Grumpy Politics: The Netherlands in Rejectionist Mode

Steven B. Wolinetz
Memorial University of Newfoundland

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Introduction:

The years 2002 and 2003 were a watershed in Dutch political life. In fall, 2001 the Dutch were in the eighth year of 'purple' or social-liberal governments led under PvdA leader, Wim Kok. On the social and economic front, the Dutch were still receiving praise for the apparent success – modest but sustained rates of economic growth and reduced unemployment – which renewed social partnership and the polder model had achieved. Five months later, the picture looked remarkably different: Protest party leader Pim Fortuyn burst onto the political scene, initially as the leader of a new party, Livable Netherlands (LN), and after he was dropped from its ticket, at the head of a his own List Pim Fortuyn (LPF). A Ph.D in Sociology, former Marxist, one time professor, consultant and columnist, wealthy, flamboyantly gay, Fortuyn was an atypical leader of a protest party. Charging that the social-liberal cabinets had presided over a series of disasters, allowing public services to deteriorate, and that they had failed to develop or implement policies requiring immigrants and refugees to integrate, Fortuyn broke taboos, made politically incorrect statements, and said things that other people may have been thinking (van Holsteyn *et al.,* 2003); his assertion that Islam was a backward religion – impetus for his being dropped from the Livable Netherlands ticket – was only one example.

Fortuyn's critique was devastatingly simple: established authorities had lost touch with the people, failed to deliver effective services, failed to deal with very real problems, including public safety and the multicultural society which liberal immigration and asylum problems had created. The Netherlands, in his view, was full. Immigrants and refugees, including illegal entrants already in the Netherlands would be allowed to stay, but others would be barred and those who stayed would be expected to integrate. Riding high in public opinion polls, playing the electronic media, delivering barbs which established party politicians found difficult to answer, in the run up to the May 15th parliamentary elections, Fortuyn became a force with which other politicians had to reckon. Ignoring him and attempting to marginalize him failed. So did attempts to answer him. Although his claims that he would be the Minister President were overstated, the votes he was likely to receive meant that other parties would have found it difficult to exclude his list from the cabinet. That experiment was cut short when Fortuyn was gunned down by an animal rights activist on May 6, 2002. Even so, Fortuyn's death cast a shadow over the election and subsequent cabinet formation. Campaigning stopped while a traumatized Netherlands made pilgrimages to his home in Rotterdam or watched his funeral on national television, but parliamentary elections went ahead as scheduled. Despite, and perhaps because of his death, the Pim Fortuyn's list won 17% of the vote and twenty-six of the 150 seats in the Second Chamber, sufficient to force its inclusion in a new cabinet. The governing parties lost heavily: The Social Democrats plummeted from 29.0% to 15.1% (23 seats), while Liberals dropped from 24.7% to 15.4% (24 seats) and D66 from 9.0% to 5.1% (7 seats).

The political landscape has changed since May, 2002. Included in a cabinet with Christian Democrats and Liberals, the LPF lacked the cohesion to stay there. A party in name

only, the LPF had difficulty agreeing on leaders and sticking with them once they had agreed. In addition, two of the four LPF ministers in the cabinet quarrelled incessantly and publically. Tired of their antics, Liberals and Christian Democrats pulled the plug in mid October. The cabinet, under Christian Democratic Leader Jan Pieter Balkenende, had been in office for only 87 days. New elections were called for January, 2003. Liberals and Christian Democrats had hoped to win a majority and continue their coalition. The LPF lost heavily and has ceased to be a significant force in Dutch politics. However, the Social Democrats bounced back, winning 27.3% of the vote and 42 seats. Christian Democrats and Liberals held 72 seats, four short of a majority. The PvdA's recovery meant that the Christian Democrats, who had won 28.6% and 44 seats (a gain of one) had to enlist the PvdA in discussions about a new cabinet. Negotiations foundered, first on economic policy and budget cuts, then on intervention on Iraq, and when these appeared to be resolved, on Christian Democratic demands for further budget cuts. Following their break with the PvdA, Christian Democrats and Liberals enlisted Democrats 66 in a second Balkenende cabinet. This cabinet took office after a 125 day formation – the third longest in Dutch parliamentary history (Andeweg and Irwin, 2002 and 2003).

This paper will examine the impact which the LPF and the elections of 2002 and 2003 have had on Dutch politics and the Dutch political system. The Netherlands is considered to be a consensus democracy, known for its tolerance of minorities. Since 2002, the country and its politics appear to have swung far to the right, both in social and economic policy, and particularly in its policies toward immigrants and refugees, who are now expected to assimilate into Dutch society. On the surface, both the suddenness and magnitude of the changes, and the direction which they have taken appear to be at odds with both the characterization of the Netherlands as a consensus democracy with policy processes so viscous that change occurs only gradually, and with the Dutch reputation for tolerance. This paper will consider what has and has not changed, and particularly the extent to which these are consistent with those which might be expected in a consensus democracy.

What happened?

Political scientists and commentators inside and outside the Netherlands are still trying to unravel the reasons for Pim Fortuyn's success. Arguments mooted take different tacks, attributing his success to factors as diverse as discontent and cynicism (van der Zwan, 2003), his own political skill, the media and the ways in which Fortuyn's critiques reverberated in it (Kleinnijhuis, *et al.*, 2003), weak political attachments (van Holsteyn and Irwin, 2003), the convergence of established parties (Pennings and Keman, 2003), and his success in providing a channel or focus for feelings and sentiments felt by voters but not previously articulated by mainstream parties (van Holsteyn, *et al.*, 2003; van de Brug, 2003).

Sorting out all these explanations is beyond the scope of this paper, but several facets are worth considering. First, the 2002 election campaign and the course which it took were extremely important. Although the first social-liberal cabinet, Kok I (1994-98), was regarded as more dynamic and innovative than its successor, Kok II (1998-2002), the cabinet was well-regarded, and there was little sense going into the campaign, that its policies were 'puinhopen' or disasters. (Kleinnijhuis *et al.*2003). Social Democrats and Liberals initially hoped to dominate the campaign, each competing to be the largest party and the party delivering the minister

president, in either a renewed or alternate coalition. Fortuyn's entry, first as leader of Livable Netherlands, then as head of his own list, altered the focus of the campaign. In earlier phases, established parties tried to ignore Fortuyn. However, his pronouncements and successes shifted the focus of the campaign. Instead of a horse race celebrating the successes of the social-liberal cabinet, media coverage focussed on what had gone wrong – waiting lists in health care, lack of safety and security, the problems of the privatized Dutch railways, and the position of immigrants. (Kleinnijenhuis, *et al.* 2003). As noted above, the leaders of the governing parties found it difficult to answer or deflect these criticisms. Under these circumstances, it is plausible to believe that the election campaign fostered cynicism and discontent, as van den Brug (2003) argues, and that changes in voting behaviour reflected not only the long term weakening of party attachments (van Holsteyn and Irwin, 2003), but also the presence of an alternative not previously available to Dutch voters (van Holsteyn *et al.* 2003).

Parties and governments after 2002

Dutch parties had to get on with normal business after Pim Fortuyn's murder. Although there was some suggestion that parliamentary elections might be delayed, elections were held as scheduled on May 15, 2002. Victors included not only the LPF with 17.0%, but also the Christian Democratic Appeal, which advanced from 18.4% in 1998 to 27.9% in 2002. The governing parties were the principal losers: The Social Democrats plummeted from 29.0% to 15.1%, while Liberals dropped from 24.7% to 15.4% and D66 from 9.0% to 5.1%.

As usual, the Queen's request was for a majority government. Defeated, none of the governing parties in Wim Kok's purple cabinets were anxious to govern. The initiative fell to the Christian Democrats, under Jan Pieter Balkenende. However, the CDA's 43 seats were well short of the 76 needed for majority cabinet. Building the requisite majority required the CDA to enlist both the Liberals and the LPF in a majority coalition. The Liberals were reluctant but ultimately willing. Engaging LPF was more problematic: the LPF was willing but barely a political party. Confronted with the need to form his own list, Fortuyn and a few associates had assembled a rag tag list of candidates, some of whom were still members of other parties, and few of whom had much political experience or, more important, knew each other well enough to work together. In addition, the party was leaderless and unable to agree on a leader, or if they managed that, reluctant to follow the person on whom they had agreed upon for very long. Nevertheless, a cabinet of Christian Democrats, Liberals, and LPF came together with CDA leader Balkenende as Minister-President. The sixty-eight day formation was short by Dutch standards. The cabinet, however, was considerably further to the right on social and economic and welfare state policies and issues of immigration and integration, and the administration of justice. The LPF had four portfolios and five state secretaries.

The first Balkenende cabinet was short-lived. Invested in July, 2002, the cabinet submitted its resignation in mid-October. Its difficulties involved not so much policy issues, but the inability of the LPF ministers to work with each other. Minister of Economic Affairs, Herman Heinsbroek, and Vice Premier and Minister of Health, Welfare, and Sport, Eduard Bomhoff, constantly feuded with each other. After 87 days, the other parties, and particularly the VVD leader parliamentary Gerrit Zalm, pulled the plug. As Holsteyn and Irwin (2004) note, this occurred when the LPF, beset by feuds not only among its ministers but also its caucus and party

organization, had plunged to four seats in the polls. New elections were held in January 2003. These took place after a three week campaign. The Christian Democrats won 28.6% of the vote and 44 seats (one more than 2002) while the Liberals advanced to 17.9% of the vote and 28 seats, a gain of four. The LPF, or rather what was left of it, dropped to eight seats and 5.7%. The biggest shift was the recovery of the PvdA. Under a new leader, Wouter Bos – for the first time, directly elected by party members – the PvdA won 42 seats and 27.3% of the popular vote.

The PvdA's success threw a monkey wrench into the plans of the CDA and VVD. As Holysteyn and Irwin (2004) point out, both took the Strategic Accord, originally concluded with LPF and the basis of the first Balkenende cabinet, as the basis of a renewed majority coalition. However, their majority evaporated in opinion polls and failed to materialize in January, 2003. CDA and VVD ended up with 72 seats, four short of a majority. The PvdA's recovery meant that Social Democrats had to be included in the cabinet formation. CDA leader Balkenende reluctantly entered into negotiations with Bos and the PvdA. However, negotiations repeatedly stalled because of differences on economic policy, budget cuts, and impending war in Iraq. In April, agreements on austerity measures came unstuck when the CDA insisted on further cuts. After 78 days, the CDA broke off negotiations with the PvdA. (van Holsteyn and Irwin, 2004)

The break cleared the way for a new centre-right cabinet. However, Christian Democrats and the Liberals, lacked required at least one more partner for a parliamentary majority. Options included enlisting smaller orthodox Calvinist parties (5 seats), re-enlisting the LPF (8 seats) or incorporating Democrats '66 (6 seats) into the cabinet. Each could provide the necessary seats, but the CDA and VVD had just broken with LPF, Liberals had scant inclination to ally with the smaller Calvinist parties, and D66 normally aligned with the left. Of these, Democrats 66 was the preferred option. D66 extracted a price for its participation: Originally, established in order to press for constitutionalsee and political reforms – direct election of the minister president, a district system, referenda – D66 had unable to realize its demands in the centre-left cabinets in which it participated. Democrats 66 agreed to join the cabinet in exchange for changes in the electoral system and the direct election of mayors. D66, however, did not get all that it wanted: demands for referenda had to be dropped. A second Balkenende cabinet, with nine ministers from the CDA, six from the VVD and two from D66, took office committed to increased competition, less regulation, and a safer and more secure society. The two phases of the formation took 125 days. (Holsteyn and Irwin, 2004)

The 2002 and 2003 elections and the cabinet formations which followed them opened the way for important changes in Dutch politics. In opposition from 1994 until 2002, the Christian Democrats had experienced difficulty finding a clear political direction or opposing the centrist policies of the social-liberal Kok cabinets. Under the leadership of former Free University of Amsterdam Philosophy Professor Jan Pieter Balkenende, the party moved to the right, placing greater emphasis on norms and values, a responsible society, and a less encompassing welfare state. Some of these ideas had been present in earlier Christian Democratic thinking, and advanced as an ideological basis for the merged Catholic and Protestant parties in the 1980s. However, the emphasis had been on connecting up to Christian social organizations and the remnants of the Catholic and Calvinist pillars and balancing the interests of capital and labour. More recent thinking continued earlier emphases on self-organization and social responsibility, but placed less emphasis on balancing interests, and more on reducing state involvement. As

Pennings and Keman (2003) point out, there was little inclination to oppose the secular parties on issues such as abortion or euthanasia.

Liberal thinking was changing as well. The VVD had been divided between more progressive wings, hoping for the coalition with the PvdA which materialized in 1994, and a more conservative element, critical of social partnership, compromises, and their party's support for the welfare state. Former party leader and European Commissioner, Frits Bolkestein, typified this point of view, occasionally taking iconoclastic positions, critical of corporatist arrangements or the failure to integrate immigrants.

The elections of 2002 and 2003 opened the way for changes in party positions and the establishment of a new centre-right policy coalition, embodied by the emerging alliance between the CDA and the VVD. Changes in party positions reflect the success of the LPF and Pim Fortuyn in the 2002 election campaign. Giving voice to what had hitherto been politically incorrect views about immigrants and multiculturalism, Fortuyn managed not only to change the political agenda (van Holsteyn *et al.* 2003), but also to demonstrate that there was a substantial reservoir of sentiment uncertain about immigration, refugees, and the failure of immigrants to assimilate into Dutch life. Parties which ignored these attitudes risked losing support to parties which addressed them. Dutch parliamentary election studies demonstrate that social class and religiosity, the two factors which once anchored party preference in the Netherlands, structure an increasingly small percentage of the vote (van Holsteyn and Irwin, 2003). Confronted with record volatility in the 2002 elections, party leaders and strategists could not help but be aware of this. Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that they would want to align their parties with a highly charged strand of public opinion. Typically, this has meant assuming a firmer stance on immigration and the administration of justice, insisting that refugees assimilate into Dutch society and that laws against criminality be enforced.

The 2002 and 2003 elections had other effects on political parties, and more broadly, political life. Following the 2002 elections, not only party leaders, but other senior figures in political life withdrew, often resigning seats in parliament which they had just won. This amplifed an already high turnover in the membership of the Second Chamber. According to van den Berg and van Braak, the 2002 elections brought in 76 new members, and the 2003 elections, an additional 39. The net result was replacement of 100 of the 150 members of the Second Chamber; as a result, in 2003, 3/4 of the membership had less than one year of experience. (van den Berg and van Braak, 2004)

The impact of this turnover is more difficult to discern. As van den Berg and van Braak note, turnover rates had increased in recent election years (almost half in 1994, 65 in 1998), and the one place in which a lack of political experience was most evident was where it was most expected – in the LPF. Lack of cohesion among members of the LPF caucus, its rudimentary organization, and two of its four cabinet members, raised questions about the desirability of continuing the first Balkenende cabinet, but this problem was solved, at least temporarily, by pulling the plug and seeking new elections, reducing the size and impact of the LPF.

Other effects on the operation of the political system are less apparent. Although it might be argued that newer ministers, particularly Minister President Jan Pieter Balkenende, display less political finesse than their predecessors, a decline in aggregate political skill is difficult to

document. Far more striking is the continuation of past practices and routines. Although the political situation in 2002 and 2003 was different, way in which cabinet formations unfolded was not. As before, the Queen, as head of state, sought the views of party leaders and key advisors, and appointed *informateurs* and *formateurs*, as before. Well-established practices continued, perhaps deemed all the more necessary because of a changing political situation.

Immigration and integration:

Changes in policies toward immigrants, refugees, and the degree to which they are expected to assimilate into Dutch society have been pronounced. Previous policies reflected a stance best described as benign neglect. Immigrants and refugees had been allowed to settle and to benefit from the Dutch welfare system. Suggesting that there were problems had been deemed politically incorrect, keeping the problem off the political agenda Policies announced and implemented by the first and second Balkenende cabinets emphasize integration of immigrants and refugees into Dutch society, higher age and income thresholds for family reunification, and more determined removal of illegals and criminal elements.

The core policy is 'inburgering' or integration – reducing social, cultural, and economic distance between minorities of different stripes and native-born Dutch people. According to the government's policy statement:

> The point of departure for the new integration policy is that immigrants who establish themselves permanently in the Netherlands must have the knowledge and proficiency needed for an independent existence. Acquiring this knowledge and competency is primarily the responsibility of the immigrant. Passing an integration examination is a condition of obtaining permanent status.
>
> (Tweede Kamer, 2003-04, 29 202, nrs. 1-2.)

A press release from the cabinet and the Ministry for Immigration and Integration elaborates on this:

> "Shared citizenship is the goal of integration. This means that people speak Dutch, are aware of Dutch values and norms and participate actively in Dutch society.
>
> This also means that practices which are in conflict with core Dutch values will be opposed. Insofar as possible, the cabinet will oppose double nationality because this is in conflict with shared citizenship. Integration means that society is open for new people and that discrimination and prejudice are actively opposed"
>
> (Council of Ministers, 19 May 2004)

The Dutch government has chosen a number of means to accomplish this. A central element is an "inburgering" or integration examination. Potential immigrants must begin the process in their home country by passing an initial examination demonstrating an initial proficiency in Dutch. Once they have arrived in the Netherlands, newcomers must register with municipal authorities and enroll in an integration course of their choice at their own expenses. In order to receive partial reimbursement of costs, the newcomer must pass a further exam within three years. Failure to pass the exam within five years will result in fine (Press release, 23 April 2004).

Integration exams are a central but by no means solitary facet of government policies.

Local governments are to intensify efforts to integrate youth, improve the position of women, and improve position of minorities in the labour market, for example by combining work and schooling. The assumption is that newcomers must have the competence and proficiency to function in Dutch society. Authorities are also to ensure that programs and installations are accessible to minorities. At the same time, however, requests for asylum are to be dealt with more rapidly and effectively, and those rejected for residence are to be expelled more rapidly. So too are illegals and criminal elements. In addition, the age and income requirements for 'family formation' (bringing in a spouse from abroad) have been increased. In order to do so, a person must be at least 21 years of age and must earn 120% of the minimum wage. (Tweede Kamer, 2003-04, 29 202, nrs. 1-2.)

These policies have been supplemented with others, broached though not necessarily adopted. These include possible restrictions on the establishment of Islamic schools, requirements that imams be trained in the Netherlands, and expulsion of naturalized citizens convicted of certain kinds of crimes. Although some of these are little more than trial balloons, they reflect a determination to keep multiculturalism within strict bounds. This became even more pronounced with the November, 2004, killing of filmmaker Theo van Gogh.

One striking feature of many of these measures is their emphasis on juridical measures. Athough there is some recognition of the importance of social and economic integration, the primary emphasis is on laying down rules, tightening up laws, and placing primary responsibility for not only for integrating, but also for its costs on the immigrants themselves. Equally striking is the rapidity with which policies have been changed. One well-known characteristic of the Netherlands as a consensus democracy is that it policy processes are slow and viscous (Andeweg and Irwin, 2002). Change is supposed to occur only gradually, after affected interests are consulted.

The rapidity of policy change reflects both the perceived urgency of the problem and the relatively weak organization of interests in the sectors under discussion. In view of the long history of accommodation between Calvinist and Catholic pillars, we might expect the Dutch to encourage the organization of immigrant populations as separate pillars with whom authorities might interact, in order to accommodate their interests and encourage their eventual integration into Dutch society. However, although it might be argued that relative complacency with which authorities viewed problems of immigrants and refugees before 2002 reflected this, immigrant populations fit at best uncomfortably into the older pattern of pillarization and accommodation. The immigrant groups are internally diverse and less intensively organized. Immigrants and refugees with Islamic background constitute 6% of the Dutch population; however their density is greater in larger and medium sized cities. That 6% however includes relatively more integrated immigrants of from Indonesia or Surinam and the Dutch Antilles, most of whom speak Dutch, and separate groups of Turks, who began arriving in the 1960s, and Moroccans, who began arriving in the 1970s and 1980s. The latter two groups arrived when pillarization and the politics of accommodation were already receding, and coming under challenge, and in any case, because they were not citizens and lacked basic language skills, were not well positioned to organize themselves, let alone establish themselves as separate pillars. Because of this, immigration policy may be one of the few policy areas in which the Dutch government can make policy without intensive consultation of affected interests.

Social and economic bargaining: the end of polder politics?

Changes have begun appearing in the system of social and economic bargaining. The Balkenende governments inherited the polder model from the Kok cabinets, but by 2003 were facing a deteriorating economic situation as effects of slowdown in Germany spilled into the Netherlands. Initially, the polder model seemed to work without difficulties. In 2002, social partners agreed to restrict wage increases to 2.5% and in 2003, social partners and government concluded a multi-year accord freezing wages in 2004 and linking increases in subsequent years to economic performance. In exchange, the government agreed to scrap previously announced elimination of tax benefits for early retirement schemes as well changes in unemployment and severance benefits. (Eironline 2003a). These arrangements were endorsed in a referendum of Federation of Dutch Trade Unions (FNV) members; 56% voted in favour (Eironline, 2003b).

In spring and fall of 2004, however, these arrangements came unstuck. Both the government and the employers associations argued that wage costs in the Netherlands were increasing too rapidly, and proposed a variety of changes including reductions in the minimum wage for certain categories of employees, increases in working time, and changes to dismissal laws. In addition, the government announced that it would not automatically extend collective agreements and declare them binding on entire sectors of the economy. The government also announced its intention to reintroduce proposed changes in tax treatment of early retirement schemes despite recommendations to the contrary from social partners. In May 2004, tripartite discussions about early retirement and proposed 'life-span' saving schemes stalled. In response, trade unions indicated that they no longer regarded the fall, 2003 wage freeze as binding, and announced protests for the fall. (Eironline, 2004a; 2004b)

Negotiations among trade union federations, employers, associations, and government took a different tack in fall, 2004. Initially, discussions in the Foundation of Labour stalled, with trade unions and Minister for Social Affairs de Geus (formerly with Christian National Trade Union Federation, CNV) barely talking with each other. On October 2, 2004, trade union federations mounted massive demonstrations in Amsterdam. This, along with mediation from the junior minister of defence, van der Knaap (also ex-CNV) were sufficient to get consultations back on track. On November 5, trade unions, employers, and government, announced a new multi-year agreement on wage moderation, early retirement (retaining changes in tax treatment, but introducing greater flexibility in life-span arrangements, and long-term disability schemes. Plans for changes to unemployment insurance were scrapped. (Eironline, 2004c)

The events of 2004 need to be seen in broader context. Social partnership in the Netherlands has never been static, but rather is a framework in which different sides manoeuver for advantage. At different times, unions, business, or government has sought to shift the terms of the bargain (Wolinetz, 1989; 2001). Negotiations stalled in 2004 and both the employers association and the government were exploring the possibility of exiting from negotiations and the amicable relationship with trade unions embodied in the polder model. The ability of trade unions to mount demonstrations and engage in industrial action, resulted in reconsideration and an apparent resumption of polder politics. Over the long haul, attempts to redefine the terms of the socio-economic bargain, and occasional displays of power are normal in such a system (Wolinetz, 1989; Visser, and Hemerijck 1997). Whether the present government, determined to reduce expenditures and the scale of the welfare state, will work through existing bipartite and tripartite structures, trying to gain acceptance for new policies – longer working hours, later

retirement, and a less generous welfare state – or seek other solutions remains to be seen. Going outside the system has costs, but they may well be costs the government is willing to bear.

Consensus democracy under pressure: some conclusions

Depending on the perspective taken, we can argue that the Netherlands has changed dramatically since 2002, or very little at all. If nothing else, two political killings – that of Pim Fortuyn and more recently, Theo van Gogh, and surge of support for the LPF in the 2002 elections have re-set political agenda, and forced political parties to deal with problems of immigration, integration, and multiculturalism that before 2002 had generally been ignored or left to the margins of the political system. Nevertheless, if we look at the routines of the political system – the ways in which politics is done – very little has changed. This should not be surprising. The Netherlands is a stable democracy, with deeply entrenched practices, which we should expect to change only gradually. In addition, the LPF was not on the political scene long enough to have any lasting impact on the political system. Had Pim Fortuyn not been assassinated but rather entered parliament with enough seats to demand entry into a cabinet, this might well have been different.

In some respects, responses to the LPF parallelled responses to demands for democratization in the late 1960s. Then, party elites, still practising a politics of accommodation, had come under attack from Democrats 66 and dissident factions in parties demanding in different guises, further going democratization, a return to and renewal of political life, and clarity in the political system. D66 won only 4.7% of the vote in 1967 but this was perceived to be a shift of mammoth proportions in the context of an electorate whose voting behaviour was anchored by religion and social class and a still strong, though receding, system of pillarization. Parties responded by taking up demands for democratization, attempting to form electoral alliances, and in the case of both the Social Democrats and Liberals, distancing themselves from each other and polarizing, in an attempt to force voters to opt for the left or right rather than the confessional centre (Wolinetz, 1973). Elite practices – then under challenge – changed more markedly than in 2002 or beyond. However, the basic response – taking up at least some of the demands of the dissidents, incorporating them and attempting to encapsulate the new political force – was similar.

It is difficult to determine whether this kind of response is characteristic of the Netherlands only, characteristic of consensus democracies, or characteristic of democracies, more generally. Lijphart's (1999) distinction between adversarial and consensus democracies is a useful way of differentiating different modes of policy-making in liberal democracies, but offers no suppositions about how consensus democracies might be expected to change. The dimensions used to distinguish more consensual and adversarial democracies tap constitutional arrangements (a rigid vs. flexible constitution, the presence or absence of judicial review, bicameralism, unitary vs. federal system) or failing that, deeply embedded features (the electoral law, the number of parties, executive- legislative relations) of political systems, unlikely to change rapidly in stable democracies. Students of the Dutch politics, such as Andeweg (2001) and Andeweg and Irwin (2002) have speculated that one form which change might take is increased support for new right populist parties, but we no theory specifying the kinds of changes which we should expect .

Several facets of the changes which have occurred in the Netherlands are worth noting. First, almost all political parties responded rapidly and dramatically to the demands and themes

advanced by the LPF, taking parts of them on board. In doing so, their behaviour best fits the behaviour which Anthony Downs (1957) predicted for parties in a two party system. In this instance, however, the 'innovator' is not one of the two parties in a duopoly, but rather an outsider. Equally striking, though, is that parties' rapid attempt to play catch-up is what we might expect of cartel parties whose leaders are increasingly distant from their members and the electorate (Katz and Mair, 1995).

Insisting that immigrants integrate and attempting at the same time to stamp out or at least control Islamic fundamentalism and the political activities which it might engender raises other questions with which the Dutch will have to deal. These concern not only the positions of minorities in the Netherlands, but also the extent to which Muslims will be allowed to enjoy the same rights to establish schools and to exercise autonomy within their own subculture, that Catholics and Protestants continue to enjoy. At issue are not only questions of civil liberties, but the continued application of the rules of the 1917 Pacification to new groups. These can be expected to be highly contested issues in the coming years.

Let us return to the question of whether consensus democracy in the Netherlands is all that different. Part of what we have observed are the rapid attempts of political parties to catch up with the sentiments of the electorate. Although this might be more likely in a consensus democracy, it could occur in any political system in which parties no longer have their ears to the ground. However, that is only one kind of change which we have discussed. Another is a shift toward the right in social and economic policy. Those changes may have been facilitated by the rise and demise of the LPF. However, attempts to redefine policy are not unusual in either consensus or adversarial democracies. Indicating that a country is a consensus democracy does not mean that there is a consensus, but rather than political leaders need to build one in order to make the system work. Some of what we have observed is normal politics, perhaps accelerated by a rapidly changing strategic environment.

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