

PVV Blog 9 ~ An Ideology Of Exclusion In Power



06-03-2024 ~ On May 16th, the Dutch Party for Freedom PVV, the liberal party VVD, the New Social Contract party NSC, and the Farmer Citizen Movement BBB, presented the [coalition](#) agreement for the upcoming cabinet. In [my previous blog](#), I already addressed the content of the agreement. Naturally, I followed the nature of the reactions with interest. How would the Dutch public respond, and how would the opposition in parliament react?

Debate in the House of Representatives

On Thursday, May 22nd, a debate took place in the House of Representatives about the coalition agreement. I watched it, and I found it confronting. Normally, Party for Freedom leader Geert Wilders is the leader of the opposition, but now he spoke from the podium as the leader of the new coalition. He is or will soon become the most powerful person in the Netherlands once the new cabinet is installed. And he was already taking a step ahead: sovereign, sharp, and very experienced in debating, he parried all attacks from the opposition, and his three future coalition partners also closed ranks.

Polls

[Polls](#) among the Dutch public showed that the new center-radical-right government is reasonably well-received. This cabinet is rated higher than previous ones, particularly the last one, led by VVD leader Mark Rutte, who will soon step down after 14 years as prime minister and may become the new secretary-general of NATO. It is not surprising that the reception of this new cabinet is positive; after all, the PVV gained a quarter of the votes in the November 2023 elections, which naturally translates into a positive response.

The Opposition Paralyzed

The opposition in the chamber presented two main arguments: firstly, that this new coalition pays little attention to the poorest in the country, that it strengthens the financial position of businesses, and that it has planned unfeasible cuts, such as reducing the number of civil servants. The latter is unfeasible precisely

because there are many vacancies in various ministries. The cabinet also envisions the strictest possible migration policy and believes that it will save billions. How these measures, often contrary to Brussels and international regulations, can save money is a question, but the Party for Freedom leader was not deterred in the debate. He believed in the measures, and if they didn't work, then "we will see that later."

An Ideology of Division

In my view, the opposition faced a major dilemma, namely dealing with predominantly positive reactions from the Dutch public. For instance, Frans Timmermans, the social-democratic leader of the opposition, was soon dismissed as a grump. He hammered on all the shortcomings of the proposed program, but he and other opposition parties faced the difficulty of articulating the fact that behind this coalition and its agreement lies an ideology of sowing division among people. The Party for Freedom and its leader are deliberately spreading a toxic ideology of inequality, especially concerning the Muslim community in the Netherlands. However, the coalition agreement hardly mentions this inequality explicitly. It speaks of various measures, and the inequality is not easily read between the lines. This made it difficult for the opposition to sharply attack the coalition agreement, and thus Wilders and his partners came through the debate relatively unscathed.

Who Will Be the New Prime Minister?

A lingering question was who would become the prime minister of this new cabinet. The agreement between the four coalition parties was that the faction leaders would all remain in the House, including Party for Freedom leader Wilders. This was against his will, but it was part of the price he had to pay to form this cabinet. The other coalition parties were against a "Prime Minister Wilders." Ultimately, the parties found a suitable candidate in their eyes: the seasoned top civil servant [Dick Schoof](#) (67 years old), who has worked for many years in various ministries and institutions on security, anti-terrorism policy, and the like. He is the embodiment of a civil servant, and it's no wonder Forum for Democracy leader Thierry Baudet scoffed on X: "37 seats for an anti-establishment populist on November 22 (date of the elections last year, JJdR). And you get... the embodiment of the establishment. Incredible." It seems that Mr. Schoof was pushed forward through backroom dealings and with the approval of current Prime Minister Rutte. Mr. Schoof is a former Labor Party member but has

resigned his membership.

It is a bizarre and unprecedented situation in Dutch politics that a coalition is formed with a certain coalition agreement, and then a man or woman is sought to execute this program.

Mr. Schoof had no input in the negotiations over the agreement and its final result. But that he supports it is beyond doubt: otherwise, he would never have agreed to become prime minister.

Concerns from Mosques

Regarding the exclusionary ideology of the coalition I mentioned earlier, one can only expect a reinforcement of it from Mr. Schoof. In the past, he has regularly pushed the boundaries of the law regarding mosques and Muslims in the Netherlands, and has also crossed them. It is no coincidence that mosques in the Netherlands [issued a statement](#) saying: “The fundamental rights of Muslims have been under pressure for some time, and with the arrival of this prime minister, who must lead a coalition where the Party for Freedom calls the shots, it is a bit like giving a bunch of bullies brass knuckles.” And: “In a mature, democratic constitutional state, citizens should not have to fear an incoming prime minister and a new cabinet. Unfortunately, this is now the case.”

I agree with the words of the mosque federation. The socio-economic measures proposed by this cabinet will hopefully withstand democratic criticism, but ideologically, this cabinet is a disaster for the country. As Sita Sitalsing, a columnist for the Dutch newspaper [de Volkskrant](#), wrote: “Unnoticed, the parties have swum into the Party for Freedom’s trap.”

And: “The country is heading towards an unpredictable government that constantly tests and tries to cross the boundaries of propriety and the law. This affects the certainties and protections of everyone living in this country. What remains is a bad taste.”

These are sharp words from the mosques, the columnist, and many others, but I think this coalition, knowing it is supported by ‘the people in the country,’ will unwaveringly implement its program and spread the poison of exclusion in the process. I will keep an eye on it for you in future installments of this series.