KSČM) gaining only 7.76 % of votes. However, the biggest political disaster hit the former ruling party – Social Democrats (ČSSD) with a result of 7.27 % votes. It was surely the worst result for the party in its history. Also, the third member of the former coalition was badly treated by the electorate, the Christian Democratic Union (KDU-ČSL) won only 5.8 %. Behind Christian Democrats were two small parties – Tradition Responsibility Prosperity (TOP09) with 5.31 % and Mayors and Independents Party with barely enough votes to be allowed into parliament – 5.18 % (INFO 2017). To sum up, nine political parties have gained their mandates, and thus, the Czech Parliament has become the most fragmented in its history. Most importantly, three new political subjects have been introduced into the Chamber of Deputies (INFO 2017).

Conceding the elections results, the mainstream parties were exposed to defiance from their former voters. The fundamental question is: why did it hap-

pen? Why did the non-traditional parties attract the voters of mainstream parties suddenly in 2017? Apparently due to the fact that the preferences of the electorate have genuinely changed and that this has been used by anti-establishment parties. The political scientist Pavel Šaradín announced that voters changed everything in these elections (Dostál 2017).

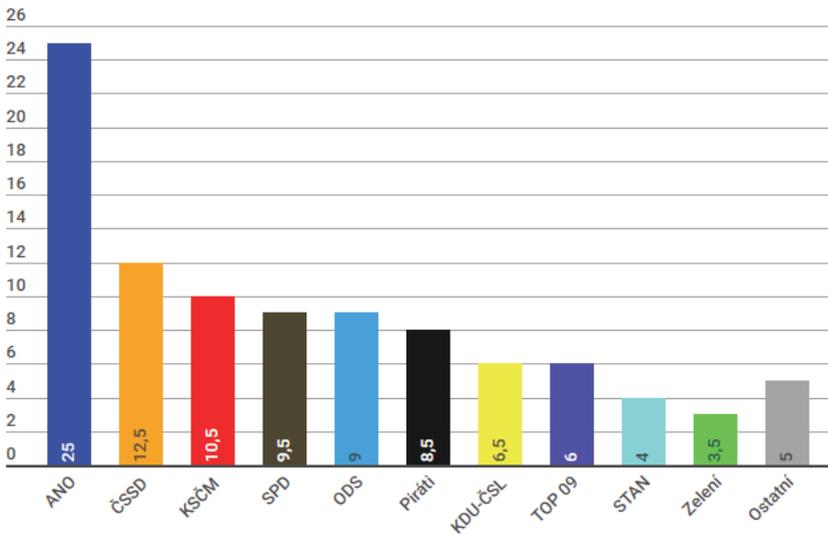
The mentioned change which occurred derives from the rise of interest in a recently developed issues. Moreover, because of the fact that Czech economy has been growing rapidly and Czechia has the lowest level of unemployment in the whole European Union, the socio-economic factors no longer matter. With regard to the political scientist Jan Rovný, the traditional cleavages between political right and left and people's sense of belonging to them were surrogated by identity politics. From this point of view, Rovný provides an apt example of how Czechs refer to the European Union. It is not only about certain economic benefits anymore; Czech people have become more focused on "the EU vs. national identity" concept. The public discussion is now being focused on the question who is and who is not legitimately a part of European society. As Rovný said, "it is about what rights people who distinguish themselves from the majority, including homosexuals, ethnic and religious ethnic affiliates or newly coming migrants, should have" (Horký 2018). Clearly, it is a reaction to globalization which in paradox leads to strengthening of national interests. Thus, Czech voters are now more deciding pursuant their views on national identity and attitude towards European Union (Rovný 2018). Moreover, two of the most discussed topics of the election campaign were the price of the butter as well as the lithium extraction in the Czech Republic. Based on what was said before, there is an answer why the price of the butter was more highlighted in the campaign than e.g. the orientation of the Czech foreign policy. The fight of politicians for the lower price of butter and for protecting natural resources such as lithium were presented to Czech citizens as the defense of national interests. Thus those political parties which claimed to defend Czech national interests against foreign influences have gained more popularity among voters.

Without further doubt, there is social stability in the Czech Republic, and according to the Global Peace Index, in 2017 the Czechia was placed in the top ten of the safest countries in the world (Appelbaum 2017). And yet, the Czechs seem to have quite big concerns about their security and preserving their well-being and lifestyle. As the source of the fear and the scaremonger

we can consider not only fake news, but also media, extremist groups, and probably most importantly, xenophobic political parties which constantly emphasize the need to defense of national interests. One of these political parties is now even present in the Czech Parliament. A huge success of the right-wing extremist subject called the Freedom and Direct Democracy Party (SPD) is an undeniable proof that the migration issue became one of the major topics in the 2017 Czech parliamentary elections.

The Election Campaign 2017

The campaign escalated long time before elections were held. It has happened also due to the crisis the coalition made up of ČSSD, ANO and KDU-ČSL, which has resulted in terminating the mandate of the Finance Minister, Andrej Babiš (ANO). The loss of political stability affected mainly mainstream political parties and favored anti-establishment parties such as the Movement ANO 2011, the Pirate Party and the Freedom and Direct Democracy Party. Even though the electoral preferences were witnessing an important shift in voter’s behavior, the old political matadors were not able to react effectively on the changing mood inside the Czech society. Thus the lack of flexibility of traditional parties created space for the avail of protest parties which were not



Polls 4 days before elections. Source: Irozhlas.cz.

The atmosphere of the 2017 elections was considerably strained. Members of the Movement ANO 2011 strongly demarked themselves against Social Democrats. In the election campaign, Andrej Babiš and his party chose the catch-all strategy to attract as many voters as possible. Thus the migration issue with the emphasis on the security of the Czech nation became one of the key topics of the winner party campaign. During the election campaign, Andrej Babiš mentioned many times his intention to involve NATO in a conflict against international smugglers and to use it as a protection of European borders. In an interview with Politico, Babiš stated that he sees himself as a defender of the European Union and that he is the one who can prevent tendencies of some Czech political extremists who would like to have a Czexit (Mortkowitz 2018).

Babiš presented himself as a defender of Czech national interests. Despite of an undeniable prosperity and high-standard life in the Czech Republic, The Movement ANO promised to people to ensure a “better Czechia”. The key campaign motto of Mr. Babiš was “to manage the state as a company”, meaning not in way of traditional incompetent politicians. Andrej Babiš managed to convince almost one third of voters with his promises that he will fight for the good of the Czechs in Brussels and the Czech Republic will therefore become a superior and safer state under his control.



“We want better Czechia. Safer one.” Source: ČT24.

In general, campaigns of protest parties differ from the traditional parties' ones. The Movement ANO 2011 preferred campaigning among people with strong support of their profiles on social sites. Mr. Babiš has appeared on many open public events to get closer to ordinary people. Similar tactics was chosen by another protest party – The Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD). Its representatives were organizing plenty of meetings with citizens because they were well aware that face-to-face contact is still the most effective way how to persuade people. Moreover, the SPD Party was very active on the Internet, sharing videos on Twitter and Facebook accounts.

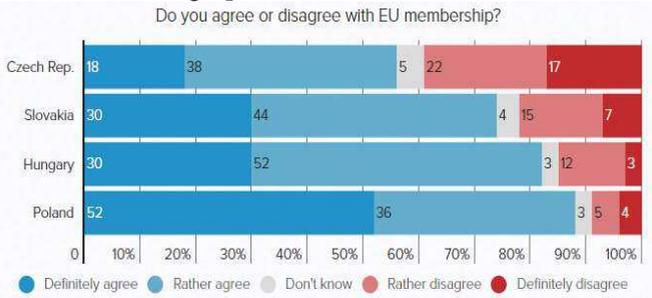
Moreover, Tomio Okamura, the SPD's leader, was one of the most visible politicians of the 2017 election campaign. Mr. Okamura can be viewed as a paradox of Czech political scene. Okamura, a Czech-Japanese politician, is the strongest supporter of anti-immigration policy inside the Czech Republic. Therefore, in the SPD's election spot, they brought out the migration issue trying to awaken fear and encourage the anti-immigrant sentiment in the Czech people. In order to do so, they used in the spot short slogans like: chaos, assassinations, changing Europe, borders' protection, or Islamization (SPD 2017). Also, all billboards which the SPD Party has distributed during the election campaign were connected to something anti-European, anti-immigrant and xenophobic. The SPD's messages were more than clear: "No to Islam, no to terrorists," "We will leave in a British style," or "We will stop illegal immigration."



"We will stop illegal immigration and the dictatorship of the EU!" Source: Mostecké listy

By such means, Tomio Okamura and his party targeted those who did not benefit from globalization. People who were easy to manipulate with, by providing them an enemy, an issue, and a quick and simple solution. For them, enemies are not only illegal immigrants, Muslims, and people from Africa, but also Angela Merkel as a politician who allowed "the migration catastrophe" to happen. Nationalistic mottos, and state official state and national symbols (most often the Czech flag) are used by the SPD Party as instruments for encouraging the Czechs to distinguish between "we and them". Tomio Okamura is very active on his Twitter account (way more than politicians from traditional parties), nevertheless, his messages are full of hate, fear and fake news. For instance, he claimed that the security situation in the Czech Republic has worsen and that the Czechs should prepare for an early terrorist attack. It comes as no surprise that Mr. Okamura is a supporter of Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders. As those populists, Okamura provides an easy solution: zero tolerance for illegal immigration and a ban on the Islamic ideology in a national referendum. And speaking about the referendum, he suggests one about the Czexit (Okamura 2017).

No doubt, there is a reason why Tomio Okamura chose this style of election campaign. The reason is that this campaign has found a fertile ground. According to Politico, "Three in four Czechs said migrants pose as great threat to national security as ISIS" (Mortkowitz 2017). More than 61 % of Czech citizens are against accepting refugees. One will be mistaken in thinking that the Czech Republic was the favorite final destination of immigrants. In fact, the country has so far accepted 12 migrants of its allocated quota of more than 2600 immigrants (Mortkowitz 2017). Besides the anti-immigration sentiment inside the Czech society, there is also strong resistance toward 'directives' from Brussels as the graph shows.



Source: Politico 2017.

The Spread of Disinformation

A new era of political campaigns did not leave out the Czech Republic. The growth of the Internet community has forced the Czech political parties to present their political attitudes, policies and programs on Twitter or Facebook. We have therefore witnessed a massive expansion of political campaigns on the Internet since the elections in 2014. Before that, it was mainly the Tradition and Prosperity Party (TOP09), who managed to gain popularity by promoting itself in this new area of political competition. The rise of the Movement ANO 2011 has further developed the shape of online political campaigning in the Czech Republic, and it seems that this move was successful. In the 2017 parliamentary elections, most of other political parties followed this trend. So the outcome of the online campaign boom is a greater audience of Czechs on the Internet, and even members of the old generations can be found on Facebook.

The topic of the first disinformation affair was to a great extent connected to the victory of Miloš Zeman in the 2013 presidential election. The protest against the President Zeman, at the very beginning of his first term, had form of lifting up the red cards in the streets of Prague. The protest was accused by Zeman's closest supporters and his voters of being financed by the US embassy. There is no surprise that this information could be found in articles on pro-Russian websites, e.g. 'Sputnik', which is a well-known website financed by Moscow. Nowadays, the disinformation campaign has become focused on another topic – the migration crisis. It regards the strengthening position of extremist groups which are truly interested in spreading fake news in order to sow the fear into the society.

Because of the persistent disinformation threat and the intention of Russia to affect the political life in the Czech Republic, the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic has established the Centre Against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats. Thus, the centre was set up not only to fight against inner extremist groups spreading fake news, but also because of the need to challenge Russia's ongoing disinformation campaigns (Noack 2017). For instance, one of the inner threats might be the controversial website 'Parliamentary Letters' which is well-known for exaggerating facts, sensational headlines and spreading articles about the growing danger from refugees or Islam (Schultheis 2017). Disinformation is not a new thing in the Czech Republic, but what increased is their scope. In 2017 parliamentary elections, fake news posed a useful tool

for some political parties, mainly the extremist one as Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), in achieving of their political goals. However, more recently, a new disinformation phenomenon has occurred in the form of chain emails targeting mainly the older generation in order to spread fake news on specific political issues.

The 2018 Presidential Elections

During the election campaign of the 2018 presidential election, the Czech Republic has experienced a massive increase in disinformation. It was not just about fake news spread on social networks and published on disinformation servers. Mendacious messages which were forwarded by email became literally the phenomenon of this year's presidential election. In fact, they were spread mainly by older people. Digital literacy seniors in the Czech Republic communicate predominantly by email because they trust this communication platform very much. Moreover, when they receive a message from a family member, former colleague or their close friend, they have no reason to verify the information. The main reason of the massive boom of the e-mail campaign, in which up to tens of thousands of misinformation emails were distributed, was that it was built on the elderly's credulity. Messages from people they know and from those with whom they are in contact, elderly people then forward lightly to their beloved ones, friends and acquaintances, which spontaneously creates a pyramid. Thus, disinformation and false news spread further.

The Czech TV's program 168 Hours made a film about the boom of fake-news email campaign targeting the older generation during the presidential election two reportages. They are focused on the most active disinformation distributors – the seniors themselves. In interviews, many seniors have reported that they receive emails with information about presidential candidates and their political attitudes almost daily. Some of them do not feel capable of evaluating objectively the truthfulness of the content of such emails. Although the claims in the texts seems sometimes very suspicious, the pictures and photographs that are often attached to disinformation emails look real. For this reason, even people who do not accept – unlike many others – all information as a fact without critically evaluating or verifying their content first, tend to easily believe in disinformation in emails which have visual attachments.

An Email Disinformation Campaign

While the presumed election winner, Czech President Miloš Zeman, was exposed to unfounded statements about his health and quite a critical campaign in the form of mocking cartoons, the main object of the dishonest email campaign was his strongest opponent and the second favorite of the 2018 presidential election – scientist, chemist and university teacher Jiří Drahoš. Several authors (such as senior Oldřich Lukáš, Communist journalist Helena Kočová, and doctor Vítězslav Podivínský) have taken care of



creating a series of articles and web sites that have become a hit of the Internet. The article titled Reflecting the Presidential Elections by Oldřich Lukáš describes Jiří Drahoš as a homosexual with pedophile inclinations. In the article, Drahoš is also referred to as “a supporter of immigration and massive Islamization of the Czech Republic”, and to as a person who wants to “introduce hard censorship and even punish people for spreading the truth” (168 hours, January 2018). In the end of his text, Ondřej Lukáš warns against the consequences of electing Jiří Drahoš to the office of the President: “So my dears, choose. If you want to have Czech educational system full of pedophiles, homosexuals, and parasite non-profit organizations which systematically Islamize brains of our children from their early age in the kindergartens, choose Drahoš” (Lukáš 2018).

One of other emails says that the Anti-Zeman coalition used various fraudulent tools to discredit the incumbent president of the Czech Republic. The author, for example, says that there was professional counterfeiting of the TV debates held before the first round of elections, when one of the presidential candidates, Mr. Michal Horáček, was digitally installed as a guest to hit the

President Zeman below the belt. It should be stressed out that private TV Barrandov's debate programs are usually broadcasted live. The author then presents the incumbent president as a defender of the Czech nation. "He, as one of the last brave ones, has been holding EU-enthusiasts and agents of the new world government who desire to enslave of all of us, and to exterminate the white race and the indigenous population, firmly restrained. It is President Zeman who gives EU a hard time to EU-psychopaths who are preparing Europe for its perfect suicide"(168 Hours, March 2018).

Also in other emails, some people (supporters of the candidate, Jiří Drahoš) are presented as the ones who are trying to destroy the Czech nation, its cultural heritage, its values, Czech families and their homes. Moreover, emails accused Jiří Drahoš, in addition to pedophilia, of cooperating with the Communist Stb and of stealing ideas and patents from his colleagues during his scientific career. Due to the massive mediation of such false information, the Police of the Czech Republic has been now investigating the crime of defamation.

The Migration Issue as the Main Topic of the Election

Undoubtedly, the most striking line of the campaign against Jiří Drahoš was the accentuation of his attitudes towards immigration. Drahoš was presented as a pro-refugee candidate or even as a "immigrants' welcomer". All this based on the fact that Jiří Drahoš, by his signature, joined the initiative of Czech scientists against fear and indifference (vyzvedcu.cz 2015). The purpose of this document was to encourage the Czech people to speak out openly against xenophobia, religious intolerance and extremism.

Drahoš was, because of his support of the scientists' initiative, marked as a representative of multinational elites, whose intent is to establish a new world order. With this goal, these elites have also triggered and further supported the migration crisis. That is why, according to some disinformation, Jiří Drahoš' political campaign was organized and financed not only by the oligarchs such as George Soros or Zdeněk Bakala, but also by the Muslim community in the Czech Republic. One of the other fake news which the object of some messages sent out by emails even states that Jiří Drahoš is a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. "In large numbers, people have also been forwarding a pro-Zeman commentary by Helena Kočová, editor of the Communist Haló noviny. „Personally, I am well aware of a huge danger which we are facing and

will thus vote for a candidate who stands against the admission of immigrants and against the Islamization of Europe. And if that is ‘fat’ and ‘unattractive’ Zeman who comes to grips with the mass migration and Islamization, I’m going choose ‘fat and unattractive’ Zeman for the next term in the office,’ she wrote last July “(Golis 2018).

President Miloš Zeman has been using the theme of migration during the period of his first mandate as the Czech President to strengthen his popularity among citizens. The migration issue has therefore logically become one of the pillars of Zeman’s presidential campaign. The incumbent President Zeman first kept himself out of the political campaign which he joined just before the second round of the election. After that, the campaign was marked by a significant increase of personal attacks.

“A negative advertisements in the daily press with the slogan “Stop Immigrants and Drahoš”, which was commissioned by Euro-Agency and contracted by civic organization called Friends of Miloš Zeman” (Rekonstrukce státu 2018). Only one week before the second round of the election, billboards with the same inscriptions linking Jiří Drahoš with the support of migration appeared. The slogans against the immigrants and against one of the running candidates for presidential office were complemented by the nationalist appeal “This country is ours!” in order to present the President Miloš Zeman as the protector of the Czech nation.



“Stop immigrants and Drahoš. This country is ours! Vote Zeman!” Source: ČTK.

On the subject of migration, the two candidates have been very sharply debating within the pre-election TV duels. In these debates, Zeman emphasized his disagreement with the adoption of fixed-quota scheme and the need to stop the migration influx to Europe. The Czech President sees in the newcomers – especially in those of the Muslim faith – a serious threat for the European continent. “Although Jiří Drahoš declared himself also opposed to compulsory quotas, Miloš Zeman drew attention to Drahoš’ speech from 2017 when he declared that accepting 2,600 migrants should not be any problem for the Czech Republic” (Novotná 2018). By that, President Zeman wanted to demonstrate that connecting the issue of immigration and open access migration policy to Jiří Drahoš is thus justifiable, logical and true (TV Barrandov, January 2018).

Xenophobic Rhetoric and Its Criticism from Abroad

Experts then agreed that “the name Drahoš was by design associated with migration because of the negative emotions that the issue poses in the Czech society” (ČTK, leden 2018). The Czech President is well aware of this fact. Therefore, Zeman often points out migration as a sensitive issue, and he has been working effectively with the issue for quite a long time by now. Miloš Zeman is presenting himself as an active opponent of migration as well as a strong critic of Islam.

In Zeman’s opinion, terrorism is based on and has its roots in the Islamist ideology. Thus, he sees newcomers – especially the Muslims – as a potential danger for the Czech Republic and for Europe in general. “I’m not saying that all Muslims are terrorists, I am saying that all terrorists are Muslims. I think it possible to coexist with Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Confucianism, but there is no way to coexist with Islam,” said Miloš Zeman in an interview for magazine Reflex in August 2011. The Czech President also took a clear critical stance on the aforementioned “Scientists Against Fear and Indifference, saying that, “each of the signatories of the scientists’ call for tolerance should take in at least one refugee in his or her own home” (Stuchlíková 2015).

In October 2015, President Zeman was criticized by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zaid Raad Hussein for his xenophobic and Islamophobic speeches. Hussein also condemned the Czech Republic attitude to refugees in general. “According to credible reports from various sources,

violations of migrants' human rights are neither singular nor random but systematic: it seems to be an integral part of the Czech government's policy aimed at deterring immigrants and refugees from entering the country or staying there," said a Jordanian diplomat in his statement. (Lidovsky.cz 2015). The latest Amnesty International report on human rights situation in the world corresponds to this claim. The report criticizes not only the Czech Republic's attitude towards the admission of refugees, but also the xenophobic rhetoric of the Czech President and the Czech government as well. "The paragraph with the subheadline Racism and xenophobia states, among other things claims that during the election campaign, the Minister of the Interior presented the restrictive policy as a success that led to the fact that refugees are now avoiding the Czech Republic" (ČT24 2018). The presidential spokesman criticized the AI report considering it as a "pointless drive" and saying that the Czech President does not see the reason for changing his attitudes. Accordingly, in the presidential duel on TV Barrandov Miloš Zeman continued with his anti-immigrant rhetoric. As a response to the comment that there are hardly any refugees in the Czech Republic, the President Zeman opposed that "dealing with the floods when you are up to your knees in water is a little too late. Flood barriers must be built before the flood comes" (TV Barrandov 2018). The President Zeman – as he has already done many times before – rejected the European program for the re-distribution of immigrants (in which the Czech Republic has so far granted asylum applications to 12 immigrants). Moreover, he compared the quota system to a Czech fairy-tale about "insatiable Jezinky" when he stated that it would start with only 2,600 immigrants, but it would continue with another tens of thousands of them. "If you want to stop it, you have to stop at the beginning, or you will not be able to stop it ever again," said Miloš Zeman in the presidential election debate (TV Barrandov 2018).

Conclusion

Emotions are, however, a very powerful tool of political struggle and media coverage, so the topic of the migration crisis can be considered the most convenient theme for creating artificial threats. Some Czech politicians are well aware of this fact. For example, the Czech President Miloš Zeman is a very experienced politician. Therefore, he systematically builds his popularity on topics related to the rejection of migration. That is the reason why the migration issue and EU refugee quotas became an important topic of the 2018 presidential campaign. The difference between the electoral gains of both

candidates was just around 150 thousand votes. Considering an extremely large number of fake-news emails which were sent out in the disinformation campaign, they might have had an immense impact on the presidential election result.

In March, Miloš Zeman started his second term in the office, thus, his strategy can be considered as effective. On the other hand, we can observe that the President Zeman, by constant simplification of particular social phenomena such as the migration crisis, further encourages the incitement of fear among the Czechs, and consequently, he participates in the spread of disinformation in the Czech Republic.

In the case of the 2017 parliamentary elections, the anti-immigrant sentiment has played a significant role as well. As a result, the right-wing xenophobic extremist party has gained 22 seats in the Czech Parliament for the first time in the history of the democratic state. The SPD Party and its leader Tomio Okamura have used fake news to provoke the fear of unknown, religion intolerance, cultural animosity, racism and hatred in the Czech society. Paradoxically, there is no massive migration influx into the country. It proves that a coherent and well-played work with human emotions and people's imagination is the key for the political success of extremist nationalist and populist parties all over the world.

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Stefan Maximilian Drexler

Wir schaffen das! Do we?

Winged words, watchwords and slogans of politicians can play a very important role during election campaigns and put their stamp on them. With “Yes we can” Barack Obama in 2008 recommended himself to the voters as a pioneer of a progressive change, to which they themselves could contribute with their vote. Conversely, his successor Donald Trump promised to “Make America great again” to bring back the supposedly lost glamour after eight years under Obama. In post-war Germany, political slogans as carriers of clear, simplified messages in election campaign times are booming, too. The CDU was extremely successful in contesting the Bundestag election campaign in 1957 under the motto “No experiments” and secured an absolute majority of votes in parliament for the first and last time in a campaign, tailored to Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. Helmut Kohl also succeeded with his memorable message from the “Chancellor for Germany” in 1990, an impressive election victory in the first all-German elections since 1933, which his successor Angela Merkel 2013 could repeat with the slightly adapted slogan: “Female Chancellor for Germany”. Since then, the Christian Democrat Merkel has ruled in coalition with the Social Democrats in a country in the heart of Europe, where the economy has been prosperous for years now, where unemployment has reached record lows and that yet is as disunited as it has ever been since 1945. The key year for this is the tenth year of Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel: 2015. This was the year when Germany met with globalization face-to-face.

As a rule, it was the Germans who visited remote destinations as travel world masters, and goods “Made in Germany”, which were exported from the FRG to almost all countries of the world. For the first time, large numbers of people from other continents came to Germany with the request to receive at least temporary protection and accommodation. Among them were several hundred thousands of refugees from Syria and Iraq, as well as numerous migrants from the Maghreb countries, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and

sub-Saharan African states such as Nigeria, Gambia, Eritrea or the Congo. If Germany was initially affected by a wave of compassion and sympathy for the fate of these people, this positive mood, at the latest of the events in the New Year's Eve 2015/2016 of Cologne, in which predominantly Muslim migrants sexually molested women, New Year's eve rockets were shot on the Cologne Dom and policemen attacked, sharply decreased. This change of sentiment was since then extremely problematic for Germany's Chancellor, a year and a half before the next election. Merkel made a decision and seemed unwilling to change, which came as a surprise to many commentators and political analysts: "We can do it", was her motto, which she repeated several times since August 2015, including the CDU Federal Party Congress on 14 December 2015, just two weeks before the events of Cologne, and which became the soundbite of the German culture of hospitality.

Despite the German culture of hospitality, Angela Merkel could never convince a majority of Germans, which is illustrated by an annual study by the survey institute YouGov: at the beginning of the survey, in September 2015, the rate reached its best value with 43% approval and 51% rejection. In January 2016, under the impressions of Cologne events, but also in the last month of the survey, July 2016, only 27% of respondents agreed with the motto, 66% said no (Schmidt 31.07.2016). A poll by the daily Die Welt came to a similar conclusion three weeks before the 2017 general election: 56% of respondents saw the sentence as unfulfilled, with 38% opting for the most negative answer: the sentence did not come true at all. 37% considered the sentence correct. 7% were undecided in their rating. Looking at the evaluation of party supporters, only the voters of the Greens are clearly behind this sentence: 68.5% of the voters of the Greens consider it to be right and fulfilled. At least 56.5% of the Union voters still agree with their Chancellor, while the SPD voters reject the sentence at 52% and the liberal FDP at 58%. The AfD, whose voters reject it with overwhelming 97%, is clearly positioned, while voters of the Left Party are opposed to it by only 47%, while 43% support it (Die Welt 01.09.2017). "We can do it", an actually memorable and distinct sentence became a problem case for an otherwise well respected and popular Chancellor, which was preparing to renew her mandate at the federal elections on 24.09.2017.

The present study is therefore intended to clarify the impact of the topic of flight and migration on the German election campaign 2017. First of all, the electoral programs of the most important German parties are examined with regard to this subject before the election campaign itself is analyzed. Here, the two TV duels and selected speeches by party leaders and top candidates will play a major role. In the third part an analysis of the election results of the individual parties takes place under the aspect of migration, before a final conclusion about meaning, handling and effect of the topic is drawn. For this purpose, in addition to original documents such as the electoral programs, current studies of election research and reports by well-known German and international newspapers are used as main sources for this case study.

The German federal election campaign 2017 under the aspect of migration

The topic of flight and migration in electoral programs

In the first section of this analysis, the electoral programs of the CDU/CSU, SPD, The Left, B90/The Greens, FDP and AfD, which were elected into the Bundestag on 24.09.2017, will be examined on the existence and content of passages as well as striking statements on the subject of flight and migration. Election programs in Germany are written documents that, unlike long-term party programs, are intended to provide voters with an overview of the party's positions and intentions for the next four years in the event of government participation. For this reason, the Union also calls its election program traditionally government program (CDU/CSU Joint Electoral Program 31.07.2017). The program then forms the argumentative guideline for the party's campaigners, based on which they should argue in order to convey a clear and united picture of the party as a whole. At the same time, the electoral program is a more static tool for positioning and defining goals and can no longer cover short-term developments from the day of its adoption or react to it, as it is customary to get the program passed by delegates from the party rank and file on special party days about half a year before the election day.

CDU/CSU

For the Union parties CDU and CSU, there was a lot at stake in this election. It had achieved a very strong election result with 41.5% in 2013 and, in addition to the Chancellor's Office, which was inhabited by Angela Merkel since 2005, also represents the Ministers of Finance, Home Affairs, Defense and the German EU Commissioner. With regard to the topic of migration,

however, there has been an enormous disagreement between the two parties since 2015: while the conservative wing of the CDU and the CSU insist on limiting migration and therefore demand an upper-limit of 200,000 asylum seekers per year, the Chancellor rejects a concrete number. Accordingly, the Union published its program at the end of July as the last party, as this conflict could not really be cleared and the CSU persisted on a separate program for Bavaria, the so-called Bayernplan. The joint election program, under the motto: “For a Germany in which we live well and willingly”, from which the hashtag #fedidwugl was created, including the election call at the very end, only of 75 pages. It is very positively worded and resembles an up-to-date stocktaking with many forward-looking aspects. The preamble praises the success of the current federal government. It focuses on the wealth of the citizens, a growing economy, safe and well-organized social systems, low unemployment, especially among young workers, and a high level of internal and external security (ibid. p. 4). People would live in the most beautiful and best Germany ever. The subject of migration is barely covered. Rather, the program starts with the topic of economics and work. This is followed by family life, equal living conditions in all regions, finance/housing/health, digitization, Europe, internal and external security, climate and environmental protection and social cohesion. Migration-relevant passages are mainly found in two chapters that are more in the back of the program. In the chapter on internal and external security, there is a subchapter with the bulky title: “Help people in need, control and reduce migration, send rejected migrants back.” This title illustrates the dilemma and disagreement of the Union parties, accordingly, the issue is also dealt with very shortly. It is noted that Germany has faced the biggest refugee crisis since 1945, but has coped well with it. It points to successes in registering and reviewing immigrants and refugees, as well as increasing efforts to return them to their homes. However, within the subchapter of migration and flight, the topic changes very quickly to the fight against smugglers and traffickers, civil disaster management and emergency measures, a functioning public service and higher wages for civil servants. Also, there is no clear understanding of how to manage migration practically, even if the headline promises concrete proposals. It however makes it clear that the situation of 2015 should not repeat, but it does not adequately explain how this could be secured. Rather, it is made known that the Union parties want to fulfill Germany’s commitments regarding the relocation and resettlement of refugees (ibid. p. 62, 63). To this end, the Union would like to conclude a Marshal Plan with Africa in order to accelerate the economic

growth of the continent with aid for development and to better combat the causes of flight (ibid. p. 66, 67).

For a second time, the topic flight and migration is taken up in the context of integration. In the last chapter, “What holds our country together,” Germany is praised as a modern country with a strong identity, but which has developed further and whose social unity exists in diversity (ibid. p. 69). Unlike the AfD, the Union sees diversity as something unifying and positive. As an example of this positive and non-exclusive patriotism, the program names the 2006 FIFA World Cup, hosted by Germany (ibid. p. 70). As a minimum of integration, migrants are expected to be in favor of the German constitution, the Grundgesetz. The Union also defends the concept of a leading culture in a liberal-democratic context and rejects both, parallel societies and multiculturalism. Language, including dialects, participation in working life, acceptance of equal rights for men and women, respect for local customs and peculiarities of the country and its federal structure, voluntary work and an understanding of German history and therefore a strong responsibility for Israel are elements of the guiding culture according to the Union parties (ibid. p. 71). Interestingly, however, is the formulation that the party does not demand that all inhabitants of Germany, whether migrants or autochthonous, should participate in a good future for Germany, but only, almost shyly, asks them to do so (ibid. p. 70). The Union grants a special place to Christianity as a form of intellectual influence that shaped the country together with the Enlightenment, but clearly professes itself to the freedom of religion (ibid. p. 72, 73). It rejects political influence over religion from abroad, and declares terrorist attacks and violence in the name of Islam to be an abusive use of this religion, which is according to the CDU/CSU as peaceful as the other religions in the country (ibid. p. 74). In the case of dual citizenship, the Union opposes all other parties except the AfD and demands that this should remain the exception and calls for an intergenerational cut to prevent its passing on from one generation to the next (ibid p. 75). The Union lies on a line with the FDP, with its demand to punish and expel integration deniers, if necessary. In addition, all migrants with a permanent perspective should be able to quickly learn the German language and to take care of themselves, in order to give something back to the host society. The Union also advocates binding integration agreements and integration monitoring in order to detect and remedy problems and infringements (ibid. p. 74). The Union program does not comment on the critical question of how to deal with people with

limited residence status. This pattern of blurring neuralgic subjects and not answering questions runs through the entire program, giving the reader the feeling that the party avoids answering many of these crucial and for the parties obvious unpleasant issues.

Here, the CSU is clearer in its 30-page Bayernplan from 17.07.2017. At the beginning, the party gives five guarantees, which, in addition to security, family, participation of citizens and equal living conditions, also include an order guarantee. This guarantee implies integration at the standards of a leading culture, the conditions of 2015 must not be repeated. Migration must be limited and organized. Also, the Bayernplan contains the controversial demand for an upper limit in a prominent position, which is not in the common election program at all (Bayernplan p. 2). In the first chapter of the plan, the CSU also discusses threat scenarios from the aspect of security, for example by Islamists or Salafists, which are mainly caused by migrants. It also calls for a comprehensive registration and review of refugees and migrants in order to unmask terrorists (ibid. p. 3, 4). The CSU completely devotes three chapters to the topic. The fifth chapter calls for: "Germany to remain Germany". The CSU advocates integration based on the principle of demand and promote, whose standard is a guiding culture. She expressly turns against burqa, Salafism and Sharia, but also against Muslim Antisemitism and foreign influences on German Muslims. The CSU demands Imams to prove conscientiousness and loyalty to the state. Christianity is mentioned separately as identity-forming religion (ibid. pp. 13-15). In the sixth chapter, the party calls for a "Clear course on immigration". Here, the party repeats its order guarantee: immigration must be limited, for this it needs protected borders, asylum is only temporary, criminals should lose their protection claim, family reunification does not necessarily needs to take place in Germany, but in safe third-states like Lebanon or Jordan. Conversely, the party is also committed to refugee protection, but calls for a better distribution of refugees within the EU. Also, causes of flight should be combated and refugees should be looked after locally and not in Europe (ibid. pp. 15-17). In the seventh chapter: "Homeland and cohesion", the CSU emphasizes the historical growth of Bavaria and the contribution of all tribes to it. The German refugees after 1945, the Spätaussiedler and the Jewish community are especially appreciated. One sentence also refers to the new citizens who have found their home in Bavaria, but remains inexact. An appreciation of the guest workers or a positive mention of Islam is, in contrast to the common election program, missing (ibid. p. 17, 18). In the tenth and

final chapter, “Europe and global security”, the party calls for more commitment to protect the EU’s external border to stop migration (ibid. p. 28).

The party largely refrains from mentioning the benefits of migration, such as in the chapters on business and labor. In general, the Bayernplan is thus much more skeptical and cautionary than the Joint Electoral Program and focuses on the challenges and dangers of migration, but is also not formulated hostile towards migrants or refugees.

Overall, the two programs are not coherent on migration. The public dissent of the CDU and CSU is also evident in the program. The Joint Election Program largely conceals the topic or hides it under positive terms, while the Bayernplan is more aggressive here and leaves more room for the topic, emphasizing in particular the negative aspects of migration and making demands on migrants.

The Social Democrats/SPD

The Social Democratic Party with its top candidate Martin Schulz adopted its 113-page election program on 25 June 2017 in Dortmund. The program operates under the title: “Time for more justice” and can be regarded as an adversary to the CDU/CSU Joint Program. Where the Union highlights the benefits and achievements of the past four years, the SPD sees room for improvement. In line with this, the program focuses on social justice, education, care and health, the welfare state, fair taxes, equal living conditions and environmental protection, before the party devotes a chapter entitled: “An Orderly Migration Policy” on pages 74-78 to migration. The SPD does not speak of a limitation of migration. Rather, the chapter begins with the fact that the party is committed to receiving refugees and does not want to further restrict the right to asylum. It also wants to recognize gender-specific asylum reasons better and better protect certain groups such as women or homosexuals (SPD Election Program p. 76). In principle, causes of flight such as war and poverty should be combated. Doing so, the United Nations and the EU should receive more money. At the same time, the EU should better protect the external borders and spend more money on FRONTEX. Refugees already in Europe should be distributed according to a fair key within the EU (ibid. p. 74, 75).

The SPD confesses itself to deportations in an interim headline, but then goes on to explain what it does not want to do, namely to send people back into the absence of prospects or to insecure states such as Afghanistan. She also prefers voluntary return and incentives through voluntary return programs. Many demands of the SPD are also contradictory: they call for a faster asylum procedure, but also more thoroughness of the decision makers and “better” decisions in terms of the refugees, but does not explain what better decisions should be. Also, integration measures for language acquisition and value transfer should be financed even before the asylum decision, which should then be further strengthened with recognized applicants (*ibid.* p. 76, 77). On the last two pages of the chapter, the SPD demands immigration to be seen as an opportunity. First, she notes that asylum should be granted irrespective of economic considerations. Then it demands an immigration law, independent of the asylum legislation, following the Canadian model, to recruit qualified professionals. In the last part of the paragraph, however, the party would like to examine whether asylum seekers could fall under the Migration Act and thus remain in the country without any apparent reason for asylum if they have proven qualifications (*ibid.* p. 77, 78).

In the next chapter entitled: “It’s time for a modern and open society,” the SPD commits itself to a modern and cosmopolitan Germany and opposes foreclosure and new borders. The basis for this society is the German Grundgesetz and not a particular German guiding culture. Traditions need to be protected, but also developed to enable immigrants to integrate. No religion should be preferred. Accordingly, there is no particular mention of Christianity during the whole program (*ibid.* p. 78). Migrants tend to be seen as victims of discrimination, for example when seeking employment (*ibid.* p. 84) or affected by racism and in need of help from associations and administrations. The SPD explicitly supports these groups and thanks them for their work and their assistance in combating discrimination (*ibid.* p. 79). Muslims are also seen as part of the country (*ibid.* p. 88). The problem of the Islamist hate preachers is briefly mentioned. Here financing should be stopped and individual centers be closed. However, the prevention work and the good cooperation with the mosque communities is praised. In addition, this is not to be seen as a problem of migration but a German one, because the migrants would radicalize in Germany and not enter the country as extremists (*ibid.* p. 70, 71).

In summary, it can be said that the SPD focuses on the topic more than the Union, but the program in the area of light and migration is also heavily influenced by the ideological background of the party and does not deal with current developments. It is very much focused on the needs of migrants as an ideologically positive connoted group. Problems caused by migrants are not named or alienated from the context of migration. If there are problems caused by migrants or their descendants, the host country is largely responsible for this. However, when there are problems for migrants, they should be resolved with more money and more effort for a better understanding for migrants, shown by the autochthonous population. In an egalitarian society, aspired to by the SPD, the distinction between new and old citizens is also meaningless. It is correspondingly difficult for the party to consistently raise the demand for limitation and control of migration and to place it in the election program. There are such attempts, for example, when the party speaks of orderly migration, the deportation of migrants who have committed delinquency or the repatriation of rejected asylum seekers, but these headlines are not substantiated and rather often relativised in the following chapter.

The Left

The Left Party, as the largest opposition party of the 17th Bundestag, had completed its election program under the title “Social. Just. Peace for everyone” at a party congress on June 11, 2017 in Hanover. The program has 18 chapters, of which chapter 11 enriches the integration and two others, chapters 15 and 17, deal partly with migration. Similarly to the SPD, the Left also places work, social security systems, health and care, but also housing, education and pensions at the beginning of its program. The left recognizes in the eleventh chapter of its program that a good co-existence does not succeed easily. However, like the SPD, it sees the state as having the duty to look after the migrants. The Left notes, that from her point of view, bureaucratic sanctions would aggravate the integration of immigrants and refugees. Also, the state would harass migrants for no reason and discriminate against them. From the perspective of the Left, it would be better for migrants to provide language courses and entry-level jobs to them from the first day of their arrival in Germany, irrespective of their social and official status, in order to enable them to participate in society. The Federal Government, on the other hand, has not created any conditions for good integration and is pursuing a policy of foreclosure against immigrants, refugees and people of non-German origin. It uses mood-building to simulate a capacity to act, while other-

wise it does not adequately acknowledge the real problems such as housing shortages. Refugees and migrants also need the same facilities as Germans. The Left therefore calls for an expansion of public transport and social tickets for migrants, better education and health care, support for anti-racist sport facilities or the creation of a Refugee Ombudsman to report discrimination to (The Left Electoral program pp. 64-67). Also, the integration agenda would have to be shifted from the Federal Ministry of the Interior to the Social and Work Ministry, as this is the case in Thuringia or Berlin.

Restrictions on asylum law are strongly opposed by The Left, but rather it wants to expand it and not just grant a residence permit to political and war refugees but to other persecuted groups as well (ibid. p. 65). When it comes to combating the causes of flight, the left sees them mainly in Germany itself. It criticizes armaments exports, agricultural corporations and unfair trade agreements with Africa and Asia as push factors that would force migrants to emigrate. Development aid for states should not be tied to measures to secure borders and help Europe to defend against refugees (ibid. p. 98). The Left calls for the abolition of FRONTEX and demands: Ferries instead of FRONTEX (ibid. p. 107). It rejects EU cooperation with autocratic states in Africa and Asia. The agreement with Turkey should therefore be terminated and the cooperation with Libya's coast guard ended (ibid.). The Left states that the Dublin system has failed, whereas the EU borders should be open to anyone who wants to seek protection in any European state (ibid. p. 108).

Finally, it should be noted that the party program of the Left often takes extreme positions, which, however, are quite acceptable with the left ideology of the party and are coherently formulated in itself. As a solution to overcoming the social divide, it considers an expansion of state services to be indispensable. It does not distinguish between Germans and immigrants in their demands. It therefore considers attacks on asylum-seeker homes an attack on the entire democracy in Germany (ibid. p. 109). Conversely, there is no topic on violence that could come from migrants, such as terrorists or criminals in the program. Like the SPD program, migrants are primarily victims of global inequality to which Germany contributes. Therefore, all improvements to benefit the Germans should automatically apply to immigrants. In its program, The Left thus insists on a consistent inclusion of immigrants via incentives. On the other hand, there is no approach of limiting immigration. Migrants' respect for traditions or a guiding culture is not demanded, rath-

er, their individual lifestyles should be respected (ibid. p. 64). Also, Islam is only themed in the context of Islamophobia and criticism of Islam, which in the view of the Left Party is hate speech and must be avoided. That these life plans often correspond to the mission statement of the Left of an emancipated, equal society, which is basically assumed in the 144 pages of the election program, is not further elaborated. In addition, the program often uses simplifications, slogans and polemics to attack the wealthy, the economy or the government.

B90/ The Greens

B90/ The Greens as the smallest opposition party in the outgoing Bundestag adopted the election program: “Future is made of courage”, on 18 June 2017, a week after the Left Party, in Berlin. The topic of migration and flight finds quite a prominent place in the program. Already in the introduction, the party picks up on the topic and makes it clear that it wants to fight the causes of flight, not the refugees (B90/The Greens Election Program p. 7). Otherwise, chapter C: “The world at a glance” contains several sub-chapters on the subject, such as “We protect refugees and fight the causes of flight”, or “We shape our country of immigration”. With this formulation, the Greens also clearly declare their understanding of Germany as an immigration country and designate it as the only party in a headline. The assessment of flight and migration is also the same: Refugees are granted protection without any upper limit, migration is defined as absolutely positive and the population has changed for the better. A “national leading culture” (ibid. p. 152) is rejected by the Greens as a restriction of an integrative concept of culture in the name of an “alleged cultural identity” (ibid.). The Greens oppose further tightening and restrictions on immigrants and refugees. They recognize the actions of the Federal Government in the fall of 2015 as praiseworthy, but accuse it since then, like the Left Party, to follow a policy of deterrence and foreclosure. Similarly to US President Trump, Germany and the EU would now hide behind fences and barbed wire. The Greens criticize this as inhuman and an aggravation of the migration problem, no contribution to its solution (ibid. p. 98). Instead, the Greens want to explicitly create legal immigration and escape routes (ibid. p. 109). As far as the processing of asylum applications is concerned, they propose a Fast & Fair procedure, which provides independent legal advice from the outset to asylum seekers. If the Federal Office for Migration/BAMF needs more than one year to process an application, then this should be considered an old case and the migrant should receive

a residence status. Like the Left Party, the Greens want to introduce special protection grounds for women, homosexuals and children and to keep them in separate camps, since ordinary refugee camps are too insecure for them (ibid. p. 105, 106). Only tolerated migrants should also be allowed to stay in the country indefinitely after five years. Restrictions to family reunifications are fundamentally rejected by the Greens (ibid. p. 107). Access to health and education should be improved, whereas residence restrictions should be abolished.

In the chapter on Germany as a country of migration, the Greens emphasize the advantages of multiculturalism. According to them, diverse societies are more dynamic, more creative and therefore more successful than homogeneous ones. Migrants are a part of Germany, migration must be seen as an enrichment and the country therefore become more attractive for well-educated migrants in the global competition for skilled workforce, which is why the Greens demand a “modern immigration law for a modern immigration country” (ibid. p. 111). Like the Left Party, the Greens want a transfer of the subject of migration from the Ministry of the Interior, but to an own Immigration and Integration ministry (ibid.). In addition, the right to vote for migrants should be extended generously, and citizenship should be replaced by a place of residence principle in order to give people without a German or European passport the right to vote (ibid. p. 115).

It is striking that the Greens indirectly address numerous issues such as forced and child marriage, Islamism, homophobia, Antisemitism or the poor social status of women in certain migrant societies. As solutions, they only demand that the state makes an effort to better protect migrants. The fact that it is predominantly migrants themselves who discriminate against their own compatriots, is, however, not addressed, as it would probably not correspond to the image of the migrant as needy victims painted by the Green Electoral Program. Overall, the Green Program follows similar premises to those of the Left Party and can be considered very migrant-friendly. There are hardly any demands for limitation or compulsion towards migrants, for example concerning the question of repatriation.

The FDP

For the FDP, which just missed the re-entry into the Bundestag in 2013, there was a lot in play at the general election. Accordingly, the Federal Party Congress in Berlin passed an election program under the title: “Let’s stop watching”, quite early the year, on April 30, 2017, the final version of which was published in summer 2017. Thematically the party focuses in its 155-page program very strongly on topics which it identified as future policies and gives them mostly classic liberal answers. These include more money for education, balanced public finances, a reform of the administrative state, empowerment, self-determined and responsible citizens, as well as civil liberties and human rights. Finally, under one of the last chapters, the party subsumed the topic of asylum and migration. In general, it is noticeable that the FDP does not make the topic a priority subject, but considers it very differentiated and also becomes more concrete in comparison to most other parties. Already before the actual migration block, the party demands an immigration law in the field of economy and work. It makes it clear, too, that it does not want to abolish the fundamental right to asylum, but laments on its abuse and supports the repatriation of rejected migrants.

The immigration law should be determined on the basis of language skills, age and qualification. It is important that migrants can permanently make their living on their own. For rejected refugees, similarly to the concept of the Greens, they are proponents of the opportunity to change the legal system of asylum to migration, but only if the desired qualifications allow this (FDP Electoral Program 07.08.2017 p. 68, 69). For the FDP, Germany is a *de facto* immigration country, which depends on migration due to a demographic change and whose society must be open to qualified immigrants. Accordingly, the party would like to recognize foreign qualifications and recognize English as a further language of traffic and administration besides German (*ibid.* p.70, 71). In addition, the party criticizes both leftists and conservatives for their approach to integration. The conservatives had for too long negated the fact that Germany was an immigration country, whilst the political left did not disclose the problems and saw all migrants as an enrichment (*ibid.* p. 69, 70). With regard to an open society, the FDP is in favor of maintaining dual citizenship, thereby rejecting its limitation, as demanded by the Union parties. At the same time, however, she openly addresses problems in dealing with Islam without explicitly mentioning this particular religion, as the Liberals in general want to treat all religions equal. As a liberal party, the FDP

sets on individual rights and freedom in the exercise of cultural identities for migrants, too, and opposes the ban of concealment. Nevertheless, the party names it as a problem, if, for example, the rights of women, other religions or sexual minorities are threatened by migrant behavior. As a measure of values for integration, the FDP names the German Grundgesetz and less traditions. However, if certain behaviors go beyond the value of the Grundgesetz, the party advocates strict sanctions against immigrants who refuse to integrate (ibid. p. 82, 83).

The issue of asylum is dealt with by the FDP quite briefly. In addition to the above-mentioned belief in the right to asylum, it rejects the fixed upper limit of the CSU. Nevertheless, she criticizes the government's loss of control in 2015 as chaos that must be ended and not repeated. It calls for hotspots for asylum seekers from safe countries of origin whose applications are processed there quickly and whose repatriation should be carried out quickly as well. In addition, the FDP relies on Europe. Development co-operation with Africa needs to be better coordinated and the financing of refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon secured. As the Dublin III system has failed for the Liberals, all EU countries should contribute to the reception of refugees. The FDP advocates binding quotas based on population and economic power (ibid. p. 107, 108). At the same time, however, FRONTEX should also be developed into a real border protection authority, registering illegal border crossings and, if necessary, stopping them (ibid. p.110). Finally, the party comprehensively addresses issues such as Islamist terrorists, Salafists or hate preachers, which they want to counteract by prevention work at youth centers, schools and mosques, but also in social networks (ibid. p. 113, 114).

Basically, it remains to say that the FDP dares in its program a balancing act between individualism and the protection of the population by the state. On the one hand, the party wants the state to focus on certain state affairs and state action only in selected areas and urges for thrift state. On the other hand, it recognizes the role of the state in the management of migration and asylum seekers and thus the financial needs of the authorities in this area. The program remains somewhat unclear on the question of limiting immigration. Primarily, the qualification, demand for skilled workers and thus the usefulness of the migrant for the economy is the decisive criterion to allow migration. At the same time, it defends humanitarian values and rejects a limitation of asylum seekers to a specific number.

The AfD

The AfD is the youngest of the parties examined here. It was created in February 2013 at the height of the euro crisis as a party that rejected the rescue of Greece and narrowly failed in the federal elections in September 2013. After a brief soaring victory in the 2014 European elections, however, the party initially entered a serious crisis, from which it was able to work its way through pronounced criticism of the Federal Government's asylum and migration policy from 2015 onwards. The election program for the 2017 Bundestag elections under the name: "Program for Germany" was decided on 20 April in Cologne and is the shortest examined document with 74 pages. In line with the content of the party, the rejection of migration and asylum is one of the main points of the AfD. Of the 15 chapters of the program, there are at least 10 whole chapters or parts in which migration is addressed and viewed predominantly critically.

For example, Islam gets its own performance in the sixth chapter. The AfD argues that it is largely incompatible with the free democratic order of Germany. Islam does not belong to Germany according to the AfD, and the growing population of five million Muslims in Germany would be a great danger to peace in the country. The AfD recognizes that many Muslims would live right-of-way in Germany. At the same time, however, it laments on parallel structures and the tolerance of the use of sharia in Germany. The party is committed to religious freedom, but defines Germany as a secular state in which freedom of religion must be limited, for example through the freedom of expression and art. Accordingly, the AfD rejects the titling of their criticism of Islam as Islamophobic or racist, as is done in particular by the Greens, the Left Party and related journalists, organizations and clubs. The AfD calls for increased efforts to combat Salafism and radical Islam, to stop foreign financing of mosques and clubs and to shut down radical places of worship. She also wants a minaret ban after the Swiss model, as she sees in the minaret and in the public Muezzin prayer a sign of religious imperialism through Islam, which would not fit Germany because it violated the equal rights of religions. The cooperation with the Islamic associations is seen, in contrast to CDU and SPD, critical, as these would often be controlled from abroad. In contrast to the FDP, the AfD advocates a ban on full veiling and also wants to ban the wearing of the headscarf in public places (AfD Electoral Program p. 34, 35).

In the seventh chapter, the AfD thematizes demography and migration in Germany. From their point of view, there is a German state people, suffering from childlessness. Therefore, it relies on a “national population policy” (ibid. p. 37). This includes strengthening the family, rewarding child-wealth, emphasizing marriage while rejecting alternative education models, views abortions and feminism critically and wants more rights for fathers in divorce cases (ibid. p. 37, 38). In the educational chapter, the AfD warns of the consequences of too many migrant children in school classes. When educating asylum seekers, their targeted return to their homeland should not be forgotten (ibid. p. 44). It also rejects Islamic education in schools. Special rights for Muslims, for example in the field of physical education or on school trips, the AfD considers an impediment to integration. Koran schools the party wants to check in principle for their constitutional loyalty. The AfD demands explicitly: “Integration does not mean that Germany adapts to Muslims. Integration means that Muslims adapt to Germany.” (ibid. p. 45). In the cultural chapter, it rejects multiculturalism as a failed ideology. Germany has a culture and many traditions that need to be protected, for example by promoting and appreciating one’s own language more strongly (ibid. p. 47). With regard to social policy, the AfD considers the current immigration policy to be irresponsible and damaging, since immigrants bring too few qualifications and thus claim too much financial resources from the state (ibid. p. 56). Similarly, the AfD argues in the area of health that refugees and migrants would need too many resources and burden the system (ibid. p. 60) She also wants to end the German-Turkish social security agreement of 1964, as it assumes a better position of the former guest workers by the application of the Turkish family term, which also includes the parents of the respective guest worker and co-insures them under German conditions, which is not the case with German insured (ibid. p. 62). The topic of internal security is linked by the AfD massively to migrants, too. In addition to terrorism, she cites foreigner crime, especially in the area of drug and violence offenses as a central element of internal security. She also points out that the majority of organized crime criminals are migrants. It demands a rigid expulsion of criminal migrants and a serving of prison sentences abroad and not in Germany. In addition, criminals should not be naturalized. On the contrary, they should lose citizenship even easier than today (ibid. pp. 23-25).

It should be noted that the AfD, as expected, gives the largest space to the issue of migration from all parties, and in almost all its chapters it draws a line to migration and asylum and its effects. The party is very concrete in its demands, but also extremely positioned as a kind of reflection on the Greens and The Left. The program contains nationalistic elements in relation to migration and is accordingly the program which argues most coherently for a rejection of immigration. The focus of the program is on national law-making, international law is judged as a hindrance in the implementation of its own goals. The program is also very easy to read and clearly arranged due to short sentences and many indents.

Migration as crucial election campaign theme? Analysis of TV-debates and selected speeches

While party and electoral programs are more static documents, hardly to be changed after being decided on by party congresses or federal party conferences, the statements of politicians in the election campaign have their very own dynamics. Top politicians of all parties react with their statements in two directions: on the one hand, they reinforce the statements of party and electoral programs and bring their core theses scarcely formulated and pointed to the electorate. On the other hand, unforeseen events may make it necessary to adapt the election program, to make it more concrete or even change it. It may also be the case that a top politician with high media reach is heavily dissatisfied with some program items of the election program and expresses this dissatisfaction opposing the majority decision. Thus the voters may listen to the politician and by doing so perceive the position of the party differently to its the original direction set in the electoral program. The second chapter of this analysis will therefore deal with this dynamic aspect of the election campaign, which traditionally gains momentum in the FRG after the summer holidays from end of August/beginning of September on, about four weeks before the elections. For this, the TV duels at the beginning of September will be examined first, followed by a closer look at selected comments and statements by leading politicians on the subject of migration during this politically intense four-weeks period.

The two TV duels in analysis

During the 2017 general election campaign there were two major election debates prepared and broadcast jointly by public broadcasters and private companies Pro7/Sat1 and RTL. Chancellor Angela Merkel and her toughest

challenger, the former European Parliament President Martin Schulz of the SPD, duelled on 03.09.2017 for 90 minutes at prime time at 20:15 clock in a format later criticized as very rigid and artificial, in which the candidates were asked questions alternately by four moderators in an exactly defined order. The topic of migration was present in the first third of the duel (ARD I The TV duel 03.09.2017 05:32). None of the two candidates, however, was attracted to controversial statements in this regard. Merkel initially wanted to combat the causes of flight in analogy to most electoral programs of all parties and to expand development aid, but made it clear that migration had to be limited (ibid. 6:38). To the sentence that Islam belongs to Germany, which would be rejected by two-thirds of voters, the Chancellor replied evasively, she understood the skepticism, but her government had achieved much in the field of integration and the Muslims would contribute to the economic success of the country (ibid. 19:28). Similarly, she responded to the issue of the opening of the border in 2015 and the failure to close the border hereafter again, which according to the moderator was perceived by many citizens as a loss of control of the state (ibid. 13:40). The Chancellor did not want to recognize a mistake in her own policy in the non-closing of the border, but admits that she ignored the subject of people on the move for too long (ibid. 13:52). The question of more deportations showed a similar pattern: Merkel agrees with the moderator that more effort need to be made to deport people without residential status, points out to successes in deporting migrants from the Balkan region and announces that she wants to continue to be involved in the topic (ibid. 28:35). Schulz criticized that Merkel did not integrate the European partners well enough and destroyed their trust, but in principle he would have opened the borders for the refugees as well (ibid. 08:34, 13:10). Regarding the question of immigration law, both agree in principle and Schulz demands a law based on the Canadian or Australian model, which should regulate migration in a European context (ibid. 35:45). He refers to the rejections of Hungary and Poland in this question, where he pleads to clearly separate migration from asylum, but does not do so himself at this point (ibid. 37:05). Domestically, Schulz wants to identify hate preachers in mosques and deport them to their countries of origin (ibid. 27:17). Merkel answered evasively that they do not ignore the problem and that her government is on the right track to combat it. Schulz deviates from the party program of the SPD by calling for an end to the accession negotiations with Turkey (ibid. 26:20). The Chancellor responds by saying that these negotiations are currently basically non-existent and that one needs the line of con-

versation with Turkey regarding the refugee agreement to which she wants to hold on. Schulz also wants to do this and puts himself on the defensive on an argumentative basis, even as he answers very vaguely to the question of protecting the European external border against migrants and his position on it (ibid. 35:00). The Chancellor also took advantage of the issue of the border guard and Turkey after a good 40 minutes to finally move away from the topic of flight and migration. Rather, she now brought her diplomatic expertise in dealing with Erdogan, Putin or North Korea into play. The second third of the debate turned, unusually for German TV debates, to foreign policy. Here, both candidates again had similar views and therefore waived on escalations. In the last third of the duel, a short and unappealing potpourri on topics such as labor market reforms, pension, car toll or the diesel affair was streaked.

Overall, the Chancellor was considered the winner of the duel since Schulz could hardly bring the incumbent in distress even on subjects like migration, where she was mainly evasive and vague. However, the duel was also commonly considered boring and superficial as little new was said and, though broadcasted on five major channels, it was seen by 16 million potential voters and therefore by 1.5 million viewers less than in 2013. Both candidates held very strictly to the statements of their electoral programs and hardly deviated from this. Because of the questioning style of the moderators, there was almost never a direct confrontation between Merkel and Schulz. Likewise, the format prevented problems from being addressed in more detail. However, some further TV duels as suggested by the SPD in response to the criticism of the debate to discuss topics even more detailed were rejected by Chancellor Merkel.

One day later, on 04.09.2017, also at 20:15, the 75-minute long, so-called mini TV duel took place, referred to as 5-fight or pentathlon, in which Sarah Wagemknecht for the Left Party, Cem Özdemir for the Greens, Joachim Herrmann for the CSU, Christian Lindner for the FDP and Alice Weidel for the AfD met with only two moderators to continue the debate of the evening before. This duel initially revolved around digitization, education and housing, after it had been criticized that these topics had not been taken into consideration the previous evening (ARD II The pentathlon after the TV duel 04.09.2017). Interestingly, Sarah Wagenknecht first addressed the problems of migrant children at school, but no one took up on that (ibid. 10:18). After half an hour, the moderator asked CSU's top candidate Herrmann about

family reunification for refugees, to whom Angela Merkel had evaded the previous evening (ibid. 28:57). Herrmann tried to deal with the issue quickly by returning to the topic of housing and infrastructure, but made it clear that recognized asylum seekers should continue to have the right to family reunification, but not subsidiary recognized migrants without actual asylum status. He received support from FDP leader Christian Lindner. He spoke in favor of a clear separation of migrants and asylum seekers and a quick return of rejected applicants. He also demanded an immigration law. Although it moved in terms of content in the area of the liberal election program, it was rhetorically much harder to limit migration than the formulations in it (ibid. 31:26). Alice Weidel complained about the federal government's bad credit on deportations, especially with criminals (ibid. 33:26). Sarah Wagenknecht then defended the right to asylum, but demanded more voluntary departures, and unlike the election program of the Left Party, she did not want to reject deportations in general and in individual cases considered them justified (ibid. 36:00). Green leader Özdemir was also critical of Salafism and understood the fears of many citizens concerning the topic of migration. He, too, appears less radically and more open on limiting migration than the very migration-friendly program of the Greens suggests (ibid. 38:27). On the question of internal security, both, Herrmann and Lindner, emphasized that, in view of the attacks in Barcelona, they wanted to better equip the police in combating terrorist attacks, especially from the Islamist milieu (ibid. 42:09). In this regard, Alice Weidel attacks Sarah Wagenknecht directly and cites the electoral program of the Left party, in which the party calls for open borders for all people. Wagenknecht reacts by declaring this to be a future version and not a practical policy for the next few years (ibid. 55:26). The rest of the duel then evolves especially around Turkey, possible Nazi politicians of the AfD and the diesel scandal.

In general, this duel was better received than the Chancellor's duel the night before, because it was perceived livelier, more authentic, thematically more versatile, yet deeper in content than the other duel. Above all, FDP chief Lindner scored points over his very clear points of view. Furthermore, the appearance of the leading candidate of AfD Weidel was one of the best of an AfD politician during the election campaign. With regard to the topic of migration, Sarah Wagenknecht and Cem Özdemir positioned themselves noticeably to the right of their own party program, while Joachim Herrmann once again had problems coping with the dissent between the CDU in the

form of the statements of the Chancellor and the CSU in his contributions and therefore, even though he often pointed out his achievements as Minister of the Interior of the state of Bavaria, tended to be in the defensive.

Two further debates on 30.08.2017 and 21.09.2017 were not included in the analysis, as they either took place only on private channels or without inclusion of all relevant top candidates and therefore caused little media interest. For example, Chancellor Merkel and Martin Schulz were only shown in the debate on 03.09.2017 and did not appear on 21.09.2017, while representatives of the CDU/CSU and the SPD were not invited to a debate on 30.08.2017.

Selected speeches in analysis

In this chapter, the most important and most respected statements of politicians during the election campaign with regard to the topic of migration are analyzed for their media reception and later impact. For reasons of space, only one quotation by a leading politician and its effects on the election campaign will be discussed per party, even if several statements were available from the CSU, the Greens and the AfD, but with all of them being in a similar direction to the election program and therefore not offering too much new. Angela Merkel (CDU) vs. Horst Seehofer (CSU): “There will be no/an upper limit.”

An upper limit for refugees: yes or no? In the course of the election campaign, the question of Germany’s ability to absorb and integrate refugees and migrants in the country became an increasingly pressing issue for the CDU/CSU parliamentary group, to which they found no joint answer. While Merkel answered superficially to most questions about the refugee crisis, she was very clear on the question of an upper limit in all interviews and speeches. So she declared in the ARD election arena two weeks before the election again: “My attitude to the upper limit is indeed known that I do not want it. I do not want it. Guaranteed. I also do not consider it practicable.” (Frankfurter Rundschau 11.09.2017). The Chancellor promised voters that she would not agree to only allow 200,000 people to claim asylum per year, as requested by the CSU. Shortly before that, Bavarian Prime Minister and CSU party leader Horst Seehofer had responded to the same question in a completely different manner: “We are strongly in favor of the upper limit, and we will emphatically defend it, before and after the election.” (Ibid.) This disagreement irritated the voters, because throughout the whole election campaign, the fault lines,

which had previously been painstakingly concealed, now reopened and were visible to all potential voters. Both party leaders ignored each other's views and there was little room for a face-saving compromise between these maximum positions. Only reluctantly, the CSU had previously supported Merkel's request for a fourth term as Chancellor, but was finally deterred from a break of its close ties with the CDU. The main criticism from Bavaria was always Merkel's attitude to the refugee crisis. While the CDU defended this, the CSU criticized the opening of the border or Merkel's attacks against Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. In addition to the Joint Electoral Program, the CSU also demanded its own paper, the Bayernplan, quoted in the first chapter, in which skepticism about migration from Asian and African countries is more clearly reflected than in the CDU/CSU's Joint Election Program. Ultimately, both parties were unable to resolve this dispute until the election, which created a massive credibility and coherence problem, as no one knew how Merkel's clear rejection of an upper limit and Seehofer's insistence on such would lead to a working post-election migration policy.

Aydan Özoguz (SPD) "A German leading culture is not identifiable."

Among the most controversial politicians of the last legislative period was certainly the SPD politician Aydan Özoguz. She was nominated by the Social Democrats as Integration Commissioner of the Federal Government after the election in 2013 and as such in the Federal Chancellery in the rank of a Minister of State responsible for the German Integration Agenda. Since 2011, she was also the first Muslim woman deputy chairman of the SPD. Özoguz was criticized mainly because of their unilateral demands that the German majority society should make a step towards the migrants and better accept their peculiarities. In addition, her name came up in negative headlines due to criminal and Islamist activities of her brothers. They run the website Muslim market, where they give Muslims advice on Islam-compliant life and offer them addresses and names of Muslim doctors or lawyers to seal them off from the majority society. The website was monitored by the constitution protection service and classified as anti-Israeli and anti-Zionist. For many Union politicians, Özoguz was therefore already before their controversial statement a red cloth and resignation ripe. In a debut contribution for the newspaper Der Tagesspiegel, Özoguz then wrote in May 2017 another highly controversial sentence. She stated, that: "a specific German culture, beyond language, is simply unidentifiable." (Jaeger, 31.08.2017). In addition, Özoguz spoke vehemently against a leading culture in the article. In her view, this

is an ideologically charged concept of the right, which one can not fill with content without slipping into ridiculous clichés. Moreover, a leading culture would be excluding migrants, while immigration and diversity would have shaped and made Germany strong. Immigrants should not be prescribed a specific, traditional culture, but rather they should focus on the principles of the Grundgesetz. She wanted a kind of social contract for all and thus a departure from old traditions of the majority society. According to her, there is no difference, regardless of “what someone believes, reads or wears” (ibid.). Özoguz thus moves to the very edge of the SPD election program, which recognizes traditions but also considers them flexible. Supporters of the Integration Commissioner then interpreted their statements as a response to the then CDU Federal Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière, who had tried a few days before exactly what Özoguz had designated as impossible, namely to summarize the German Leitkultur in 10 theses. Among other things, he had spoken out against the burqa and religious extremism (ibid.). On the other hand, critics accused her of having a fundamental problem with German culture and of refusing to acknowledge it, and therefore considering her a complete miscast for the office of the Integration Commissioner and an obstacle to integration.

Alexander Gauland (AfD): “We shall then dispose of her in Anatolia!”

To this statements of Aydan Özoguz also responded the top candidate of the AfD, Alexander Gauland, in a campaign speech on the Thuringian Eichsfeld. This region was considered to be special, as the population here during the Reformation remained faithful to the ruler, the Prince-Bishop of Mainz, and thus Catholic. Even during the Nazi period and later especially in the GDR, this Catholic island was seen as the center of resistance against the respective regimes. A secularization as in the rest of the GDR did not take place here, the population remained catholic and continued to follow traditional customs, resisting the pressure of both, the Gestapo and the Stasi. Gauland therefore consciously used the well-attended event to work out the contrast between the Eichsfeld area with its inhabitants and the statements of the integration commissioners. He literally said, “That’s what a German-Turkish woman says. Invite her to Eichsfeld and tell her what German culture is. After that she will never come here again, and we will then, thank God, dispose of her in Anatolia.” (Ibid.) Especially the last part of the statement was later perceived by all parties as misanthropic and xenophobic, since he referred to a human being as rubbish to be disposed of at a waste disposal site and

also, Özoguz was born in Hamburg, not in Turkey. The Chancellor then accused Gauland of open racism and reiterated her rejection of a coalition with the AfD for its migration policy (ibid.). In all outrage, Gauland's well planned quote may have helped the AfD. A defense of the controversial SPD politician by Union politicians was at least after their statements on the leading culture for conservatives in the Union highly problematic. Gauland, on the other hand, polarized and achieved the desired effect: rural German idyll of the AfD against urban cultural relativism of the other parties, which earned the AfD later, especially in rural areas, high number of voters. The SPD is likely to have profited from Gauland's quote as well, since now the attention was on his words and Özoguz was seen as victim of an unfair attack of the AfD top candidate. So Gauland was in the center of criticism and no longer the controversial SPD woman. Nevertheless, Özoguz did not receive a mandate in the cabinet again after the elections and also lost her post as deputy federal chairman.

Sarah Wagenknecht (The Left): “Not all refugees can come.”

The topic of migration caused great problems in the election campaign of the Left Party, which had to fear a moving away of voters in their strongholds in the east to the AfD, and at the same time did not want to ruin itself with the urban, student voters in West Germany and therefore dared to do a balancing act similar to the FDP's. While the party's program was clearly immigrant and refugee-friendly and dismissed by critics as Utopian and wishful thinking, top candidate Sarah Wagenknecht sought a more realistic view of the migration debate. Already in 2016, she tried to give the party a more balanced image in terms of migration policy. She stated that in her opinion, all refugees could by no means come to Germany and a direct reception of refugees from Greece or Italy was not possible. She avoided the word upper limit, but spoke of capacity limits and limits of receptivity in the population, which were to be respected. She very early rejected schools with a too high proportion of migrants because she did not see integration possibilities here if too many children did not speak German properly. She pointed out, however, that the limits of acceptable migrant admission to Germany, for example in the housing market, are politically movable and that investments in education, housing construction and social welfare systems would increase receptivity (Wilmer 11.03.2016). Thus, she clearly left the course set by her party, which she could afford, however, because of her popularity within her own electorate. Furthermore, she publicly criticized the sentence: “We can

do it” of Federal Chancellor Merkel as a meaningless phrase. She spoke in the light of terrorist attacks in Ansbach and Ochsenfurt of potential threats to public safety caused by migrants, which were to be detected by the police and the secret service in order to restore security and was apart from the AfD the only politician in Germany to directly link refugees and terrorism. For this, she received from her party and co-fraction leader Dietmar Bartsch “the dark yellow card” (Spiegel Online 29.07.2016). In an interview with the Munich *Abendzeitung* she called referred to refugees as a cause of dissatisfaction in addition to low pensions and high rents and finally renounced frontal attacks on the Chancellor during the election campaign, although one could see in the TV duel that she still considered the course of the Left Party with respect to migration and refugees wrong (*Abendzeitung* 16.09.2017). This internal disunity of the party was probably also visible to the voters, who gave the party quite low 9.2%. The Left could thus hardly benefit from the strong losses of the SPD with an increase of only 0.6%. Especially among pensioners, workers and unemployed, i.e. the lower income groups and actual core voters, the party performed nationwide with 10-11% each surprisingly poor (Lehmann 27.09.2017). In the East, it fell sharply from 22.7% to 17.8%, which was compensated by a gain of 5.6% to 7.4% in the West. Already on election night Wagenknecht then broke her silence and again attacked their inner party competitors: It was too easy to ignore migration and problems caused by it for a year, the party saw its core voters abandoning and saw the consequences of this at the election. On the following day she continued with her criticism, repeating her assessment of March 2016 publicly in a television interview: “We have to talk openly about whether really anyone who wants to come to Germany can do so.” (Ibid.).

Katrin Göring-Eckardt (The Greens):”These people are a gift for Germany“
Significantly less skeptical than the top candidate of the Left Party on the refugee policy was her Green counterpart, Katrin Göring-Eckardt. She had decided early to support the welcome policy of Angela Merkel. At the Green party congress in November 2015, she said: “Our country will change, drastically. And I’m looking forward to it! “ (Meiritz 21.11.2015) At the Synod of the Evangelical Church a few days later, she went even further and referred to people who flee war and poverty as gifts: “We are suddenly given people. These people are a gift for Germany “ (Graw 31.07.2017). She repeated these theses several times in the election campaign, completely staying in line with the Green Electoral Program and positioning the Greens as the clearest ad-

vocates of a welcome culture and a policy of open borders. In a detailed interview with German daily newspaper *Die Welt* at the end of July, unlike for example Sarah Wagenknecht, she defended the liberal refugee policy. Asked about the Berlin attack in which a Tunisian refugee stole a truck in December 2016 and killed several people at a Christmas market, she explained that the terrorist who had entered Germany from Switzerland in 2015 have already been “living in Europe” (ibid.). Therefore, one could not find any connection between the refugee policy and the Berlin attack. In addition, although he came across the Mediterranean from Tunisia to Italy in 2011, he was not a real refugee for her and therefore not a gift (ibid.). The problem for her is rather the security authorities and the overwhelmed German state, less the refugees. Therefore, she was in favor of generous refugee contingents, which should include all the European states. Asked by the interviewer that he could hardly recognize any willingness to do so, Göring-Eckardt responded with a counter-question whether he was willing to let people drown in the Mediterranean Sea. She was not willing to do so and it therefore advocates their inclusion in the EU. She also criticized the policies of the EU and Germany several times between 2015 and 2017. After a good start in 2015, too little has been done for integration. Two years have been lost as there are too few language teachers and too few offers for migrants and refugees to integrate. The EU was too focused on foreclosure and paid too little attention to migrants and their needs. For these statements Göring-Eckardt had to face some criticism from her own party, e.g. from the mayor of Tübingen, Boris Palmer, as well as from the Union parties and the AfD, but remained largely consistent and authentic and thus found backing from her own voter base, albeit hardly beyond this, as the election results show.

Christian Lindner (FDP): “Those who do not meet our criteria must go back.”

For the liberals, refugee policy was a chance and a risk at the same time. For one thing, there was an enormous voter potential right of the Union, which felt homeless. On the other hand, the FDP has always been the representative of a liberal constitutional state, which should give equal opportunities to all people regardless of their origin. At the same time, Liberal electoral base was similarly skeptical of the events of 2015 as those of the CSU, demanding a tough course on asylum abuse, crime and migrants without qualifications (*The Welt* 01.09.2017). Correspondingly, top candidate Christian Lindner endeavored to please both sides. He emphasized the value of asylum law and wanted to defend it, but also made clear that migration needed borders and

needed to be controlled. In a well-publicized interview to the BILD newspaper, Lindner therefore demanded to respect the law in both directions (ntv 07.09.2017). War refugees from Syria were to be protected, but after the end of the war they had to be sent back immediately and not integrated. The refugee status should not automatically result in a permanent right of residence, which also applies to children. As soon as it is safe in Syria, refugee protection in Germany would have to end and repatriation to begin. There is no human right that allows anyone to freely choose his or her stay in a country of their choice, Lindner said. However, he wanted to allow some refugees to permanently stay under a new immigration law, but they should have shown great integration efforts to do so: “You have to speak the German language, must not get into debt and have to take responsibility for taking care of the family. But if you do not meet our criteria, you have to go. “ (ibid.) He also harshly criticized the policy of the Chancellor after 2015. The borders should have been closed and Dublin III again put into force. Angela Merkel had sent devastating signals to all the poor people in the world to come to Europe. Instead, the Mediterranean route must be permanently closed and refugee camps built in Northern Africa. Also, states that do not take back citizens, should no longer receive development assistance (ibid.). With these statements, the party leader moved to the right edge of the party program, but still clearly within its framework.

The outcome of the 2017 elections under the aspect of migration

The last chapter of the analysis will deal with the outcome of the election. For this purpose, the results are first briefly described and some peculiarities will be worked out. Afterwards, a further subchapter will deal more closely with the question of the topic of flight and migration and its influence on the performance of the respective party.

Notable outcomes of the election

The 2017 federal elections brought four major changes compared to 2013. On the one hand, it was the election that caused the ruling coalition, with a minus of 13.8%, the biggest losses since 1945. The Union plunged 8.6% from 41.5 to 32.6% and showed its worst performance since 1949, with the SPD losing 5.2% from 25.7% to 20.5%, scoring its worst ever result. A large coalition of the Union and the SPD reached just over 50% at 53.1%, compared to the constitutional majority of 66.9% in the previous elections. It remained the only possible two-party coalition, but had been badly decimated (Fed-

eral Returning Officer 2018). What was pleasing was the second aspect, the increase of the turnout. After years of decreasing, it rose significantly from 71.5% to 76.2%, with an especially notable increase in Bavaria, Saxony, Thuringia and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, but also in Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate. In the west, participation increased by 4.3% from 72.5% to 76.8%, in the East, even by 5.5% from 67.6% to 73.2% (ibid.). With regard to the composition of the Bundestag, there was a strong shift to the right with the entry of FDP 10,7% with and AfD with 12,6%. The Union, FDP and AfD as right-center parties would hypothetically reach a clear majority of 56.3% of the vote. The mandate majority of centre-left, achieved in 2013, was clearly reversed by the leap from the FDP and AfD over the 5% threshold and a red-red-green coalition became impossible. The last point is that with the AfD, a right-wing protest party moved into the Bundestag for the first time, thus losing Germany's attribute of being the EU-country, which due to its history, is immune to right-wing populism. The middle course of Angela Merkel had indeed successfully outmaneuvered the SPD as a competitor to the Chancellery and anchored the Union at the center of politics, but the conservative profile of the party greatly attenuated, thus contributing to the rise of the AfD and also allowing the FDP to find dissatisfied voters right of the current position of the Union without moving itself into the extreme right corner. Especially in conservative strongholds such as Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg and Saxony, the losses of the Union and the gains of AfD and FDP were particularly high (ibid.).

With regard to the top candidates, the picture was inconsistent. Angela Merkel won her constituency around the island of Rügen with 44%, well ahead of the AfD with 19%, but lost 12% compared to 2013. In the neighboring Rostock The Left co-lead candidate Dietmar Bartsch had the largest losses with minus 6%, but held with 25% before AfD and SPD in second place behind the CDU candidate with almost 30%. The Green top candidates Cem Özdemir and Katrin Göring-Eckardt were able to gain slightly in their constituencies in Stuttgart and Erfurt as well as in the federal trend, which saw the party rising from 8,4% to 8,9%, while Die Linke top candidate Sarah Wagenknecht increased her vote in Dusseldorf by 4% to 13%. Strong growth was achieved by FDP leader Lindner in the Rheinisch-Bergisch district with an increase of 13.9% to almost 16%. Alice Weidel achieved a moderate 10% in her constituency on Lake Constance, but Alexander Gauland did very well in Frankfurt on the Oder 22% on his first appearance and thus only lost narrowly to CDU candi-

date Martin Patzelt, an advocate of Angela Merkel's refugee policy, with 27% (election.de 2017). Martin Schulz was only heading the SPD-list for North-Rhine Westphalia and thus had no own constituency.

CDU Minister of the Interior de Maizière had great problems holding on his electorate Meissen in Saxony against the AfD and lost 17% to 36%, whereas the AfD scored here strong 31% with their candidate from the stand. CDU faction vice Michael Kretschmer lost his constituency in Görlitz on the Polish border, however, to the AfD, which became the strongest party in Saxony and which scored with party leader Frauke Petry south of Dresden with over 37% their by far best result and gained another direct mandate there. Merkel critic Jens Spahn achieved 51.3% in his constituency around the city of Münster, which is just 0.7% less than in 2013 (ibid.). The Bavarian CSU top candidate Joachim Herrmann could not win a mandate because he had no own constituency and the CSU could not send any MPs on the list, as they won all direct mandates. His chances to become Federal Minister of the Interior and to implement a tougher asylum policy were thus greatly reduced, since he would have been dependent on the Chancellor without his own mandate, which the CSU tried to avoid (Focus Online 22.02.2018).

The question of migration and asylum connected to the parties' performances

With regard to the electoral motives of German in the general election, there were contradictory statements. The analysis refers to data of the research institute Infratest dimap from polling day itself. When asked about electoral motives, 64% cited education policy, 59% counted the fight against terrorism, 57% considered good protection in old age, and only 27% cited the immigration of refugees and migrants as decisive issue. Asked about the biggest concerns in the future, however, 70% expressed the fear that society would drift apart. 62% worried about an increase in crime. 46% feared the increasing influence of Islam and 38% thought that too many foreigners came to the country (Tagesschau election-critical topics 24.07.2017).

On the other hand, when people were explicitly asked to deal with refugees, 90% wanted quicker deportations, 79% a better integration of refugees, 71% a permanent limitation to migration and 57% a limitation of the influence of Islam, which they saw as a concern. This means they were arguing for a stricter policy towards migrants and refugees. Dissatisfied with the migration policy were voters of AfD, FDP, Left Party and SPD, satisfied was a majority

of Union and Green voters. Dissatisfaction was higher in the East with 64% than 52% in the West (ibid. Refugee politics).

Refugee and migration policies were particularly problematic for the Union. Although it still achieved the highest competence values in the field of migration and flight with 38% among all parties, it fell significantly in comparison to 2013 and has significantly higher values in fields as the economy with 57% or combating terrorism with 51%. There are also massive differences between the CDU and CSU and between former and current voters. 66% of the CDU voters believe that Merkel's refugee policy was correct, while 71% of voters who voted for the party in 2013 but not in 2017 disagreed. This shows that the losses of the Union are mainly due to its migration policy. Moreover, 67% of former voters say that the Union does not take people's concerns about migration seriously, compared with just 33% of current voters and 55% of the general electorate, who are no longer able to see a clear refugee policy in the EU, though this was once one of the trademarks of the Christian Democrats. Also, at the CSU, only 43% of voters believe that the attacks of Horst Seehofer would have been wrong and would have harmed the party as a whole, while with CDU voters, however, this percentage was high 67% who complained about the CSU. Similarly, 55% of CDU voters and only 45% of CSU voters think the two parties would not fit together anymore (ibid. 24.09.2017, The CDU). With 20%, the SPD achieves the second highest competence value in the area of migration, but here too with a clear minus compared to 2013 and well below topics such as higher wages with 41% or better care with 39%. The problem of the SPD was seen especially in Martin Schulz and unclear statements in the field of social justice and a lack of demarcation to the Union of Angela Merkel, even if the SPD lost just among workers and the socially weak 470,000 voters to the AfD. (ibid 24.09.2017 The SPD).

The AfD had gained 8% and with this scored the third highest competence worth in dealing with migration and refugees. AfD voters also saw their party as convincing in the area of counter-terrorism and crime, as well as family policy and social justice. The dissatisfaction of AfD voters with the refugee policy of the federal government is according to this survey at 100%, it was thus the top election motive for this party. AfD voters are also very concerned about the loss of their own culture through immigration, too rapid changes in the country and fear more influence of Islam in the country. 92% of the voters also stated that the AfD in the Bundestag must criticize the refugee

policy of the federal government and press for change. The party achieved high shares of 21% each among workers and the unemployed, less with civil servants and pensioners with 10%. At 76%, the AfD was also the party whose voters were most concerned with the clearly migration-critical election program and with 10% the least with the candidates (ibid. 24.07.2017 The AfD). Green and Left Party, each with 7%, achieved the fourth highest competence value in the migration and refugee issue (ibid. 24.07.2017 Refugee politics). Satisfaction with the Chancellor's refugee policy was by far the highest among the Greens (78%), and voters were therefore satisfied with the defense of this course by the Greens during the election campaign (ibid.). In addition, migration was the second highest competence value besides environmental policy at 56%. There was a high level of approval among the self-employed and the employees, less so with workers and pensioners. For the Greens, the very migration-friendly election program was very important at 71%, while the candidates Göring-Eckardt and Cem Özdemir were only decisive for 11% of their voters (ibid. 24.09.2017 The Greens). By contrast, migration did not play a major role among Left Party voters. In the areas of social justice, high wages, better pensions and family policies, it achieved higher levels of competence than in migration policy. In addition, the party was considered a party of social justice, but also as radical and advocating cost-prohibitive projects and was therefore not seen as able to govern. On the other side, this radicalism also led to their own voters attaching high credibility and clear positions to the Left Party. By contrast, the party was not able to profit or lose in terms of migration, only its focus shifted somewhat from eastern Germany where there was strong competition with the AfD to the urban regions of West Germany, where the SPD lost over proportional. Sarah Wagenknecht's satisfaction ratings were at high 44% among the voters in this poll, which is their best score ever, and she probably should not have harmed the party with her controversial statements on how to reduce the influx of refugees (ibid. 24.09.2017 The Left). The FDP, and in particular its top candidate Christian Lindner with a competence worth of 5% in migration politics, responded to both, the wishes of his core voters and the needs of many dissatisfied Union supporters, who did not want to vote the AfD due to its radicalism, and achieved by doing so a record result of almost 11%, with 1.3 million Union voters, 700,000 non-voters and 450,000 SPD to be convinced to vote the FDP this time. Polls showed that 66% of the party voters found the party's tough refugee policy, as represented by Christian Lindner, to be a good one. Only the replacement of the grand coalition with 70% and the party's future pol-

icy with 76% were more convincing election motives. Also slightly younger voters between 18 and 24 agreed with the FDP regarding these points, here the party achieved 12%, compared to the other age cohorts with 10-11% each (Tagesschau The FDP 24.09.2017).

“We will hunt Mrs. Merkel or whoever“ – Migration as an urgent issue in German politics

On election night, Alexander Gauland, the than new chairman of the new AfD faction in the Bundestag started hunting on Angela Merkel and her migration and refugee politics (Tagesspiegel 24.09.2017). He explained the strong performance of his party in particular with the dissatisfaction of voters in the area of migration and promised in martial words to political fight for a change here, away from the liberal course of the outgoing government. This analysis by Alexander Gauland was shared in the wake of the election by numerous commentators, even if they sharply criticized his choice of words. It is clear that migration was an enormously important campaign issue, which favored mainly right-center parties, provided that they had a clear course in their election campaign on migration. For the Union party, the latter was not the case, which is why the topic was more or less neglected despite its explosiveness for the voters by the party. On the other hand, the Union was severely punished for their election campaign at the ballot box by the disappointed voters. Conversely, the Greens on the left edge were also able to mobilize their voters very well through a closed approach in favor of migrants and refugees. If one concludes by looking at the positions of the parties in election programs and election statements, the AfD, FDP and CSU stand for a policy aimed at limiting immigration, the Greens for a migration-friendly policy and CDU, SPD and The Left, the latter mainly because of their top candidate Sarah Wagenknecht, for no explicit determination. With regard to the top candidates, it can be said that Sarah Wagenknecht and Christian Lindner focused on the right wing of their parties in terms of economic migration and capacity limits, while Angela Merkel, with the rejection of an upper limit for asylum seekers and defense of her refugee policy, tended to address the left wing of her party. Joachim Herrmann, Cem Özdemir, Katrin Göring-Eckardt, Alexander Gauland and Alice Weidel, however, remained within their election programs and followed the course of the party there. Especially Weidel and Gauland, but also politicians of CSU, FDP, Left Party, and even the CDU, were holding Angela Merkel responsible for the influx of migrants due to her refusal to close borders. Moreover, Merkel was unable to

clear the topic, focusing too much on economic growth and positive aspects of migration and too less on concerns over a loss of identity and a melting away of traditional values. Helmut Kohl in the years 1990-93, who succeeded in forging an asylum compromise of the CDU/CSU, SPD and FDP, which had thwarted the rise of the right-wing republicans in the 1994 Bundestag elections, could have served as a role model here. Similar to the AfD, the party was first elected into the European Parliament in 1989, only to fail in 1990 at the 5% threshold in the federal election. When in 1992 the number of asylum seekers from Russia, the Balkans and Turkey rose, Kohl recognized the new danger for him and his party. He moved the SPD to the so-called Petersberg turn, in which the party adapted its previously highly idolized policy to the conditions of the 1990s and agreed to the constitutional amendment sought by the Union and the FDP, and thus to a tightening of the asylum law. The political parties in the FRG had demonstrated their will to act and respected the negative attitude of the citizens towards more migration, which meant that the issue of migration and flight in the 1994 elections had no major impact on the political system. The Republicans missed the entry into the Bundestag again, an event which started their descent. The left-wing majority in the German Bundestag did not move to a similar step in 2015, but there were no visible signs from the Union to seek a second comprehensive asylum compromise, as well. This gave an impression of unwillingness to act and the AfD was able to achieve an election success on the subject of migration, which at this height was hardly expected by anyone before.

In conclusion, it should be noted that migration was an urgent issue, but also extremely unpleasant for some of the political actors involved, and they shied away from its aggressive treatment during the election campaign. This opened the door for critical and often shrill voices from the extreme right, which was able to send delegates to the Bundestag for the first time since 1945 on the topic of migration and asylum and thus changed the political situation in Germany dramatically.

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List of abbreviations

AfD: Alternative for Germany / right-wing

ARD: Consortium of public broadcasters in Germany

BAMF: Federal Office for Migration

CDU: Christian Democratic Union of Germany/centre to centre-right

CSU: Christian Social Union of Bavaria/ centre-right

EU: European Union

FDP: Free Democratic Party of Germany/centre-right

FRG: Federal Republic of Germany

FRONTEX: European Border and Coast Guard Agency

GDR: German Democratic Republic

Gestapo: Secret State Police (NS-state)

NPD: National Democratic Party of Germany / far-right

RTL: Radio Television Luxembourg

SPD: Social Democratic Party of Germany / centre-left

Stasi: State Security Service (GDR)

Niels Back, Claudia Elion and Marthe Hesselmans

Introduction

The 2017 Parliamentary Elections were the first elections to be held in the Netherlands after Europe witnessed the 2015 peak in migration numbers. As a result, migration, asylum and integration were hot topics in the campaign. After the elections, migration-related topics laid a heavy burden on the process of forming a new coalition government, even leading to a collapse in talks between political parties.

It appears that the fragmentation of the Dutch political landscape reached its peak during the campaign. Questions concerning migration divided parties in different camps, sometimes breaking with original divisions between political parties. Sociocultural issues overshadowed classic left-right socio-economic divisions. Questions concerning human rights, national security, and national identity all became heavily associated with migration.

Emotions often ran high in these debates. What would start as a rather factual conversation on asylum procedures, would often end up in tensed discussions about integration, Dutch identity and the multicultural society. How did migration evolve into such a hot topic and what to make of it?

This paper offers an analysis of the framing of migration during the Dutch 2017 parliamentary elections. It starts with a description of the Dutch political landscape (I). Then, two case studies about migration debates in the 1990's and the early 2000's are presented (II). The third part of the paper discusses the 2017 elections based on debate- and media statements by political leaders (III). Finally, we look at the extent to which parties tend to emphasize national security interests, or rather human rights issues in migration debates (IV).

The Dutch political landscape

To understand the 2017 Parliamentary campaigns, the outcomes of the elections and the political debate held in recent years, an outline of the major parties in Dutch Parliament will provide some insight.

Long-established political parties

The VVD (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie) is usually seen as a centre-right and conservative-liberal party. For long, VVD was either in the government with the Christian-democratic party CDA or in the opposition. Over the last decade, the party has grown significantly and has become a regular coalition partner. Its leader, Mark Rutte, first became prime minister in 2010 and is now heading his third cabinet.

The social democratic PvdA (Partij van de Arbeid) or Labour has known long periods of coalition partnerships and used to be a dominating party. In 2012 PvdA joined a coalition with VVD, but it dramatically lost the 2017 elections. Traditional left-wing blue-collar voters turned their backs to the party and it failed to attract new voters.

The CDA (Christen-Democratisch Appèl) or the Christian Democrats is traditionally a dominating factor in Dutch politics. Because the party is ideologically placed in the centre of the political landscape, it could form coalition governments with either the centre-right VVD and the centre-left PvdA. Between 2002 and 2010, CDA headed four cabinets, but they lost half of their seats in Parliament during the 2010 elections. With party leader Buma made the CDA has become more conservative, focusing on national values with a Christian focus.

D66 (Democrats 66) was established to democratise the existing political system. Radical in its early days, D66 became a regular coalition partner in recent years. It is usually classified as a progressive liberal party with a pro-European outlook. Currently the party is in government, as the only progressive party among VVD, CDA and the smaller ChristenUnie. D66 attracts mostly well-educated voters from urban areas.

GroenLinks is a progressive leftist party with a strong focus on sustainability. GroenLinks has never been in government. With a grassroots, activist way of doing politics, they attract young and progressive voters. Attempts to build a 'green-right' coalition with D66, CDA and VVD last year failed, inter alia because of disagreement on migration. GroenLinks typically attracts well-educated voters from urban environments.

The SP (Socialistische Partij) is socio-economically seen as the most leftist Dutch political party. It further distinguishes itself from GroenLinks and the PvdA as a Eurosceptic party and somewhat conservative regarding sociocultural issues. The SP has never been in government.

Political parties established more recently

Besides these long-established parties, the Dutch political landscape knows an increasing number of new parties. Starting from 2001, political outfits like Leefbaar and LPF (Lijst Pim Fortuyn) shook up Dutch politics and paved the way for right wing populist parties such as Geert Wilders' PVV (Partij voor de Vrijheid). The PVV was established in 2006, after Wilders left the VVD faction. The party is concerned about political Islam and its alleged threat to Dutch culture. Combining a socio-economic leftist point of view with a far-right stance on Europe, migration and borders, the party has dominated the debate on migration and integration over the last decade. The party has never been in government but supported a VVD-CDA minority government between 2010 and 2012.

FvD (Forum voor Democratie) should be seen as socio-economically right and Eurosceptical with a strong focus on national values and culture. In addition, it focuses on the democratisation of Dutch politics by criticising current political parties. In the past year, the party quickly gained popularity, but it has also been (heavily) criticized of supporting racist and ethnocentric views. During the 2017 parliamentary elections, FvD gained two seats.

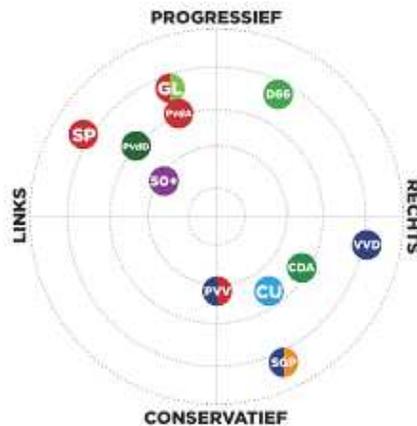
DENK emerged as a split off of the PvdA. The party name means 'think' in Dutch and 'equality' in Turkish, symbolising its appeal to voters with a migration background. DENK got three seats in parliament during the last parliamentary elections.

There are some other, smaller political parties such as the Party for the Animals, a green party focusing on animal rights, 50Plus, a party promoting the interests of elderly people and two smaller Christian parties, the ChristenUnie and the SGP. The number of parties has slightly increased over the years, counting 13 parties after the latest parliamentary elections.

A fragmented political landscape

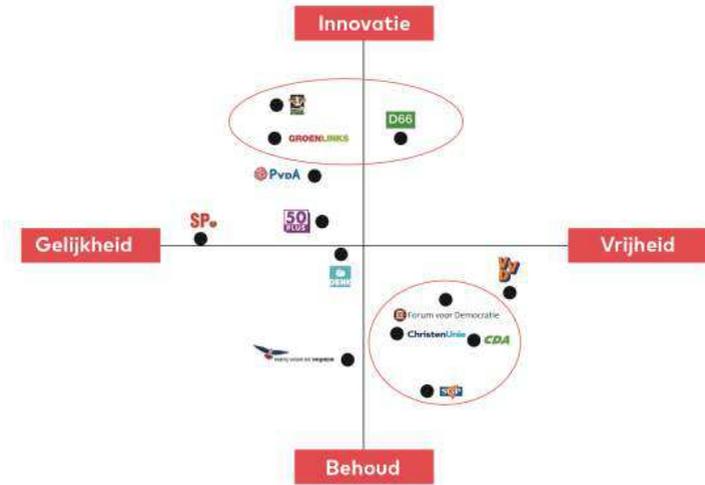
In the fragmented Dutch political landscape, voters switch regularly between parties. Currently, the VVD is the largest party with 33 seats out of 150 in parliament. PVV has twenty seats, D66 and CDA both have 19 seats while GroenLinks has 14 seats.

Traditionally, the socio-economic left-right axis is used to classify political parties in the Netherlands. Below an example of a left-right classification of established political parties ('links' meaning 'left' and 'rechts' meaning 'right', 'progressief' meaning 'progressive' and 'conservatief' 'conservative').



Source: Andre Krouwel, Kieskompas 2014

Increasingly however, parties are distinguished by their position on the so-named socio-cultural axis. This axis entails a wide range of positions: secular versus religious, Eurosceptic versus pro-European, nationalist versus cosmopolitan. Below an example of how the Dutch political landscape can be characterised as of 2017 based on socio-cultural points of view.

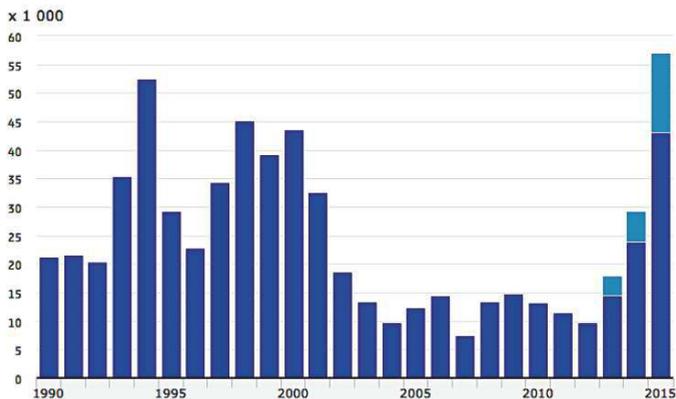


The Dutch political landscape. Clockwise: innovation, freedom, conservation, equality.
 Source: Brink, G. van den (2017). “Als je van plan bent om één stuk te lezen over de verkiezingen, lees dan dit”. Brainwash.

The asylum debate in the Netherlands: two case studies.

The Netherlands has a long history of asylum and (labour) migration. Subsequently, this theme has been prominent in parliamentary debates. In recent history, asylum became a central topic in Dutch politics during the Balkan war of the 1990s, when every year about 35,000 refugees applied for asylum in the Netherlands (Leenders 2004). The numbers per year are illustrated in the following graphic.

Number of asylum requests in the Netherlands



The increase of refugees was followed by intense debates on asylum procedures, integration and international law principles (e.g. non-refoulement). Members of parliament raised questions related to morality and humanity, but also questions about economic and national security interests played an important role in the debates. This section looks at the political discourse on migration in two periods: the 1990s and 2002-2004.

1990s: the return of geopolitics

Only moments after the collapse of the Yugoslav Republic, a regional war between today's Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia resulted in ethnic cleansing, causing thousands of victims. Between 1991 and 1995 up to 4.4 million people fled the Balkan states, of which approximately 700.000 settled in Western Europe. The consequences of the war became directly visible in the number of asylum requests: from 1990 to 1991 the number of asylum applications from the (former) Yugoslav Republic in the Netherlands quadrupled.

The government in the Netherlands at the time was headed by Christian Democrat leader Ruud Lubbers, who was in his third cabinet, consisting of CDA and PvdA. Its asylum policy was rather restrictive and focused on limiting the growing numbers of asylum applications. The cabinet's initiative was based on a 'two-way policy': primarily asylum should be handled in the region. The Netherlands would only offer asylum to people belonging to vulnerable groups (e.g. minorities and families with young children).

Parties such as GroenLinks, PvdA and D66 argued for a more humane policy in addition to supporting the idea of regional shelter. They declared that all refugees from the region should be able to apply for asylum in the Netherlands. Moreover, they believed the Netherlands could play a model role to other European states, as a front-runner in providing a safe haven for refugees from the Balkan states. D66 did mention the need to be realistic about the financial costs of such policies.

More conservative parties argued for the provision of shelter only when absolutely needed. If there was no necessity, asylum should be denied. Arguments related to humanity and morality were barely mentioned. Priority was given to regional politics and international law: no measures should be taken from

which the Serbian leader Milosevic could profit, and through proportional division among European countries the Netherlands could still comply with international rules without having to accept a high number of asylum migrants.

Parties on the right side of the political spectrum argued that policies should not be based on emotions and that measures should comply with strict (international) rules and procedures. They also emphasised the Dutch financial contribution to the conflict area. It was unavoidable to grant asylum to some refugees; however, the number of requests exceeded the ability and flexibility of Dutch procedures to grant asylum to all applicants.

Although parties in general terms agreed on the need for help and on the possibility of providing asylum to refugees from the (former) Yugoslav republic, they did not necessarily share the same perspective and arguments. It appears that emotions did play an important role. Progressive parties used arguments relating to humanity and morality, whereas law, politics and financial arguments played a more central role in the discourse of conservative and right-wing parties.

2002: the change in discourse

The early 2000s saw a change in public and political discourse on migration. Critique emerged especially on what came to be considered as the failed integration of immigrants in Dutch society. Paul Scheffer, a prominent member of the PvdA, published an article in 2002, titled “The Multicultural Tragedy” (Scheffer 2000). In a nutshell, the article stated that Dutch multiculturalism – the idea of immigrants becoming Dutch citizens while preserving the cultural identity of the countries they came from – had been a fiasco. A new ‘class’ of citizens had emerged which, according to Scheffer, failed to integrate, participate and contribute to the Dutch society. This would eventually undermine social cohesion and the functioning of the liberal democratic state, particularly “because of the supposedly illiberal ideas of the Muslims among the immigrants” (Entzinger 2006).

Years before Scheffer’s milestone critique, VVD leader Frits Bolkestein had already voiced critical opinions about immigration issues in several articles and speeches. Starting with his 1991 article ‘on the integration of minorities’, Bolkestein consistently questioned the desirability of Islamic schools and ed-

ucation in the language and culture of the countries of origin.

When Bolkestein left Dutch Parliament to serve as European Commissioner for Internal Markets and Services, he was succeeded by Hans Dijkstal, a more liberal minded leader. Within two years, Pim Fortuyn, a university professor and author, filled up the vacuum Bolkestein's early exit from The Hague had left. Fortuyn launched a populist right wing party called Lijst Pim Fortuyn. He rapidly gained popularity with a strong anti-immigrant discourse, as well as a sharp critique on 'the established political elite'. With Fortuyn, questions of migration and integration were brought into the centre of Dutch political debate, leading to an intense parliamentary election campaign in 2002.

Only days before the elections, Fortuyn died after being shot by an animal rights activist. His party, however, made history with its election victory, gaining 26 seats in Parliament. The new government, which besides Fortuyn's party also included CDA and VVD, focused on curtailing immigration and promoting a more coercive integration policy. The government lasted only 87 days. Their heritage, however, was that migration related topics would remain in the heart of Dutch political debate until this very day.

Framing of asylum migration during the 2017 parliamentary elections

Back to today. Since 2015, asylum applicants in the Netherlands have counted up to 40,000 individuals per year. Most refugees originate from Middle-Eastern countries. In 2015 for instance, 43,100 asylum applicants were registered in the Netherlands, mostly originating from Syria, Palestine and Eritrea. In the same year, immigration and integration were the two issues most contemplated by the Dutch citizens (Dekker et al. 2015). From the quarterly national study it appears that Dutch respondents were mainly fearful of tensions in society caused by the lack of integration of new citizens. Respondents feared that newcomers would not adopt core aspects of the Dutch society such as tolerance, human rights and individualism. At the same time, participants emphasised the moral duty to support refugees and provide a safe haven for those in need. Both perspectives are strongly related to the war in Syria and the overall tensed situation in the Middle East.

Not only do different perspectives on the issue exist within Dutch society, but also within political parties there is strong disagreement on topics related to asylum and migration. Often a distinction can be drawn between humanity and restriction, and between emotion and rationality. Notwithstanding the duty to comply with international treaties, many parties tested the limits

when it came to human rights-friendly measures with regard to refugees and migrants. During the many political debates between 2014 and 2017, the coalition parties VVD and PvdA generally argued for sober policies based on restriction and fairness, in compliance with the EU and UN agreements. Noticeable in this period is the discrepancy between formal party statements on migration and what was said in campaign debates. Parties would express a clear view on for instance asylum procedures in their political program. In debates however, party leaders often confused legal discussions about asylum with emotional questions about integration or Dutch identity and values. To better understand this discrepancy, this section offers an analysis of both official party programs and some of the key debates leading up to the 2017 elections.

Party programs on migration for the 2017 Parliamentary elections

In the run up to the 2017 Parliamentary elections, most parties drafted and published a party program, including topics related to migration and integration. The VVD proposed a sober policy towards asylum migrants, because, as they argued, “a better future” could only be offered to “a limited number of refugees” (VVD 2017). The program focused on the responsibility of asylum migrants who have been denied asylum to immediately return to their home countries. Moreover, it stressed that the integration of newcomers is one’s own responsibility. Integration programmes and language courses had to be paid for by the newcomers themselves. Accepting the liberal democratic principles was a precondition to build up one’s life in the Netherlands, according to the VVD.

The PvdA program stated that the Dutch have a duty to help people in need, that is fundamental to the solidarity as known in the Netherlands. The state needs to take the initiative to send back refugees when they are denied asylum. This contrasts with the VVD election programme, where the individual is held responsible. Newcomers would also need the government to organise language and integration courses.

The CDA stated openly in its election program that it was in search for a balance between mercifulness and what the Netherlands could cope with as a country. Moreover, it indicated that “the difficult integration of newcomers” led to “fundamental questions about identity”(CDA 2017). With this statement the CDA suggested that the culture of newcomers can be incompat-

ible with Dutch culture. “Nobody can build up a future in the Netherlands who does not respect the values and traditions [of the Netherlands]” (ibid.). Together with the VVD, the CDA thus focused strongly on Western, liberal values. In addition, the Christian Democrats acknowledged the rights and duties of newcomers and the duty to contribute to the integration of newcomers upon society.

Migration is framed in several ways in the election program of D66. Regarding refugees and current migration flows, D66 said it wants to act humanely. If it is not possible to build up a future in the nearby region of one’s home country, the Netherlands should accept him or her because “the right on individual freedom” should not be bound to “a certain territory” (D66 2016). D66 emphasised the potential of refugees and their will to build up a future in the Netherlands. Migrants can, according to D66, help the Netherlands fill gaps in the labour market caused by an ageing population. In addition to helping refugees who are in need of a shelter, the Netherlands should also select economic migrants to work in sectors with labour shortages. In addition, D66 stated that diversity should be embraced as an added value to the society (D66 2017).

In the GroenLinks election program, migration was not so elaborated upon as in the program of D66. The GroenLinks program focused mainly on the rights and the well-being of asylum migrants. They are people in need of protection and safety and the Netherlands should help them on humane grounds. Hardly anything was said about economic or cultural dimensions of migration.

The SP took a rather pragmatic stand on the issue of migration. Refugees in need of help should be able to receive help from the Netherlands. More important to them was tackling the root causes of migration. The SP election program focused furthermore on the integration of newcomers by immediately integrating them into Dutch society and labour market. This integration should be state-driven and was not something to be run by the market (SP 2017). A remarkable point in its program was the equal distribution between and within municipalities (Dijk et al. 2017). Richer municipalities had been taking less refugees than poorer municipalities which, according to the SP, was unfair. Refugees should be distributed equally over wealthier and poorer

municipalities, taking the GDP of the individual municipalities into account. Richer communities should take on more refugees than poorer communities. The PVV one-page political program was dominated by the issue of migration. In the first sentence the party called for a “stop to the Islamization of the Netherlands”. The PVV proposed to accept no asylum migrants at all and no migrants from Islamic countries. Furthermore, centres for asylum seekers should be closed and all temporary residence permits should be invalidated. According to the PVV, asylum migrants are bound to Islam, which – to them – is an evil ideology. Banning Islam from public places, together with other anti-Islam measures, would, according to the PVV program, save the Dutch state 7.2 billion euros.

The political program of the new party FvD stated that Dutch society cannot handle the current numbers of refugees. Therefore, FvD proposed to restrain the number of refugees coming into the Netherlands. FvD postulated the Australian model regarding immigration as a solution for the Netherlands. A request for asylum should not automatically lead to a permanent residence permit, but to reception with a focus on returning to the country of origin (Forum voor Democratie 2017). This would help take back “control over our border”.

DENK sang a different tune regarding migration. Its program stated that “the refugee drama is a drama for the refugees themselves”, because of the miserable circumstances in the refugee camps around EU-borders. That is why the Netherlands should, according to DENK, accept more refugees (DENK 2017). Similar to the SP, DENK said it wants the Dutch government to spread asylum migrants equally over the entire country.

Overall, most parties included at least some statement about migration in their programs, particularly regarding refugees. However, parties differed greatly in the extent to which they discussed matters of migration and how they approached the topic. The PVV clearly took on the most negative position towards refugees and regarded them as a financial and cultural burden. The leftist parties PvdA and GroenLinks were rather superficial regarding the topic of asylum migrants. D66 stood out in that it acknowledged the positive influence of current newcomers in their election program and emphasized the need to enable them to participate in Dutch society. New parties presented themselves as holding strong views on this issue: FvD with negative views and DENK with rather positive views.

Debates before the 2017 Parliamentary elections

In this section an overview is given of the most important debates on Dutch television and in Dutch newspapers on migration during the election campaign of 2017. Notably, DENK and FvD did not take part in any television debates, mostly because they did not have any seats in Parliament yet. On social media these two parties were rather active, maintaining their views on migration as outlined in their political programs.

As the campaign progressed, migration took a more prominent position both in talk shows and in radio and television debates. Out of the eight debates that took place between party leaders, three focused specifically on migration related topics such as refugees, integration and a multicultural society. Debates that were supposed to focus on other topics often drifted away from the original subject and towards questions of migration. In these debates, concepts such as national identity, values and cultural adaptation tended to be used interchangeably and were constantly mixed into broader debates about migration.

In the first general election debate on television for instance, a discussion on national security lead to an intense debate about national identity and values (Debate on Islam between Pechtold and Buma 2017). Christian Democrat leader Buma particularly emphasized the importance of Judeo-Christian values as the core of Dutch society. Without explicitly referring to Islam, Buma made it clear that he believed these values to be threatened as a result of immigration from non-western countries. D66-leader Pechtold responded to this by asking Buma whether he considered Islam a ‘second-rate religion’. Avoiding an answer to this question, Buma once again emphasized the importance of Judeo-Christian values as something that all newcomers should first and foremost adopt once they are in the Netherlands.

Besides values, party leaders debated the overall reception of refugees in the Dutch society. Both the Greens and D66 stressed the dimension of humanity here: people who fear persecution in their own countries, should receive help in other countries, also in the Netherlands. When emphasising the disadvantaged situation asylum migrants were in, the two progressive parties countered the framing of ‘economic migrants’ and ‘fortune seekers’. Both parties insisted on complying with previous international and European agreements, e.g. the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and European decisions on diffusion

of refugees over all EU member states. Simultaneously, D66 claimed it wanted to improve European border control so as to better regulate the number of refugees.

In contrast, the VVD and the Christian Democrats stressed the need to first consider national security interests when it comes to migration. Refugees should seek shelter in their own region. Buma also stated that the Netherlands should focus less on refugee integration and more on their return to their home countries or regions. The Christian Democrat leader proposed that within the Netherlands, war refugees should be titled 'displaced persons.' They should be able to work or study while they are here, but their intention to return should always prevail. For this, Buma said, the UN definition of refugees should be adjusted.

Finally, on the left side of the political spectrum, PvdA and the SP tried to position themselves in the middle, between fully open or fully closed borders. They took a social-conservative and rather restrictive perspective on migration, saying that the Netherlands should receive people in need, but at the same time strive not to accept more refugees than it had done in the past years. Overall, the two left-wing parties were minimal in their statements on migration and barely seemed to have a coherent vision. PvdA leader Asscher would call for a restrictive asylum policy in the Netherlands, but at the same time talk about the need for Dutch society to be open to the migrant communities already present in the country.

In a consecutive public radio debate between party leaders, migration initially did not figure high on the agenda (NPO Radio 1 2017). A discussion on mandatory national service however ultimately drifted towards matters of integration. Buma claimed such service to be imperative for youth to learn about what he considered the Dutch value of caring for society. The underlying presumption here seemed to be that youth, especially those with migrant backgrounds, had not adopted this value and did not do enough in terms of social service. D66 leader Pechtold pushed Buma to be honest about his focus on migrant youth. Buma denied this but nonetheless gave an example of bad behaviour especially among Moroccan youth in the Netherlands.

During a talk show Pechtold and Buma again faced each other, this time on whether or not it should be allowed for newcomers to have two passports

(Debate between Pechtold and Buma 2017). In this debate, the D66 leader accused Buma of scapegoating newcomers and people with a migration background. Buma in response presented the CDA as just being realistic about the fact that the Netherlands and Europe cannot handle all refugees that are willing to enter.

This last argument of realism returned regularly throughout the election debates. Both CDA and VVD used it to present themselves as the moderate and reasonable alternative to progressive as well as populist parties. In a one-on-one debate between Rutte (VVD) and Wilders (PVV) for example, the prime-minister accused Wilders of naively thinking that migration could be stopped by closing the borders. This would not be a realistic option, said Rutte. He also claimed that Wilders was just complaining without taking responsibility, whereas the VVD did take responsibility as governing party. Rutte emphasized the reasonable measures his party came up with to help limit migration, such as the EU-Turkey agreement to stop refugees from crossing the Mediterranean. Thus, Rutte portrayed the VVD as having sober but realistic solutions to deal with migration. The PVV meanwhile came out as an equally radical as naïve party that could never be a serious option for ruling the country.

In the final television debate with all party leaders, Rutte similarly labelled the focus of the progressive parties on a humane reception of refugees as naïve (NOS Slotdebat 2017). The prime minister said he did not want the scenario of 2015 to repeat itself and to see a society that could not handle so many refugees. Therefore, Rutte said, his party wanted a restrictive asylum reception policy along with a fixed maximum number of refugees to be accepted and an effective return policy. As in other debates, the progressive parties responded to Rutte's call for restriction by talking about the importance of humanity. GroenLinks leader Klaver talked specifically about the bad circumstances for refugees as a result of the EU-Turkey agreement. Preventing asylum migrants to come to the EU would in his view be an inhumane measure. Instead, Klaver, along with D66 leader Pechtold, urged to improve European asylum policies to ensure a just and humane reception of asylum migrants in the EU. Another important topic in this final debate was integration and the multicultural society. PvdA leader Asscher accused PVV leader Wilders of treating Muslims as second-class citizens. Asscher claimed that the Netherlands was "a home for every one". In response, Wilders said that the welfare state – "once the pride of the PvdA" - is incompatible with the multicultural society the

labour party currently supports. Throughout the debate Wilders consistently talked about asylum migrants as if they are all Muslims. Their Islamic identity would, according to the PVV leader, pose a danger to Dutch society. This corresponded with the images put forward by the PVV throughout the election campaign. In these images asylum migrants would be primarily male and Muslim, so-called 'testosterone bombs', that formed a burden to society and a threat to Dutch women and girls.

Who won

Eventually the 2017 Parliamentary elections were won by the VVD, which still lost 5% of votes as compared to the 2012 elections. The coalition party PvdA suffered the most severe loss in the history of Dutch politics, losing 29 of its 38 seats. GroenLinks won 6% compared to the 2012 elections and had its best election result since the party was established. CDA and D66 both became the third party with each getting 19 seats. The PVV still became the second largest party after VVD with an increase of 3% of votes, thus gaining twenty seats out of 150 seats in Parliament. Despite this significant number, the PVV was barely considered as a coalition partner. Having branded the PVV as a radical party unfit to govern, the VVD promised its constituency prior to the elections that it would not negotiate with Wilders for a potential coalition. Rutte kept his promise and ended up forming a coalition government with D66, CDA and the small Christian party of the ChristenUnie.

The topic of migration played a major role in the negotiations for the government coalition. At first the VVD had sought to include the Green party GroenLinks. Ultimately however, the Greens could not agree with the VVD, CDA and D66 on the matter of asylum migration to the EU. Particularly sensitive was the EU-Turkey agreement. The three parties were open to the idea of having more agreements like this one to help restrict asylum migration to the EU, while the Greens wanted the future government to oppose such agreements and support the reception of asylum migrants in the EU. While D66, and in a later phase of the negotiations the ChristenUnie, were critical of the restrictive policy of the VVD and CDA, they did not want the negotiations to break up over this matter. In the end, the four parties (without the Greens) agreed on a coalition accord that supported future refugee agreements to prevent asylum migration to the EU, but with strict clauses to guarantee a humane treatment of refugees in addition to investments in crisis regions to prevent asylum migration on the long term.

Concluding remarks: between humanity and security

The findings above show that migration was without a doubt one of the dominant topics during the campaign for the Dutch parliamentary elections of 2017. The election campaign showed a deep divide between conservative and progressive views on the matter. This divide deepened as parties like the PVV took on negative positions towards migration whilst progressive parties emphasized the humane dimension of migration. The extreme position of parties like the PVV also made parties such as the VVD and CDA seem centre parties.

Whereas the CDA stated in its election programme that it struggled to find a balance between mercifulness and realism regarding accepting refugees, the campaign was rather focused on national identity and values. Buma repeatedly brought up values – national and Judeo-Christian – that needed to be protected from radical forms of Islam. By stressing national identity, liberal values, soberness and assimilation the CDA, just like the VVD, sought to present itself as a rational alternative to Wilders and his total rejection of refugees and Muslim newcomers. The radical views of the PVV made it easier for both the VVD and the CDA to portray themselves as moderate center parties with a restrictive as well as realistic perception of migration. This image likely helped the two parties, particularly the VVD, to win in the elections.

It is remarkable that the focus on restriction did not work as well for the two left-wing parties. The Socialist Party and especially Labour lost significantly in the 2017 elections. Both had also highlighted the need for sober migration policies, but with less conviction than for instance the VVD. Problematic here was that the left-wing parties sought to balance restrictive migration policies with positive views towards the multicultural society. The latter is partly due to fact that Labour has had traditionally strong voters' base among migrant communities in the Netherlands.

In general, the political programs of Labour and the SP said quite little about migration. In debates, their leaders seemed to avoid the topic even more until almost the end of the campaign. What could also explain for the discrepancy between the left-wing parties and the CDA and VVD, is that voters more likely doubted between the PVV and the VVD than between the Labour and the PVV. When the PVV in the course of the campaign came to be seen as a rad-

ical party that was unlikely to govern, potential PVV voters drifted towards the VVD as reasonable right-wing alternative and not to left-wing parties like Labour and the SP.

While the left struggled to clarify its position towards migration, progressive parties put forward a steady message on the topic. Both D66 and GroenLinks pleaded consistently for a humane, rational asylum and migration policy. They emphasised the disadvantaged situation refugees found themselves in and called for decent collaborative European measures to fairly spread asylum migrants over EU member states. Both parties received public support for their persistent attention to human dignity.

Generally, a mixture of different themes emerged in the debates. National identity was linked to the culture(s) of asylum migrants and the integration of second and third generation migrants was linked with the integration of newly arriving asylum migrants. This made the entire discussion on migration both broader and more complex. It also made migration – together with national identity, terrorism, integration and the multicultural society – an even larger topic in political as well as public discourse. The last debate before the elections counted as much as four sub-debates on migration.

It appears that during the campaign for the 2017 Parliamentary elections, Dutch political parties were sharply divided over arguments relating to human rights concerns and national security interests. In an attempt to be as recognizable as possible to the voters, parties stressed their differences more than could be expected on the basis of their political programs. In the debates, parties employed harsh language to distinguish themselves from others. They would accuse each other of being either too soft or too tough on migration and meanwhile frame refugees as either victim or threat to society. The PVV might have been most radical in its statements on the topic. In the end, almost all parties appeared preoccupied with migration and played a part in making it into the hot topic of the 2017 election campaign.

Today, Dutch politics and society remain deeply divided on migration. Due to the political system however, consensus must always be reached. The current coalition is still in the process of finding a middle way between humanity and security, both welcoming asylum migrants and calling for restrictive European migration policies at the same time. In line with the Dutch polder-model, it is likely that neither position will prevail.

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European Liberal Forum

The European Liberal Forum (ELF) is the foundation of the European Liberal Democrats, the ALDE Party. A core aspect of its work consists in issuing publications on Liberalism and European public policy issues. ELF also provides a space for the discussion of European politics, and offers training for liberal-minded citizens, to promote active citizenship in all of this. ELF is made up of a number of European think tanks, political foundations and institutes. The diversity of the membership provides ELF with a wealth of knowledge and is a constant source of innovation. In turn, the member get the opportunity to cooperate on European projects under the ELF umbrella.

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The mission of the Institute is to cultivate the Czech political and public sphere through professional and open discussion and to create a living platform which defines problems, analyses them and offers recipes for their solution in the form of cooperation with experts and politicians, international conferences, seminars, public discussions and political and social analysis available to the whole of Czech society. The Institute believes that open discussion with experts and the recognition of the causes of problems is a necessary presumption for any successful solution to political and social problems.
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Mr. Hans van Mierlo Stichting

The Mr. Hans van Mierlo Stichting works as a broker of knowledge, expertise and ideas for the Dutch progressive liberal Party D66 (Democrats66). The main focus of its work is to deepen and develop our liberal democratic thought. The Foundation was originally founded in 1974 when it served as a traditional research centre. At the turn of the 20th century, its approach changed to that of a broker, but the aim has remained the same: to spur debate and develop ideas that strengthen the intellectual profile of D66. In doing so, the Foundation tries to maintain a long term view, placing political issues in a broader (ideological) perspective.

Nowadays, the organization employs dozens of volunteers, working on projects varying from policy advice to fundamental studies of the basic social liberal principles. They also publish a quarterly magazine called 'Idee' (Idea). Furthermore, the organization acts as secretary to D66's permanent program commission, which is responsible for drafting (preliminary studies for) the party manifestos for both national and European elections.

www.vanmierlostichting.d66.nl



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