

How are they still together?

Analysing the Roots of Populist Radical Right Cooperation in the European Parliament.

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Abstract

In this research I take a comparative approach to the populist radical right parties Vlaams Blok and Front National. These parties cooperate in Europe to this day but started their cooperation in the European Parliament in 1989, via the Technical Group of the European Right. Political scientists and historians have predicted that a cooperation between these parties was not to last, claiming that these parties had no common platform, and nationalist ideas would hamper their cooperation. These predictions did not come true, therefore I am researching whether I can identify a common platform by comparing the policy positions of Vlaams Blok and Front National.

To do so I have analyzed speeches in the French, Belgian and European parliament by Vlaams Blok and Front National between 1984 and 1994. In this period Front National was first elected into the European Parliament and the period contained the first full term of cooperation between these parties. This period was also chosen because it covers the run up and signing of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992. This treaty had to be ratified and therefore forced both parties to take a clear position vis-à-vis the treaty. In three chapters, roughly representing the three pillars of policy areas of Post-Maastricht Europe, I analyze and conclude whether the policy positions of Vlaams Blok and Front National are similar. This means an analysis of both parties' position on European citizenship, immigration, the free movement of people, economic and monetary integration, a common foreign policy and a European army. Both parties are heavily influenced by their nativist core, ensuring many similarities in the positions taken on the subjects above. This has allowed for a fruitful partnership as both parties agree on two essential topics: One, what should be the responsibility of a European body and which policy areas should be left to national governments and two, on how these European policy areas are to be implemented.

‘The Brussels of today is not worth all this pain’

– Bruno Mégret 20.11.1986, Assemblée National, Paris.

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Introduction

The rise of Salvini in Italy, Le Pen in France, Wilders in The Netherlands and the resurgence of the FPÖ under Strache and Hofer among many others, resulted in the European Parliament's ID group winning a record 73 seats in the European Parliament. Indeed, authors found that their numbers alone accounted for more than enough reason to study the subject. Yves Mény, president of the European University Institute in Florence and political scientist, even went as far as stating that 'However excessive, contradictory, confusing and unpleasant are the messages, anti-EU populist rhetoric deserves our attention.'¹ Yet not much attention has been given to the first forms of political cooperation by populist radical right parties in the European Parliament. This while the Rassemblement National and Vlaams Belang are direct descendants of the parties that once started these groups – Front National and Vlaams Blok. Their recent electoral success and continuing cooperation are not in line with common expectations. Therefore, the premise of populist radical right cooperation in the European Parliament needs to be reassessed.

In *European parties and the European integration process, 1945-1992* the Technical Group of the European Right's founding is mentioned in one of the articles. Simone Paoli, history professor at the university of Pisa, concluded that Le Pen was not able to provide a common political platform or cultural identity in Europe, thereby preventing cooperation with other parties on a permanent basis.² In addition, Paoli notes that adding the word 'technical' to the group, betrays that the parties did not share a common platform.³ Instead Paoli ascribes the emergence of the Group of the European Right and its successor solely to political opportunism and for reasons of garnering political legitimacy. Front National allegedly hoped to make use of the various privileges awarded to a European Parliament Group, such as longer speaking time. This in turn would garner them political legitimacy.⁴ The view that the cooperation will not be made to last, is shared by English historian Nicholas Startin who concludes that nationalist differences, elite ego-clashes, disagreements over the direction of the EU, negative perception about other parties' images and the cordon sanitaire prevent any kind of durable

¹ Yves Mény, 'Conclusion: A Voyage to the Unknown: Conclusion: A Voyage to the Unknown', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 50 (2012) 1, 154-164, there 162.

² Simone Paoli, 'Euroright. The Extreme Right in the European Integration Process, 1979-1989', in: Lucia Bonfreschi, Giovanni Orsina, and Antonio Varsori, eds., *European Parties and the European Integration Process, 1945-1992*, (Bruxelles 2015) 313-343, there 330.

³ Paoli, 332.

⁴ Ibidem, 329.

collaboration.⁵ Furthermore, Startin believes future cooperation will diminish, not increase. This view was also taken over by politicians such as Martin Schulz, who claimed that the in 2011 founded ‘Identity, Tradition, Sovereignty’ group (ITS) was not legitimate, as they did not share a political position.⁶

At first glance a cooperation of these parties does indeed seem paradoxical. The famous Front National mottoes of *préférence nationale* and *Les Français d’abord* seem to hamper many European Integration issues.⁷ All parties joining in these groups in the European Parliament have similar nationalist ideals to that of Front National, and this indeed may cause friction between the groups’ members. Yet cooperation between radical right parties has continued, with some interruptions, from 1984 until today, and their alliance is seemingly stronger than ever. This raises questions about Startin and Paoli’s view: for some reason the cooperation seems durable enough. After some initial readings into Vlaams Blok and Front National, it became apparent that they have many similarities in the European sphere. This has made me question the premise that the cooperation is only based on political legitimacy and financial benefits, and if there is indeed a lack of a common platform. In this study I will therefore be exploring and comparing the policy positions of Vlaams Blok and Front National with regards to the European Community policy, hoping to find that common platform. I will work from the following central research question:

To what extent are Vlaams Blok and Front National’s policy positions between 1984 and 1994 regarding the Maastricht Treaty similar, warranting cooperation in the European Parliament?

The historian is, above all, able to dive into the past of this cooperation, keeping in mind the historical realities of the time. By studying the roots of the cooperation, we can better understand the groups’ current goals and objectives within the European Union.

In this study I will dive into the period of the second and third European Parliamentary term, between 1984 and 1994, for three additional reasons. Firstly, this period shows the first European Parliament cooperation between what are defined as Populist Radical Right political parties. In 1984, Jean-Marie Le Pen’s Front National formed a European Parliament Group

⁵ Nicholas Startin, ‘Where to for the Radical Right in the European Parliament? The Rise and Fall of Transnational Political Cooperation’, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 11 (2010) 4, 429-449, there 44.

⁶ DW Staff, ‘Far-Right Group Formed in European Parliament’, *Deutsche Welle*, January 16 2007, <https://www.dw.com/en/far-right-group-formed-in-european-parliament/a-2311527-0> (August 19 2020).

⁷ Andrea Mammone, *Transnational Neofascism in France and Italy* (Cambridge 2015) PDF e-book, chapter 6, 196.

called *Groupe des Droites Européennes* or Group of the European Right with the Italian Social Movement and the Greek National Political Union. Vlaams Blok at that time was not yet part of the cooperation, as they did not have a representative in the European Parliament yet. However, it is very likely they would have joined this cooperation had they been able to, considering that Vlaams Blok's leadership were, for a significant part, *Lepenists*: followers of the ideology of Le Pen.⁸ This even led to a conflict and a split within the party with the *Lepenists* coming out on top.⁹ From this point on until the modern Eurosceptic EU Group: ID, Vlaams Blok and Front National, counting their modern equivalents, have formed European Parliament groups together whenever possible.

Secondly, this period encompasses the Single European Act and its follow up: the Treaty of Maastricht, officially known as Treaty on European Union (TEU). These treaties have made significant further European integration a possibility, some of it seemingly supported by Vlaams Blok and Front National, and some of it utterly rejected. The Maastricht Treaty serves as a symbolic step towards the ever-closing union: the treaty ended the European Community and founded the European Union. The treaty also covers some of the subjects most important to Vlaams Blok and Front National in the European sphere: that of a common security and defence, borders, immigration and crime.

The Maastricht Treaty is relevant due to the fact that a treaty such as this one forces the parties to take an official stance towards it. Therefore, the Treaty of Maastricht can be used to pinpoint the position of the two parties at the same time, on its most important subjects as the treaty had to be ratified by the Belgian and French parliaments. According to the renowned French political scientist Gérard Grunberg, the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty was the catalyst that brought European instead of domestic issues to the foreground in France.¹⁰

Thirdly, this period encompasses the period in which these parties turned from believing in the European project, but wishing to reform it, to becoming the Anti-EU parties of today, opposing most future integration and wishing to reverse certain treaties. This is exemplified in Le Pen's recent autobiography. He states: 'When we started in Strasbourg, I believed in the possibility of a confederation of European powers taking care of the defence of its common interests and its borders, in particular against immigration, I even advocated a

⁸ Cas Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right* (Manchester 2000) PDF e-book, chapter (afterwards chp.) 4, 89.

⁹ Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, chp 4, 89.

¹⁰ Aleks Szczerbiak, Paul A. Taggart, *Opposing Europe? The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism* (Oxford 2008) PDF e-book, chapter (afterwards chp.) 1, 41.

European army.’¹¹ However, eight years later Le Pen claims to be the first to oppose the Maastricht Treaty, believing the European Community not to share these interests.¹²

What is the populist radical right?

Before addressing the method used for this research, it is important to get a clear understanding of the party family that Vlaams Blok and Front National are part of, so as to better understand the motives and actions of these parties and their members. Both parties will be grouped as populist radical right parties in this thesis. The definition of the populist radical right by Cas Mudde falls closest to what Vlaams Blok and Front National believe and exude in the period of 1984 to 1994. I will shortly address the two terms that populist radical right consists of: radical right, and populist. However, before we do that it is important to note that Mudde uses populist radical right, instead of radical right populists. This shows that these parties are not a part of a broader populist movement, but that instead radical right thoughts stand primary in their ideology. These ideas are further supplemented by populist ideas and methods.¹³ Firstly, I will investigate the term *radical right* through Cas Mudde’s eyes and compare it to Vlaams Blok and Front National’s ideology. Radical, should be seen as a term that indicates the level of opposition versus cooperation with the current system in a given state. Radical, according to Cas Mudde is less severe than extreme. It is different in several ways. Firstly Mudde, in an earlier work, writes that radical parties are allowed to exist, whilst extreme parties are often banned and ordered to dissolve.¹⁴ This is because of their hostility to the constitution of a country, shared by radicals, shifts into hostility to the constitution.¹⁵ Mudde sees this opposition of the modern and western populist radical right parties as an opposition to political pluralism and constitutional protection of minorities.¹⁶ Secondly the radical parties, at least in the liberal democracies of the West, do not oppose democracy, doing so would make them extreme.¹⁷

Both Front National and Vlaams Blok fall within this group as they participate in the democratic process still, but hardly cooperate with other parties from different ideology groups. Besides that, the xenophobic ideology results in an aggressive stance towards non-western minorities. For example, Karel Dillen, long time party leader of Vlaams Blok, said in the

¹¹ J. Le Pen, *Tribun du Peuple II, Mémoires* (Paris 2010) Kindle-edition, chapter (afterwards chp.) 29, 286.

¹² Le Pen, *Tribun du Peuple II*, chp. 31, 313.

¹³ Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge 2007) PDF e-book, chapter (afterwards chp.) 1, 26.

¹⁴ Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, chp. 1, 12.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, chp. 1, 25.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

European Parliament in 1992 that a European remigration policy must be pursued to avoid the destruction of Europe.¹⁸ Europe should put their own people first, according to Vlaams Blok.¹⁹ Also in its own region, Vlaams Blok pursued an image of an independent Flanders without any non-western minorities, believing them to be unable to assimilate into Flemish culture. In order to promote voluntary repatriation Vlaams Blok proposed a reduction in rights of non-westerners.²⁰ Front National shares these ideas, looking to reject any and all foreign influences. Party notable Bruno Mégret quotes Friedrich Hayek and says: ‘Our society will remain durable only so long as we treat others as inferior to our own.’²¹ This idea resulted also in Le Pen stating his opposition in the European Parliament to giving voting rights to foreigners in France.²² Next, we must look at *right*. Mudde sees the difference between left and right in the way they view the egalitarianism and the state’s role in this. Right-wing parties believe in a natural order and hierarchy of things, thus the natural inequality of things, and do not believe that government action can and should remedy this. The left believes inequalities to be superficial and wants government action to remedy the inequalities.²³ We can find examples of this in Front National’s and Vlaams Blok’s nativism: the belief that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group. For example, Karel Dillen expresses that Europe should be united in its diversity.²⁴ In addition, he states that his party acknowledges and respects non-western cultures, but only as neighbours, meaning separate from other cultures and peoples.²⁵ Dillen believes in a certain cultural area where people belonging to these cultures should be and are best suited to be. He sees Europe as a cultural area and the Middle East as the cultural area of Islam.²⁶ As such we can state that Dillen believes other cultures to be equal but different. Jean-Marie Le Pen writes something similar in his memoirs:

Disconnect the colonizing flow from America and Africa, these stupid models from which we reproduce the worst flaws. Let us return to us, to the model of a white, European and Christian

¹⁸ K. Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg II, Tussenkomsten in Het Europees Parlement 1991-1993* (Brussel 1993) 30.

¹⁹ Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg II*, 31.

²⁰ Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, chp. 4, 94.

²¹ Peter Davies, *The National Front in France: Ideology, Discourse, and Power* (London 1999) PDF e-book, chapter (afterwards chp.) 3, 137.

²² *Debates of the European Parliament* (afterwards: *DEP*) 1993-1993, No 3-448, 154.

²³ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, chp. 1, 26.

²⁴ K. Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg I* (Brussel 1991) 22.

²⁵ Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg I*, 38.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, 40.

civilization. It has allowed us to live exemplary for many centuries. Let us be proud of it and continue it.²⁷

In this text, the nativism is obvious: Europe should be Christian and white, when it is not, the culture will decline. Reflecting on to the time Le Pen had first got elected to Strasbourg in 1984 he writes that he is appalled by the melting-pot ideal, and wishes ‘Venice to remain Venice, and Marseille to stay Marseille’.²⁸

Lastly, we must look at the populist aspect of the political family. According to Mudde this is the style of practicing politics, but beside that also an integral part of the broader ideology of populist radical right parties. It is the belief in the battle between the ‘good’ common people, and the corrupt elite. Mudde lays an emphasis on populist radical right parties believing to speak for the people, voicing their general will.²⁹ The political style is also obvious in the propaganda used by Front National and Vlaams Blok. Front National used the well-known slogan ‘Two million unemployed are two million immigrants too many.’³⁰ Vlaams Blok copied this slogan, theirs being: ‘500.000 unemployed, then why guest workers?’³¹ It is also easy to identify the anti-elitist sentiments, and belief to speak for the common people. A quite literal example is the campaign slogan unveiled by Vlaams Blok for their 1984 European Parliament election campaign: ‘*Wij zeggen wat jij denkt.*’³²

Anti-elitist arguments are often made in speeches by both Karel Dillen and Jean-Marie Le Pen. On May fourth, 1994 Le Pen made a speech in the European Parliament and accused his political opponents of being federalists and internationalists causing decadence to the peoples of Europe.³³ Karel Dillen also standardly calls the other European political parties, that are in favor of deeper integration, Jacobins. They would be looking to destroy the diversity of Europe’s cultures and peoples, creating a gray unity.³⁴

²⁷ Le Pen, *Tribun du Peuple II*, chp. 43, 475.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, chp. 29, 286.

²⁹ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, chp. 1, 23.

³⁰ Davies, *The National Front in France*, chp. 1, 21.

³¹ Vanessa Bosseman, *De communicatiestrategie van het Vlaams Blok evolutie van positionering, doelgroep en boodschap* (Thesis Communication Science, Gent 2001) 47.

³² Bosseman, *De communicatiestrategie van het Vlaams Blok*, 47.

³³ *DEP* 1993-1994, No 3-448, 154.

³⁴ Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg I*, 106.

In short Front National and Vlaams Blok fall well within the minimal definitions that Cas Mudde has provided for the populist radical right party family. In the analyzed speeches, their ideology is apparent.

Method

Having concluded that the two parties to compare fall within the same ideological and political family, does this still warrant the chosen method? The comparative, most-different - similar outcome method is indeed only legitimate if the object, in this case the two parties, differ sufficiently and the outcome is the same. In this case the outcome is set as membership of the same European Parliament Group, the Technical Group of the European Right. For the object we need to dive deeper into the essence of what European cooperation means for populist radical right parties. As Cas Mudde, widely seen as the authority on the populist radical right, has explained in his book *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, parties fall within different families, but can be reduced with a minimum definition to a single concept or value. Mudde uses an example by Terence Ball that shows this. Marxism's core concept would be 'class', Feminism's core concept would be 'Gender' and so on. Mudde concludes that for the parties associated with the Populist Radical Right family it would undoubtedly be 'nation'.³⁵ Vlaams Blok and Front National both believe the European Community to be an institution that weakens nation states and they disapprove of an ever-closer union, instead embracing the subsidiarity principle. The European Parliament's main task is to amend and vote on policy proposals by the European Commission. These proposals are in line with the planned integration agreed upon in the Council of Ministers, and within the European treaties. So further integration cannot, in essence, be stopped from the European Parliament. Therefore, it is only logical to conclude that these nationalist parties are in the European Parliament for their own national cause, to get the best deal for their own peoples. Then, how can that explain cooperation between parties from different countries, and thus with differing national objectives? This paradoxical cooperation therefore warrants the use of the most different – similar outcome approach to comparative research.

In each of the three chapters of this thesis I will be analysing a different and essential part of the Maastricht Treaty. Furthermore, I will outline the positions of both Vlaams Blok and Front National on this subject and compare them. We can then conclude whether these

³⁵ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, chp. 1, 15.

positions are similar or different. This will provide an answer to the question of the existence of a common platform and thus for additional grounds for European parliamentary cooperation.

It is hard to divide the Maastricht Treaty into the three most important subjects of the treaty. How should one decide which is more important than the other? Besides that, the themes are very interconnected. How can one see open borders separate from economic integration, but again separate from the creation of Europol? In the end I have decided on a mix between what populist radical right parties find important based on Cas Mudde's analysis of the party group, such as the themes of open borders and with the main takeaways of the treaty by contemporary scholars in the period, such as Andrew Duff. Duff is the president of the Spinelli Group, a pro-federation initiative. This combination has led me to mostly keep my chapters contained to the themes of Maastricht's three pillar system, each pillar reflecting a chapter. I have only grouped the theme of European citizenship with justice and home affairs as for Vlaams Blok and Front National European citizenship is closely connected to the issue of immigration, which belongs to the third pillar.

Source material

Now that the methods of analysing the source material are defined, it is time to focus on the source material itself. When studying political parties and their positions or ideology, the selection of source material may differ. A researcher may focus either on the party itself, its leaders, or its voters and voting base. In this thesis I have chosen a qualitative content analysis. I will focus on members of the European Parliament and National parliaments of Vlaams Blok and Front National parties and their activities within these parliaments. I have further refined my search into their activities to interjections and speeches in these parliaments. I then filtered these results to only those having to do with the European Community in the case of the national parliaments, and the subjects connected to the Treaty of Maastricht for the European Parliament. I will further explain the positions found using secondary literature written on the subject.

It is important to address the fact that a study of this material can give a warped image of a party. Cas Mudde describes this as the *frontstage* of a party, as I do not study internal party documents.³⁶ I hope to combat this by explaining party positions found in the material by combining it with secondary literature written on the subject. Besides that, the front stage for political party cooperation can be very important, not in the least with regard to populist radical

³⁶ Ibidem, 35.

right cooperation in the European Parliament. A public position taken by the Social Alternative party about Romanians led the Greater Romania Party to exit the radical-right ITS group during the sixth term, causing its collapse. Another example is the exclusion of the MSI party from the Technical Group of the European Right in 1989 over disagreements over the status of South-Tyrol with the German Republikaner party. Therefore, public comments made by other parties, also affect the other parties that they are allied to in the European Parliament.

Moreover, it is important to address the other types of sources often used when performing this kind of research. Published party literature and, most notably, party manifestos are instrumental in defining a party position. In this study I would have very much liked to use party manifestos and read party literature such as Front National's *Identité*. I have, however, been prevented from visiting the archives that contain these documents because of the COVID-19 crisis. Other methods of obtaining these documents have also failed, resulting in the current choice of source materials.

1. Towards an economic and monetary union.

First and foremost, the Maastricht Treaty should be seen as the official birth of the Economic and Monetary Union in 1992, paving the way for the future single currency.³⁷ The adoption of the single currency was seen as the final stage of economic integration within the newly founded European Union, and would provide up to 5 percent growth in GDP for the member states involved. Yet, according to French economist and economic historian Paul-Jacques Lehmann, not all observers were wholly in favour of the single currency, worrying over different levels of growth, economic development and debt held by the member states.³⁸ Aware of this severe deepening of integration, the treaty therefore provided the Maastricht criteria: only if these strict criteria were met, could a member state adopt the single currency. However, it quickly became apparent that the criteria were kept only nominally by the commission and council, as long as there was enough political will for increased integration.³⁹ The deepening of economic integration could surely bring economic growth to the member states, and a strong currency could compete with the Dollar. However, there were also fears of the large economic differences between member states and about the loss of sovereignty this would mean for member states. Furthermore, the deeper the integration became, the harder it would be for new member states to join the European Community, it was the classic debate on deepening versus widening. This was especially relevant as with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Eastern European countries would make ideal future member states. I will now explain the attitudes of Front National and Vlaams Blok towards this essential part of European Integration proposed by the Maastricht Treaty proposed within Maastricht's first pillar, from initial thoughts about deepening economic integration, to the ratification of the treaty.

In his memoirs Le Pen claims that Front National was the first to oppose the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, calling the single currency a 'Eurosnake'.⁴⁰ He explains that he had always been against the single currency. He believed that the common currency could only be successful when there was a common monetary policy, which in turn required the relinquishing of

³⁷ Andrew Duff, John Pinder, and Roy Pryce eds., *Maastricht and beyond: Building the European Union* (London 1994) PDF e-book, chapter (afterwards chp.) 2, 20.

³⁸ Paul-Jacques Lehmann, *The Future of the Euro Currency* (New York, 2019) PDF e-book, Introduction, 18.

³⁹ Lehmann, *The Future of the Euro Currency*, Introduction, 18.

⁴⁰ Le Pen, *Tribun du Peuple II*, chp. 31, 315.

sovereignty previously held by national governments, something Le Pen did not want.⁴¹ He portrays Front National and himself as staunch opponents to the Euro from the very beginning. Vlaams Belang in 2018, too is against the monetary union on grounds of sovereignty, believing that the loss in fiscal sovereignty will in turn eventually lead to economic stagnation.⁴²

Yet between 1984 and 1992 Vlaams Blok was not very interested in the economic and monetary side of the union, giving it hardly any attention in their speeches and interruptions. When talking about monetary matters it was usually with regards to how the money was spent, not any kind of economic policy or ideology. During this period the economic dimension of the union was much less interesting to them as the political dimension was. Party leader Karel Dillen writes that though Europe's economic cooperation is important in terms of combating unemployment and the dwindling industry, it should not be the primary focus of the European project.⁴³ Dillen laments the fact that Europe is in the first place an economic and material cooperation, according to him exemplified by coal and steel. Having economic integration before political integration is 'putting the cart before the horse', he states.⁴⁴ In a letter directed at young Flemish people Dillen tries to instil a certain European Nationalism: an idealist vision to what Europe is and is to be. He shies away from pragmatic and realist themes such as economic and monetary integration. In short, the pre-Maastricht Vlaams Blok is not opposed to further economic integration but would see political integration precede the further deepening of economic integration.

Despite the current Front National opposition to the Euro and Le Pen claiming that Front National opposed it from the start, Bruno Mégret's speech in 1986 painted a different picture. Looking at speeches from before the Maastricht Treaty, Front National had a different message. In 1986 Front National was not against a European single currency at all. Bruno Mégret held a speech for Front National in the Assemblée Nationale on the 20th of November 1986. It was the only large speech by Front National on the European Community during the eight legislature, when they were represented with 35 seats in the Assemblée Nationale. Mégret saw the economic unity of Europe as an important step towards a world-power Europe that would use its economic strength to pursue its global interests, much like the Soviet Union and

⁴¹ Ibidem.

⁴² 'Voor de democratie, tegen de EU', Party website, Vlaams Belang, <https://www.vlaamsbelang.org/voor-de-democratie-tegen-de-eu/>. (July 7, 2020).

⁴³ Karel Dillen, *Voor U geschreven. 21 brieven aan een jonge Vlaming en Europeaan* (Brussel 1993), 12.

⁴⁴ Dillen, *Voor U geschreven*, 12.

the United States.⁴⁵ In his speech he was not so much opposed to the integration, but simply to how this power would be used by Brussels and Strasbourg. Mégret even went as far as saying yes to a monetary union, ‘because money is an instrument of power’.⁴⁶ Mégret proposed France to take the initiative and lead the free peoples of Europe towards this union.⁴⁷ Moreover, he did not believe that the European Commission could deliver on the economic promises of growth. Indeed, Front National believed European unity was beneficial, but they agreed that the current institutions were not yet ready for this integration: ‘We have taken the wrong path’ Mégret said.⁴⁸

Both Front National and Vlaams Blok had expressed that economic and monetary integration was a possibility and was important, yet they believed that the conditions had to be right. They would prefer to see this economic integration within a different kind of Europe: more focussed on political unity, using its economic weight as a tool to pursue its interests around the world. For Vlaams Blok these conditions were based around the subsidiarity principle within Europe. This is the principle which denotes the EU does not take general action unless it is more effective than action taken at national, regional or local level.⁴⁹ For a nativist party like Vlaams Blok it was essential this principle would favour the national parliaments over supranational institutions, and they wanted insurance that the European Community would never interfere in matters of culture and education. Karel Dillen told the European Parliament on the 12th of march 1991 that ‘only when the peoples and fatherlands of Europe have the security and insurance that Europe means their continued existence, development and growth, then and only then can much be achieved’, including a single currency.⁵⁰

For Front National and Vlaams Blok to ratify the agreement the conditions had to be right, and in 1992 they were certainly not. The economic integration proposed by the Maastricht Treaty was attacked by the Vlaams Blok both from European Parliament by Karel Dillen, as from De Kamer in Belgium. Within the latter, it was mostly attacked by Gerolf

⁴⁵ *Débats Parlementaires de Assemblée Nationale* (afterwards DPAN) 1986-1987, 6625.

⁴⁶ DPAN 1986-1987, 6626.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, 6626.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, 6624.

⁴⁹ ‘EUR-Lex Glossary’,

<https://eurlex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/subsidiarity.html#:~:text=The%20principle%20of%20subsidiarity%20is,the%20Treaty%20on%20European%20Union.&text=Specifically%2C%20it%20is%20the%20principle,national%2C%20regional%20or%20local%20level.> (October 8, 2020).

⁵⁰ Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg* I, 30.

Annemans and Marijke Dillen, Karel Dillen's daughter, a coincidental similarity to the Le Pens. Also in the European Parliament Vlaams Blok voiced their opposition. Karel Dillen did not believe that the economic integration would result in economic growth. Instead, he believed it was meant only as a tool to lead the European Community to a federal Europe led by the corrupt Euro Jacobins and technocrats. On the 14th of October he said that the Maastricht Treaty is not the political tool that brings wealth to the peoples of Europe, instead 'it is the dogma of *eurosuperficiality*' to be 'worshipped as an idol'.⁵¹ His daughter seems more the realist and less the idealist than her father and she goes into detail concerning the technical consequences of the economic integration and rules set by the treaty. In a speech in the Belgian Kamer on the 15th of July 1992, Marijke Dillen is much less opposed to the treaty than her father is three months later.⁵² Indeed, while she does reject the treaty, she proposes to modify the treaty, thus not rejecting further integration by default. On the contrary, she states that the union undoubtedly has economic advantages.⁵³ Her worries about the economic and monetary union can be summarized into four points: First, the place of an independent Flanders within the union. Second, the heterogeneity of the economic areas within Europe. Third, suspicion of other member states not keeping to the rules that are set out. Fourth, fear of the power of the ECB, and handing over sovereignty to them.

The first point is specific to the Belgian and Flemish case. Dillen outed worries about what would happen to the exchange rates between a new Flemish currency and the European currency unit. Dillen also worried about the European Central Bank (ECB) wanting to halt Flemish independence by punishing Flanders with poor exchange rates and the majority of the debt of the Belgian state. Vlaams Blok required insurance that the ECB approves of a Flemish state. In addition, another typical Flemish issue is Brussels: Vlaams Blok did not want the ECB to come to Brussels, as it saw the institution and influx of foreigners who work for European institutions as impacting the local Flemish population negatively. Lastly, Vlaams Blok required the possibility of an opt-out should they do not want to take the final step towards a single currency, like the British.

The second point addresses the principal arguments against the economic and monetary union according to Marijke Dillen. In principle, Vlaams Blok was against the treaty because it

⁵¹ Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg* II, 86.

⁵² *Parlementaire Handelingen der Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers van België* (afterwards HKV) 1991-1992, 42, 1604.

⁵³ HKV 1991-1992, 42, 1604.

believed the heterogeneity of Europe to be too diverse to form a union.⁵⁴ Dillen asked: ‘is it possible to build a union between heterogenic parts?’⁵⁵ She continued by asking legitimate questions concerning the different type of fiscal and monetary policies preferred by the economically more mature north that wants to control inflation, and the south that would want to devalue their currencies.⁵⁶ To remedy that fact, Marijke Dillen proposed an initial phase of the union only for those countries whose monetary policies are already similar to each other. The Southern European countries were not yet ready for the integration, nor is the union that was ‘still recovering from the addition of Spain, Portugal and Greece’, according to Marijke Dillen.⁵⁷

Marijke Dillen also feared that the deepening of integration prevented the broadening of union. To Vlaams Blok it was very important that the European community, or ideally a European confederation, covered the entirety of Christian Europe, or Spengler’s *Avondland*, often referenced by Karel Dillen. In 1991, Karel Dillen told the European Parliament that ‘... no nation should be excluded’ and that ‘their accession will prove a valuable addition’.⁵⁸ Indeed, Marijke Dillen brought up the economic situation in Finland, arguing it to be too different from the rest of the community, making a successful economic and monetary integration impossible. She feared that accepting the Maastricht Treaty would therefore hamper the widening of the European Union with those countries that were economically different. Marijke Dillen also knew that it would be important to act within the rules set out by the treaty in terms of budget deficit and national debt. Vlaams Blok itself was not sure whether keeping to the Maastricht criteria would be beneficial for Belgium, and furthermore worried that other countries would not keep to the criteria in times of recession.⁵⁹ Karel Dillen warned that Belgians ‘should not overestimate solidarity’ of the other member states, especially since the treaty did not have any sanctions included.⁶⁰

Lastly, Vlaams Blok opposed the undemocratic character of an ECB. Marijke Dillen argued that the central bank would have representatives from the various national banks of the member states and that they together would create the policy that applied for the entirety of the union. While this makes economic sense from a European perspective, it could lead to a country

⁵⁴ Ibidem, 1603.

⁵⁵ Ibidem.

⁵⁶ Ibidem.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, 1604.

⁵⁸ Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg* I, 31.

⁵⁹ *HKV* 1991-1992, 42, 1604.

⁶⁰ Ibidem.

following a monetary policy that it is completely opposed to, and this would not be democratic. The national governments should be able to listen to the will of their people. Dillen says that 'Our people come first, then come the others.'⁶¹ Vlaams Blok cannot ratify the treaty but is not opposed to further integration. That's why they want to be able to amend the treaty and discuss it point for point.⁶² Karel Dillen's stronger tone versus the treaty may have to do with the fourth point: he was disappointed in the inability to make amendments to the treaty. Besides, Dillen was appalled at the decision made by Germany and France to go ahead with the treaty even after the Danish rejection of the treaty via referendum. Dillen was now even more convinced that the economic project had begun to live its own life, fuelled not by the support of the people but of the 'Euro Jacobins' and technocrats. Indeed, this was repeated in the Belgian parliament where Joris van Hauthem said that 'it goes wrong when the package is offered as a take it or leave it deal.'⁶³

In France too, debating the Treaty of Maastricht was addressed within the Assemblée Nationale. Representation laws in the Assemblée had changed in 1988, and since then Front National was only represented by one member: Marie-France Stirbois. Stirbois is stronger in her rejection of the treaty in terms of rhetoric than Vlaams Blok. Front National does not believe in the economic advantages of the treaty. She says:

We are told: the ECU will replace the Franc. Let's translate: French people will lose their freedom to decide how to manage their economic policy, in particular with regard to employment.⁶⁴

This is the classic autonomy argument, repeated by Le Pen in his memoirs, and it also connects to Dillen's critique of the ECB. Le Pen voiced similar concerns in the European Parliament in 1991 as he pointed out five beliefs that were wrong about the Maastricht Treaty, three of which were concerning the economic integration. Firstly, Le Pen does not believe that efficiency is related to size, that a large economic block would be stronger than a smaller one.⁶⁵ This is of

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, 1605.

⁶² *Ibidem*, 1605.

⁶³ *HKV* 1991-1992, 30, 1135.

⁶⁴ *DPAN* 1991-1992, 960.

⁶⁵ *DEP*, 1990-1991, No 3-412, 247.

course a clear break from Bruno Mégret's speech five years earlier. Secondly, he does not believe that economies should be planned and regulated as much as the European community intends to. Thirdly, Le Pen says that 'the belief that the economy is of overriding importance and that if the economy is healthy everything else will follow' is wrong.⁶⁶ Instead, Le Pen claims that cultural values are more important to ensure a healthy economy. After all, 'the introduction of the single currency will achieve nothing if the people are not able to work, save and invest, in a climate of freedom... particularly from excessive taxes.'⁶⁷

Stirbois continued her strong language, claiming that Maastricht would lead straight to federalism. Stirbois sees a certain complot by the technocrats to destroy nations. She says that 'From the Single Act to Maastricht, via the community regulations, there is an obvious logic, an anti-national-logic'. According to Front National, signing this treaty would ensure the 'annihilation of France'.⁶⁸ Besides that, Front National did not believe that the economy was the way to unite Europe. They felt that their economic system was shared by other countries such as Japan, but they did not want a union with Japan. Therefore, the basis of the union should be a shared Europeanism and identity, as opposed to globalism.⁶⁹ However, besides the strong language Stirbois makes it clear that she is not opposed to the idea of Europe. What she means is that she is not against a united Europe within a confederation of free people. Front National only opposes the type of integration and the 'decadent' institutions, again believing that Europe has gone down the 'wrong path'.⁷⁰ Front National and Vlaams Blok were not the only populist radical right parties to put the economy on the second plan. Cas Mudde concludes that for this party group the economy exists only to serve the primary nativist agenda.⁷¹ These parties are only interested in an economic program that puts their own people first.

Concluding this chapter, it is obvious that both parties oppose the Maastricht Treaty and oppose the future monetary union in 1992 as well. In the case of Front National it is presented as if they had always had principal objections to such an economic union. However, Bruno Mégret's speech has proven that at first Front National saw the merits of a united economic area. Vlaams Blok was also not opposed to further economic integration, but believed it to be of secondary

⁶⁶ Ibidem.

⁶⁷ *Debates of the European Parliament* (December 12, 1990), No 3-412, 247.

⁶⁸ *DPAN 1991-1992*, 961.

⁶⁹ Davies, *The National Front in France*, chp. 2, 96.

⁷⁰ *DPAN 1991-1992*, 961.

⁷¹ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, chp. 5, 137.

importance, much like Le Pen told the European Parliament in 1991. Perhaps this can also explain the shifting of Front National's position on the subject: they might have gladly sacrificed their earlier position in order to attack president Mitterand's support of the Maastricht Treaty. Vlaams Blok could not ratify the treaty but was willing to look at the treaty point for point, in order to keep the good parts and renegotiate the wrong parts. Besides that, they even proposed a monetary union of economically homogenous areas, a sort of Northern Euro. However, when it became clear that an amendment was not possible and that the treaty was a take it or leave it deal, their resistance to the treaty grew. In the end both parties opposed the treaty's proposed economic integration. Both parties made it clear that this kind of integration should only happen in a different kind of Europe that had its emphasis on subsidiarity, morals and culture – perhaps a Europe where its governments are led by populist radical right parties.

2. Common Foreign and Security Policy in Europe

In this second chapter I will be analyzing the second pillar of the Maastricht Treaty in order to establish and understand the position of the two nationalist parties. This is the pillar of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The pillar includes two distinct sections: one, a common foreign policy such as diplomatic protests and condemnations or statements and two, it also composes of an eventual common defence policy and common army – though this part was left intentionally vague. The treaty read that the CFSP shall include ‘all questions related to the security of the Union, including the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence’.⁷²

The text of the treaty was vague because common foreign policy is traditionally a sensitive and hotly debated subject in Europe, but also because there was little time to make these decisions. In fact, this pillar was not intended to be part of the treaty at all, as the political scientists and European Union experts Geoffrey Edwards and Simon Nuttall, write: ‘Maastricht was supposed to be solely about the Economic and Monetary Union’.⁷³ However, the late 80s and early 90s proved to be so very tumultuous that a new treaty had to also contain a political component. From the collapse of the Soviet Union to the collapse of Yugoslavia, from the Soviet invasion of Lithuania to the Gulf War, Europe needed to reassess its position vis-à-vis the changed situation on its doorstep. The CFSP would be controlled by the European Council. Therefore, the CFSP would solely be an intergovernmental institution, except for the minor supranational element that allowed the European Commission a right of initiative (on equal footing with Member States whom also had that right).⁷⁴ Voting was done either by unanimity or by qualified majority. Not only was this reform much desired considering the political situation in Europe, it was also very interesting for Vlaams Blok and Front National: two parties who had wanted increased political cooperation from the very start. Despite this, in 1992 both parties rejected the reform on grounds of inadequacy and an overreaching commission, and by a general lack of trust that the CFSE was there to serve the interests of the European people. In this chapter I will explain their initial position towards political cooperation within Europe, what caused them to reject this reform and compare the approaches of the two parties with each other.

⁷² Duff, Pinder, and Pryce, *Maastricht and Beyond*, chp. 2, 24.

⁷³ Geoffrey Edwards and Simon Nuttall, 'Common Foreign and Security Policy', in: Andrew Duff, John Pinder, and Roy Pryce eds., *Maastricht and beyond: Building the European Union* (London 1994) PDF e-book chapter (afterwards chp.) 6, 84-103, there 86.

⁷⁴ Duff, Pinder, and Pryce, *Maastricht and Beyond*, chp. 2, 24.

It is impossible to analyze Vlaams Blok and not notice its militancy. Already in March 1985, Karel Dillen – then still active in the Belgian Parliament – argued for a Europe ‘unattached to all blocs and armed to the teeth’.⁷⁵ In a debate on the removal of nuclear rockets from Belgium, Dillen was vehemently against. Believing it not to be the place of the smaller country to remove its weapons, according to him instead the Soviet Union should take the first step.⁷⁶ Dillen, however, did not believe anything like that was likely to happen. He therefore believed that a strong army was the only way to ensure peace, quoting the age-old wisdom: ‘Let those who wish for peace, prepare for war’.⁷⁷ Dillen told the parliament of his dream: ‘A Europe free, independent, resilient and able to defend its own freedom’.⁷⁸ Dillen wanted that dream to become a reality; to do this all efforts must be exhausted.⁷⁹ However, as Dillen pointed out, the challenge lies not in acquiring the best weapons or the strongest army, it lies in having the will to fight.⁸⁰ This is a message that was thereafter often repeated by Vlaams Blok in the Belgian Parliament as well as the European Parliament. Vlaams Blok wanted the creation of a European defence cooperation that is able, but most importantly willing, to defend the interests of Europe militarily.

In the European Parliament in 1989, Dillen was a proponent of Europe-wide mandatory conscription, viewing this to be an integral part of one’s civic duty.⁸¹ Later that year, Dillen also supported the expansion, not reduction of the nuclear arsenal of Europe’s powers, in a speech titled the ‘Duty to Self-defence’.⁸² At this time talks of European common defence were still mostly related to the threat from the east, but soon this would be supplemented by a perceived threat from the south and instability in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. On June 11th 1990, it had become clear that the Soviet Union was on its last legs. Dillen then told the European Parliament that even if the Soviet threat was receding, it did not mean that Europe was now free of the duty of ensuring its safety – now from a new threat in the south.⁸³ Here Dillen was referring to the electoral victory of the Islamic Front in Algeria. The fear of the military power of Islamic states was also repeated in the Belgian parliament by Dewinter, who said ‘Islam is a military threat’⁸⁴.

⁷⁵ *HKV* 1984-1985, 87, 2225.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, 2226.

⁸¹ Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg* I, 46.

⁸² *Ibidem*.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, 49.

⁸⁴ *HKV* 1990-1991, commissie voor de Buitenlandse betrekkingen, 33, 25.

Dillen also doubted the apparent weakness of the Soviets, believing *Glasnost* and *Perestrojka* to be weapons to strengthen the Soviet Union, not weaken it. He said: ‘To see Gorbachev as an angel of peace would be foolish and infantile.’⁸⁵ Even after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, Vlaams Blok wanted to remain watchful, not believing the Soviet power to have been broken. Yet he became more vocal on his opposition to NATO, believing that in the mid to long-term Europe had to become a military superpower and leave NATO, or it would have ‘a false security, at best being a subordinate of the United States, not only militarily but in all areas.’⁸⁶

When we turn to the Front National, we see that Le Pen’s idea of a ‘confederal’ Europe has been well-addressed in secondary literature.⁸⁷ This confederation would leave many sovereignties at the national level. However, according to political scientists Fieschi, Shields and Woods, defence was one of the chief exceptions.⁸⁸ From the activities of Front National in Europe and in Paris, it is clear they wished to form a European army. Le Pen wrote in his memoirs that he initially advocated a European army during his first term in Strasbourg.⁸⁹ Indeed in his very first speech in the European Parliament, Le Pen warned against the military Soviet threat. He hoped to whip up the young people of Europe, stating that he did not accept the subjugation of the peoples behind the Iron Curtain. Le Pen challenged the European Parliament to name the enemy, because only then could it truly unite as it had done in ancient, medieval, and premodern times at Marathon, Lepanto, Vienna and Poitiers.⁹⁰ In 1986 Le Pen became more concrete. Addressing the visiting Margaret Thatcher, he said that Europe must become a world power. Le Pen proposed a few reforms. He saw a special role for France and England, the two nuclear powers, to provide a nuclear umbrella over Europe. Furthermore, he proposed a combined arms program. Thirdly, he believed that the nations of Europe should increase their defence spending to 5% of GDP. Lastly, he envisioned a combined European defence led by an entente of France, the UK, and Germany, to be reinforced in time by Italy and Spain.⁹¹ Le Pen stressed that Europe could only become a great power with a common

⁸⁵ Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg I*, 49.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, 58.

⁸⁷ Such as: Davies 1999, Fieschi 1996.

⁸⁸ Catherine Fieschi, James Shields, and Roger Woods, 'Extreme right-wing parties and the European Union: France, Germany and Italy', in: John Gaffney, ed., *Political Parties and the European Union* (London 1996) PDF e-book, chapter (afterwards chp.) 14, 235-253, 245.

⁸⁹ Le Pen, *Tribun du Peuple II*, chp. 29, 286.

⁹⁰ *DEP* 1984-1985, No 2-315, 89.

⁹¹ *DEP* 1988-1989, No 2-360, 147.

defence, however ‘there can be no common defence without a will for a common defence.’⁹² – something he did not see enough within the European Parliament.

In the French Assemblée Nationale in 1986 the subject of the European army was also addressed by Bruno Mégret, in a fiery speech. Mégret wanted a common defence and army that would serve European interests. He envisioned a great power of Europe led by France, as a cooperation on equal footing would not work it would limit decision-making, rendering Europe powerless. Mégret said that ‘Europe cannot be validly built by placing all the states around the same table on one foot of equality. Europe will only be achieved by a federator’.⁹³ According to Mégret, France must be this federator as its desire for freedom is greater than others, it is positioned in the heart of Europe, and it has the necessary weapons.⁹⁴ For Front National too, this defence was mostly aimed at containing the Soviet threat, like Vlaams Blok not trusting the promises of Gorbachev. Le Pen told the European Parliament not to be fooled by Soviets. Europe had to unite or disappear.⁹⁵ Le Pen wanted a common European position demanding the retreat of Soviet troops from Eastern European states, before any deals would be made.⁹⁶ However, from the beginning Front National proclaimed that it needed a common defence not solely to combat the Soviets, stressing it would need it afterwards as well.⁹⁷ Mégret in his speech also already foresaw new threats on the horizon. He said that ‘the world is moving’, warned for a quickly growing China, and feared a resurgent muslim word ‘Islam awakens’ he said.⁹⁸

In short, we can conclude that both parties were very interested in increased foreign policy cooperation and in the creation of a European army. While both parties don’t go into advanced detail as to what this cooperation should look like, it is clear that both parties see the army as a tool to bring Europe back to greatness – as long as there is the will for a common defence, such an army can serve European interests.

Why then did the parties reject Maastricht and the CFSP? The answer is found by combining two factors: the experiences of the early 90s and the extent of the treaty. The early 90s saw the attempted coup and subsequent violence in Lithuania, the start of the Yugoslav wars, and the

⁹² *DEP* 1986-1987, No 2-346, 57.

⁹³ *DPAN* 1986-1987, 6626.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁵ *DEP* 1988-1989, No 2-367, 156.

⁹⁶ *DEP* 1988-1989, No 2-368, 147.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁸ *DPAN* 1986-1987, 6626.

Gulf crisis. In the eyes of Vlaams Blok and Front National this was a golden opportunity for Europe to be decisive and strong in their own backyard. Especially Vlaams Blok devoted a large amount of speeches and interruptions to the plight of the European nations looking to become independent from Soviet influence and Yugoslavia. In January of 1991, Gerolf Annemans wanted the Belgian state and the European Community to help the Baltic states in becoming independent, for instance by setting up an embassy.⁹⁹ A month later, he attacked the European Community, accusing them of ‘acting like a dwarf’ with regard to the Baltic states and Iraq.¹⁰⁰ In July 1991 Annemans tried to convince the Belgian parliament to be the first to recognize the independence of the Balkan country, acting as a catalysator.¹⁰¹ Moreover, in Anneman’s opinion ‘Europe [was] missing its chance by being passive on the subject of Bosnia’.¹⁰² However, in the end Vlaams Blok was very disappointed with the Community’s actions. Vlaams Blok wanted Europe to choose the side of the Baltic peoples, the Croatians and the Slovenians. The fact that Europe did not do this wholeheartedly showed a lack of courage, according to Karel Dillen.¹⁰³ On 15 March, Dillen demanded Europe acknowledge Lithuania’s independence.¹⁰⁴ Dillen scolded the European Parliament for talking about Nicaragua and Tibet, while not acting to support the Baltic states.¹⁰⁵ In the following months Dillen would repeatedly ask for European support for the Baltic states and for sanctions against the Soviet Union. In March 1991 this was complemented by a demand of support for the Croatians and Slovenes.¹⁰⁶ In November 1992, after a largely inactive European role in the conflict described by Dillen as ‘sadistic indifference’, he accused the European leaders of having blood on their hands.¹⁰⁷ ‘The abandonment of Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and now Croatia belong to the darkest page of the history of the European community, one of many.’ according to Dillen.¹⁰⁸ In 1993, after the Gulf War, Dillen therefore asked the European Parliamentarians whether Kuwaiti are worth more to them than Croatian and Bosnian Europeans.

For Front National, the experiences with European common defence action in the years prior to the Maastricht Treaty are disappointing as well. In the first debate on the future Gulf

⁹⁹ *HKV* 1990-1991, 24, 1637.

¹⁰⁰ *HKV* 1990-1991, 33, 2108.

¹⁰¹ *HKV* 1990-1991, 62, 3702.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*.

¹⁰³ Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg* I, 63.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, 149.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, 152.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, 164.

¹⁰⁷ Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg* II, 193.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, 193.

War, just after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Le Pen wondered why now there was a strong reaction by the European states, when there had been no such reaction after the invasions of Turkey in Cyprus, Israel into Palestinian areas, and Syria into Lebanon.¹⁰⁹ When in October, war in the Gulf seemed more likely, Le Pen wanted Europe to act as a mediator between the Iraqi and Americans in the Gulf. He wanted Europe to prevent war and to end the blockade of Iraq, which was hurting European economies.¹¹⁰ Front National wished to prevent being dragged into a conflict in the Middle East. Le Pen's request went unheard and he again addressed the Gulf crisis, 'European nations are now on the path to war as there has been no action taken to prevent war at all.'¹¹¹ By Le Pen's next speech in Strasbourg on January 21st, 1991, war had broken out. Le Pen could not believe that Europe would leave its own borders so unprotected, having sent so many soldiers to the Gulf, while the Soviets still had 400.000 soldiers in Eastern Europe.¹¹² This is a far stretch from having a strong common defence policy that protects the interests of Europe, as Bruno Mégret envisioned in 1986. In September of that year, Le Pen further criticized the European leaders, as they had according to him, waited too long to support the independence of the Baltic states. In short, according to Front National, because Europe failed to reinforce its military position, they had no choice but to follow the Americans into war. Worse still, the European soldiers were fighting a war that hurt the European economies whilst the armies should be used to guard central Europe against the Soviets. Lastly, Le Pen believed that Europe should have intervened during the Yugoslav wars. He writes: 'What should have been liberation became gerrymandering in terrible wars.'¹¹³ In the eyes of Front National, common foreign policy did not serve the interests of their Europe, the Europe of Nations.

The disappointing experiences with common foreign policy prior to the Maastricht Treaty ratification have surely influenced both parties' rejection of the treaty. This happened for two reasons: not only had the European Community been unable to assume a strong role and the treaty would not allow that to happen either, but both Vlaams Blok and Front National disagreed with the role that was taken in the Baltic, Yugoslavia and the Gulf. In 1991, Dewinter blamed Belgium's weak reaction to the Gulf crisis on being bound to international

¹⁰⁹ *DEP* 1990-1991, No 3-393, 115.

¹¹⁰ *DEP* 1990-1991, No 3-394, 272.

¹¹¹ *DEP* 1990-1991, No 3-397, 141.

¹¹² *DEP* 1990-1991, No 3-398, 20.

¹¹³ Le Pen, *Tribun du Peuple II*, chp. 29, 282.

organizations.¹¹⁴ In 1992, Annemans also warned that common policy could lead to ineffectiveness and immobilization.¹¹⁵ In that same year, Dewinter noted that ‘European hesitance in becoming a military union is bearing its fruit, Europe cannot act militarily without the U.S.A. We do not even have the political structure to start a dialogue with the U.S.A.’¹¹⁶ Like Front National, Vlaams Blok did not believe that the CFSP would serve the interests of the people of Europe. Even if it did, the proposed CFSP would not provide the tools to do so effectively. Front National refused the CFSP for the same reasons as Vlaams Blok: it felt betrayed by Europe and was now opposed to the creation of a supranational institute. Marie-France Stirois in the Assemblée Nationale attacked the CFSE on this very issue, ‘France would lose control over its defence policy’ she claimed.¹¹⁷ Besides, the parties did not believe the treaty would be effective. Le Pen responded to the Maastricht Treaty as follows:

Tinkering with the Treaty of Rome and Single European Act in this manner will do nothing to help resolve the many problems facing the Community: Diplomatic paralysis with regard to the crisis in Yugoslavia ; the inadequacy of our defence arrangements in the face of instability in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union ; immigration ; the demographic deficit ; aids ; and the drug problem. Given the nature of the challenges facing the community, the agreements concluded at Maastricht are wholly inadequate.¹¹⁸

Believing the Danish ‘no’ in their referendum held on Maastricht would make the treaty null and void, and sensing the crisis within Europe, Le Pen hoped to seize the opportunity. He called for a broad European conference to be held, which would revise the treaty of Rome and transform the Community into a European confederation.¹¹⁹ Nothing came of that but it was clear that this was not the Europe Front National and Vlaams Blok wanted. Indeed, this chapter has shown how similar the positions of Vlaams Blok and Front National were on a common foreign policy and European army. This is significant, because foreign policy and European armies are among the most essential subjects for both Front National and Vlaams Blok within the European project. Though the parties are vague about what this policy would entail

¹¹⁴ *HKV* 1990-1991, commissie voor de Buitenlandse betrekkingen, 33, 25.

¹¹⁵ *HKV* 1991-1992, 41, 1541.

¹¹⁶ *HKV* 1990-1991, commissie voor de Buitenlandse betrekkingen, 33, 25-26.

¹¹⁷ *DPAN* 1991-1992, 961.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 960.

¹¹⁹ *DEP* 1992-1993, No 3-422, 17.

specifically, they had the same aims: the restoration of Europe to a great power in the world, able to pursue its own interests in the region. They also agreed that their colleagues in the European Parliament did not want that kind of Europe, and therefore they did not want to give them additional powers over foreign policy. Lastly, they agreed that an agreement on foreign policy needed to go much further than the vagueness of the CFSP.

3. Open borders

Between 1984 and 1994, many treaties were signed that made changes to Europe's frontiers. From Schengen to the Single Act and finally to the Maastricht Treaty. However, the former treaties were considered vague and the lack of a supranational institution to enforce them meant that member states quarreled over their meaning.¹²⁰ A free-travel zone without internal frontiers, as was proposed in the Maastricht Treaty, confronted the member states with three problems: One, member states could not control who entered via the outer frontier. That meant that immigration policies for Greece, would in fact apply for France and Belgium as there was free movement of people. Second, the treaty also proposed European citizenship, allowing for European citizens to vote in local elections after living in the area for five years. Third, member states feared that the removal of internal borders would increase cross-border crime such as drug trafficking and international terrorism.¹²¹ These issues are also addressed within the third pillar of Maastricht: Justice and Home Affairs. I will analyse the position of Vlaams Blok and Front National concerning these three issues.

Open borders: Coordinated crime fighting in Europol

To remedy the removal of internal border controls the, EU would create a supranational police institution, Europol. This institution was part of the third pillar of Maastricht's Europe. It would coordinate police action to drugs trafficking and international terrorism among others. The move to officially remove the internal frontiers proved to be a controversial one as these topics were still to be ratified by the end of 1993.¹²²

For populist radical right parties, the themes of drug crime and terrorism were very important. The authoritarian character of the parties warrants a tough stance on crime. Cas Mudde notices that drug crime and terrorism especially are themes close at heart to these parties.¹²³ Drugs were destroying the youth, preventing them from being upright and active and make them decadent according to these parties.¹²⁴ International terrorism is closely linked to immigration, and therefore also important for parties with a nativist character. For Karel Dillen the battle against drugs should be fought in the European sphere. The fight against drug

¹²⁰ Malcom Anderson, Monica den Boer and G. Gary Miller, 'European Citizenship and Cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs', in: Andrew Duff, John Pinder, and Roy Pryce eds., *Maastricht and beyond: Building the European Union* (London 1994) PDF e-book chapter (afterwards chp.) 7, 104-122, there 104.

¹²¹ Anderson, den Boer and Miller, 'European Citizenship and Cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs', chp. 7, 112.

¹²² *Ibidem*, 105.

¹²³ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, chp. 6, 147.

¹²⁴ Davies, *The National Front in France*, chp. 2, 96.

trafficking was at the very core of his envisioned Europe.¹²⁵ For example, in 1992 Dillen asked the European Parliament to stop using terms such as soft-drugs and asked for harsher punishments.¹²⁶ Moreover he attacked the mainstream stance against drug crime, telling the European Parliament in 1991 that they ‘lament dirty heroin needles and want to provide clean needles, instead of fighting drugs and drug dealers without mercy’.¹²⁷ Dillen is clear on where the problem should be solved. In 1992 he states that ‘the battle against drug-crime is eminently a European assignment’.¹²⁸

Front National too has a strong opinion on crime and drug-traffickers in particular. The party portrayed the European Community as the ‘Europe of drugs’ and described international drug-traffickers as ‘assassins of our youth.’¹²⁹ French Parliamentarian Bruno Mégret even went as far as to propose a reintroduction of the death sentence in the Assemblée National in 1986 during the earlier quoted debate.¹³⁰ This was repeated by Le Pen in the European Parliament, as he proposed the reintroduction of the death sentence for terrorists.¹³¹

Considering the above, both Front National and Vlaams Blok, prior to the Maastricht Treaty called for European action to combat cross-border crime and international drug trafficking. Yet when the treaty was proposed, both parties did not want the third pillar integration. Dillen claims that the proposed Europol is not well conceived, and not effective.¹³² Dillen was mostly opposed to the supranational character of the Europol institution. According to him, the ultimate responsibility of the cooperating police departments should lay with the national parliaments. The proposed founding of Europol is vague and ‘could lead to a dangerous unity-police’.¹³³ No doubt this is influenced by the Belgian situation, where Vlaams Blok believed the police department to be dominated by socialists.¹³⁴ In the national parliament too, Vlaams Blok was not convinced by Europol’s promises, parliamentarian de Man calling it an ‘empty cap’ in July 1992.¹³⁵ In his speech he claims that Europol will not be given the means to combat international drug trafficking and terrorism adequately. Vlaams Blok wants tougher

¹²⁵ Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg* I, 20.

¹²⁶ Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg* II, 152.

¹²⁷ Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg* I, 95.

¹²⁸ Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg* II, 155.

¹²⁹ Davies, *The National Front in France*, chp. 2, 96.

¹³⁰ *DPAN* 1986-1987, 6626.

¹³¹ *DEP* 1986-1987, No 2-342, 208.

¹³² Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg* II, 162.

¹³³ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁴ *HKV* 1989-1990, 47, 1427.

¹³⁵ *HKV* 1991-1992, 41, 1541.

laws, better connections between detective agencies and national police departments.¹³⁶ In short Vlaams Blok believes that the proposed Europol does not go far enough in its goals and does not receive the appropriate means. Secondly it believes that these heavily cooperating police departments should still be controlled by national parliaments. 'Less Europe, but a more powerful Europe' writes Dillen in one of his political letters.¹³⁷

Front National did not pay much attention to Europol and their mission. One could argue that they could not think about it, as they so vehemently opposed to the reasons why Europol would be founded: the abolition of internal frontiers. On fighting crime like international terrorism, Front National wished that Europe united in the face of the true enemy: Moscow. Front National parliamentarian d'Ormesson called upon the European Parliament to show courage and name the source of the danger.¹³⁸ A general idea about Europol can also be extracted from Marie-France Stirbois' speech to the Assemblée National on Maastricht. She said that the Maastricht Treaty is a step towards federalism, and that the European Institutions will have increased power, 'distancing citizens even further from those who decide their fate'.¹³⁹ In general, Front National would be against giving up of national sovereignty over the police department towards a supranational European institute. This means that even if Front National supported the removal of internal borders, it would still not support the proposed supranational Europol.

Open borders: European citizenship, immigration, and terrorism

In the granting of voting rights to foreigners and the loss over immigration policy we find the real and strongest reasons that the Maastricht Treaty and the third pillar was rejected by Front National and Vlaams Blok.

To start, we must look at the proposed European citizenship, a status to all European Union citizens, granting them certain freedoms and rights in all member states. For Vlaams Blok this was something that could not be discussed. Dillen, in the European Parliament called it a nameless, cultureless and rootless citizenship.¹⁴⁰ He was against the European citizenship, because he believed once again that Europe is not ready for such a deepening of the integration. The conditions were not right. Vlaams Blok opposed the treaty in the Belgian Parliament too. Gerolf Annemans said that the Europe of Maastricht was 'a step too far'. He feared that

¹³⁶ Ibidem.

¹³⁷ Dillen, *Voor U Geschreven*, 70.

¹³⁸ DEP 1986-1987, No 2-342, 212.

¹³⁹ DPAN 1991-1992, 960.

¹⁴⁰ Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg II*, 72.

Europe's different cultures would become one gray stain, 'This is not the Europe of states, this is the Europe of the one gray state'.¹⁴¹ It is an argument that is often repeated by Vlaams Blok, ironically for an arguably anti-gay rights party, they saw the Europe of states as a beautiful rainbow, as opposed to a gray matter of diluted and mixed cultures.¹⁴² Indeed, Vlaams Blok saw the individuality of the European cultures as a supplement to the shared European culture. Vlaams Blok proclaimed unity in diversity on many occasions, for example by Annemans and De Man in July 1992.¹⁴³ Annemans continued to address citizenship directly, he believed it an ill-conceived idea as he does not wish to give voting rights to foreigners claiming: 'Living somewhere for five years is not enough to form enough attachment, voting rights must be connected to nationality.'¹⁴⁴ Vlaams Blok believed that the state should be governed by people that are bound to the region and its people. Karel Dillen told the European Parliament that 'The European is connected to his family, town or city, region and people, with the traditions of its people and of Europe.'¹⁴⁵ In 1993, in the Belgian Parliament too, Annemans says that he would see a Europe composed of the mono-ethnic states like those that have emerged in Eastern-Europe, he hopes that Western-Europe will follow suit.¹⁴⁶ This, of course, fits perfectly into the nativist ideology. Living somewhere for five years would not be enough time to be integrated to that level.

For Vlaams Blok the matter of European citizenship was especially pressing, as they believed they were fighting for the survival of their Flemish culture and language. Vlaams Blok felt oppressed by the Francophone Walloons in Belgium. The most threatened regions were those regions of Flanders where Dutch-speaking people were a minority, most notably Brussels and Vlaams-Brabant. Kris Deschouwer and Martine Van Assche, two political scientists researching Belgian Euroscepticism conclude that the Dutch speaking voters in Brussels, around 15 per cent, would further be in the minority would non-Belgians also vote. They believed them to vote for francophone parties.¹⁴⁷ Of course this is not a stretch of the imagination, it is unlikely that foreign nationals would vote for a Flemish nationalist party that doesn't want them there. Furthermore, Deschouwer and van Assche argue that Vlaams Blok believed that granting voting rights to EU nationals would soon be expanded into granting

¹⁴¹ *HKV* 1991-1992, 41, 1541.

¹⁴² Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg* I, 21.

¹⁴³ *HKV* 1991-1992, 41, 1637.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 1541.

¹⁴⁵ Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg* I, 39.

¹⁴⁶ *HKV* 1992-1993, 70, 3182.

¹⁴⁷ Szczerbiak and Taggart, *Opposing Europe?*, chp 4, 83.

those rights to all foreigners.¹⁴⁸ This is confirmed in the debates in the Belgian Parliament. Parliamentarian van Nieuwenhuysen requested parliamentary research into the cultural effects of the Europeanisation of Brussels in May 1992.¹⁴⁹ Van Hauthem in October of that year warned that with making Brussels the European capital the Flemish cultural and lingual values would increasingly be under pressure.¹⁵⁰ In July 1993 Annemans again tried to convince the Belgian parliament that the position of the Dutch speaking minority in Brussels and Vlaams-Brabant was too weak to add to that European citizenship.¹⁵¹ But already in 1987, Annemans, in one of his first speeches in the Belgian parliament proclaimed Brussels to be a maimed city. ‘Brussels is also a morally maimed city, suffering of a heavy case of identity loss.’ he said.¹⁵² Only if Brussels could recover its identity ‘can it be seen as a European city again’.¹⁵³ For Vlaams Blok, losing control over immigration policy, meant that the problems of identity loss would become even greater than they were already. They feared hordes of immigrants coming to their country and replacing the culture and native population. Annemans said that Vlaams Blok ‘cannot accept a Europe without internal border [...] resulting in an influx of foreigners’.¹⁵⁴ Vlaams Blok did not believe an integration policy would work, especially not for immigrants with an Islamic background. Vlaams Blok believed that the integration of Islam into European society was impossible.¹⁵⁵ Dillen writes as much in a published letter: ‘to those who are saying that they can be integrated I reply: beware for you yourself may be integrated.’¹⁵⁶ Therefore the party promotes a full stop to any immigration from non-Western countries. This stop should be supplemented with a return-policy that would return the majority of non-Western immigrants to their countries of origin.¹⁵⁷ As such, the subject of European citizenship served as one of the main running themes for Vlaams Blok’s European election in 1994.¹⁵⁸

On top of the political influence these foreigners would have, Vlaams Blok also believed that the removal of frontiers would create an uptick in terrorism. The party’s position was extremely anti-terrorism, believing it to be one of Europe’s biggest threats.¹⁵⁹ As

¹⁴⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁹ *HKV* 1992-1993, 16, 474.

¹⁵⁰ *HKV*. 1992-1993, commissie voor de Buitenlandse betrekkingen, 13, 79.

¹⁵¹ *HKV* 1992-1993, 70, 3182.

¹⁵² *HKV* 1987-1988, 61, 1870

¹⁵³ Ibidem.

¹⁵⁴ *HKV* 1992-1993, 70, 3182.

¹⁵⁵ *HKV* 1990-1991, commissie voor de Buitenlandse betrekkingen, 33, 25.

¹⁵⁶ Dillen, *Voor U geschreven*, 90.

¹⁵⁷ Ibidem, 81.

¹⁵⁸ Bosseman, *De communicatiestrategie van het Vlaams Blok*, 60.

¹⁵⁹ *HKV* 1991-1992, 41, 1593.

mentioned, Vlaams Blok advocated European action against international terrorism.¹⁶⁰ Dillen lamented that, according to him, the European Parliament showed a selective indignation towards terrorism. Dillen accused them of staying silent when Turkish or Maghrebi immigrants committed acts of terrorism.¹⁶¹ Vlaams Blok saw the issues of terrorism and immigration as connected, the best way of dealing with the threat, here too, was an immigration stop, protecting the outer frontiers of Europe and a remigration policy.¹⁶²

Now I will turn to Front National and compare their point of view regarding the free movement of people and European citizenship to that of Vlaams Blok. According to political scientist Julius Friend, Front National were opposed to Maastricht mainly because they, like their Flemish colleagues, believed that granting voting rights in the local elections to EU citizens, would soon mean granting them to their Maghreb guest workers too.¹⁶³ According to Davies, and very similarly to Vlaams Blok, Front National believed in a principle called *enricement*: 'a vital prerequisite for human blossoming'.¹⁶⁴ This principle for Front National is following from their nativist identity, it is the attachment to a territory and the community living there.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, Front National believed that the people then originating from that region are best suited to live and rule that area.¹⁶⁶ One could translate it as France for the French. Frank Elbers and Meindert Fennema, contemporary Dutch political scientists claim that Front National believed cultural differences between migrants and French are too large to overcome, therefore it would be best if they returned.¹⁶⁷ It is clear to see the commonalities with Vlaams Blok, both parties have similar ideas about who should be able to vote, and more importantly, who should not. The motivation for the answer is cultural and ethnical. According to Elbers and Fennema Front National therefore wanted an 'effective and humane' immigration policy. This consisted of dismantling ethnic ghettos, priority for French families in welfare programs, extra taxes on work by guest workers, abolishing the right on family reunification, introduction of the *ius sanguinis*, meaning that French nationality is gained only if one's heritage is French, and the

¹⁶⁰ Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg* I, 20.

¹⁶¹ Dillen, *Vlaanderen in Straatsburg* II, 56.

¹⁶² *Ibidem*.

¹⁶³ Julius W. Friend, 'Nationalism and National Consciousness in France, Germany and Britain: The Year of Maastricht', *History of European Ideas* 18, (1994) 2, 187-198, there 193.

¹⁶⁴ Davies, *The National Front in France*, chp. 2, 88.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, 98.

¹⁶⁷ Frank Elbers and Meindert Fennema, *Racistische partijen in West-Europa: tussen nationale traditie en Europese samenwerking* (Leiden 1993) 60.

re-examination of all naturalisations since 1974.¹⁶⁸ According to Elbers and Fennema, not all migrants would leave by their own accord, and for them a certain kind of apartheid policy would be put in place, in order to convince them to leave after all.¹⁶⁹ Rather similar to the return policy supported by Vlaams Blok.

The claims made by these political scientists are largely backed when researching the activities of Front National in the European Parliament, the Assemblée National, and in Jean-Marie Le Pen's memoirs. Marie-France Stirbois in her speech concerning Maastricht, addressed the issues of citizenship directly, and immediately connected immigration to it: 'Citizenship, beautiful business! The truth is that foreigners, Europeans first, extra-European then, will have the right to vote in local elections.'¹⁷⁰ She followed it up by connecting it to immigration: '[The common man] was told: the French borders will disappear. The vacationers will no doubt be satisfied, but certainly less than delinquents, drug dealers, and illegal immigrants, who will be the primary beneficiaries.'¹⁷¹ Besides, Stirbois expected that all the immigrants in other member states would come to France, as it has the best social programs.¹⁷² The motivation against granting European citizens these voting rights were similar to those of Vlaams Blok, here too there was a belief that ethnic French can best decide for themselves. In December 1991, Le Pen was clear:

The belief that the people should be governed by self-appointed wise men. We believe, on the contrary, that a bureaucracy cut off from everyday realities is not as wise as a people rooted in its traditions. Moral and cultural values are more important in ensuring a healthy economy than institutional measures.¹⁷³

For Front National, immigration was an important theme that should be discussed within a European sphere, Le Pen writes in his memoirs about his first term in the European parliament: 'When we started in Strasbourg, I believed in the possibility of a confederation of European powers taking care of the defence of its common interests and its borders, in particular against

¹⁶⁸ Elbers and Fennema, *Racistische partijen in West-Europa*, 59.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷⁰ *DPAN* 1991-1992, 960.

¹⁷¹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷² *Ibidem*.

¹⁷³ *DEP* 1991-1992, No 3-412, 247.

immigration.’¹⁷⁴ Indeed, already during the first European elections of 1984, Front National used the slogan ‘two million unemployed are two million immigrants too many’¹⁷⁵ For Front National as for Vlaams Blok it is perfectly normal and preferable to have a France for the French, and thus also a Europe for the Europeans. Le Pen in 1984, was convinced that immigration is one of the most important issues facing France and Europe. He writes:

Like ours, every country in the world without exception establishes natural and legitimate discrimination between foreigners and nationals. There can be no national independence, national solidarity, or even national defence in a country open without control and without limits to foreigners.¹⁷⁶

Furthermore, in a debate in the European Parliament following the Danish No in the referendum on Maastricht, Le Pen pointed towards the removal of borders and the following immigration as the cause: ‘You want, with the Maastricht Treaty, to erase frontiers and differences, you are all of a sudden stunned because French people are reluctant to cease being French.’¹⁷⁷ He continued by explaining that Europe’s essential problems are first and foremost caused by immigration, and that attention should be given to that. He proclaimed that his envisioned European Confederation

...cannot be the homeland of Turks or Vietnamese or North Africans or Malians or Tamils. It is the home of the Europeans. Let us not allow non-European populations to settle on the land of Europe, for if we do we must beware that Strasbourg, Dresden or London may tomorrow end up like Sarajevo, Beirut or Los Angeles.¹⁷⁸

To Front National, Europe is a community of culture and civilization, and other civilizations were not welcome. According to political scientist Alec Stone, who has mapped the discussion

¹⁷⁴ Le Pen, *Tribun du Peuple II*, chp. 29, 286.

¹⁷⁵ Elbers and Fennema, *Racistische partijen in West-Europa*, 58.

¹⁷⁶ Le Pen, *Tribun du Peuple II*, chp. 9, 113.

¹⁷⁷ *DEP* 1992-1993, No 3-422, 17-18.

¹⁷⁸ *DPAN* 1986-1987, 6626.

around Maastricht in France, extending the right to vote to ‘foreigners’ diluted the French, and therefore the European identity in the eyes of Front National.¹⁷⁹

Like Vlaams Blok, Front National believed that terrorism would also increase because of the proposed freedom of movement. Already during the debate around the Single European Act, le Pen attacked migration laws. It would provide free access for terrorists, sponsored by Moscow.¹⁸⁰ Le Pen never did change his mind, as in his 2018 memoirs he repeated this point of view advising young people: ‘Let us return to us, to the model of white, European and Christian civilization. It has allowed us to live exemplary for many centuries. Let us be proud of it and continue it.’¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Alec Stone, ‘Ratifying “Maastricht”: France Debates European Union’, *French Politics and Society* 11 (1993) 1, 70-88, 78.

¹⁸⁰ *DEP*, 1986-1987, No 2-342, 208.

¹⁸¹ Le Pen, *Tribun du Peuple II*, chp. 43, 475.

Conclusion

In my thesis I set out to explain the durability of a cooperation that according to common sense and contemporary scholars should not exist. It is agreed that Populist Radical Right parties like Vlaams Blok and Front National could not form a durable cooperation in the European Parliament. Yet, against all the odds, Populist Radical Right parties have only grown within Europe, and the cooperation between Vlaams Blok and Front National (Now Vlaams Belang and Rassemblement national) has stood at the core. I therefore proposed the following question:

To what extent are Vlaams Blok and Front National's policy positions between 1984 and 1994 regarding the Maastricht Treaty similar, warranting cooperation in the European Parliament?

Historian Simone Paoli, one of the few who have analyzed the Technical Group of the European Right, concluded that Le Pen was not able to provide a common political platform or cultural identity, thus preventing cooperation with other parties on a permanent basis. In addition, Paoli notes that adding the word 'technical' to the group betrays that the parties did not share a common platform. This idea was first put into words by political scientist Nicholas Startin, who concludes that nationalist differences, elite ego-clashes, disagreements over the direction of the EU, negative perception about other parties' images and the cordon sanitaire prevent any kind of durable collaboration. Startin and Paoli both concluded that a permanent cooperation within the European Parliament would not be possible. This view was also taken over by politicians such as Martin Schulz, former president of the European Parliament, who claimed that the in 2011 founded 'Identity, Tradition, Sovereignty' group – another populist radical right group with Vlaams Blok and Front National – was not legitimate, as they did not share a political position. Yet the Technical Group of the European Right and all its successors consisted of a Vlaams Blok and Front National axis. Today, bearing their new names, the populist radical right group in Europe is stronger than ever. How could this cooperation continue to go on?

Paoli and Startin analyzed the core of the populist radical right parties to find reasons why a permanent cooperation could not exist. They found their answers mostly in nationalism. Therefore, I too wanted to focus on that core subject. I extensively used Cas Mudde's – the authority on populist radical right parties – research on the party family of Vlaams Blok and Front National. This allowed me to understand the underlying reasons and motivations these parties had for their policy positions. Furthermore, to me it made sense to start at the beginning

of the cooperation between these parties in Europe. This meant focusing on the period between 1984 and 1994. It proved to be a very useful period: during this period the cooperation would be tested extensively, as both parties had to either ratify or reject the Maastricht Treaty. Openly attacking or defending this treaty meant that their policy positions would become clear. Therefore, I wanted to use the Maastricht Treaty. I went on to compare the policy positions of both parties based on Maastricht's biggest reform: the creation of the three-pillar system. After reading Cas Mudde's *Populist Radical Right parties in Europe* and Peter Davies' *The National Front in France*, I then was able to connect these themes to those themes most important to parties belonging to the populist radical right. In chapter two I gave additional attention to the European army, and in chapter three I did the same concerning immigration. The subjects are policy areas that were connected to the Maastricht Treaty and were at the core of Vlaams Blok and Front National's European ideology.

The ongoing COVID-19 crisis in the Western-Europe prevented me from using the preferred primary source material, party manifestos and party publications. I, therefore, after communicating with my tutor, chose to analyze speeches and interruptions made by members of Vlaams Blok and Front National in their national parliaments. I was able to supplement this with speeches made in the European Parliament. The Luxembourg archive was kind enough to send me a limited amount of speeches that they had digitalized. For future research I would suggest the use of party manifestos and party publications, especially on the topic of economic theory. This is an area that populist radical right politicians do not often speak about. Therefore, I believe that my argument in chapter one would have benefitted from expanding the source material. After my analysis of the source material it became clear to me that there were very similar quarrels within Vlaams Blok and Front National with regard to the Maastricht Treaty. When it was time for the national parliaments to ratify or reject the treaty, both parties were in agreement: they were opposed to the treaty. Additionally, I discovered that these parties followed a similar route. Initially, Vlaams Blok and Front National wished to reform the European Community into a United Europe of States. However, when the Maastricht Treaty was being proposed, these parties wanted not only to reject the proposal, but to dial back European integration.

In chapter one, both parties were initially in favor of increased economic integration. Front National even went as far as supporting a single currency. Vlaams Blok, too, supported some of the proposals made in the Treaty of Maastricht. Quickly, however, both parties became disillusioned with the project, as they did not support the creation of a supranational authority

over free people in the form of an ECB. Besides that, the presentation of the treaty as a take it or leave it deal made the ratification impossible for both parties. They shared a vision of a Europe that was not based on economic integration. Instead, in order for Europe to grow, the parties were now convinced that a shared moral vision on the world was required based in European nativism.

In chapter two I discussed the common foreign and security policy proposed by the Maastricht Treaty. Both parties wanted increased foreign cooperation, but it was mainly the community's handling of the crises in Yugoslavia, the Persian Gulf, and the Baltic states that convinced both parties to reject this part of the treaty. It made Front National as well as Vlaams Blok doubt whether this common foreign policy would actually benefit Europeans. In the eyes of Vlaams Blok and Front National the European Community had abandoned the repressed Europeans of the Baltics and Balkans. Besides that, if they were going to settle on a common foreign policy agreement, the treaty should be stronger and much clearer on its objectives, particularly on the creation of a European army.

In the third and last chapter I connected the third pillar, consisting of immigration policy and common crime fighting in Europol, to the free movement of people and European citizenship. It is in this chapter that I encountered the heaviest resistance towards the treaty by both parties. For somewhat differing reasons, but motivated by a common nativism, Vlaams Blok and Front National strongly opposed the granting of European citizenship to all EU citizens. It allowed me to explore these parties' ideas on how to best govern a state – both parties agreeing that it should be done by the people with a great historical and cultural attachment to the country. From here on it was obvious why these parties wanted to control immigration policy and were not keen on granting voting rights to European citizens.

Grouping all these conclusions together, it is clear to see that Vlaams Blok and Front National agree on two fundamental issues, which warrant cooperation within the European Parliament. One, Vlaams Blok and Front National agree on which police areas should be ceded to European institutions, and which areas should be left to the member states. Both parties embraced the subsidiarity principle and preferred a confederation over a federation. Two, within the areas that Vlaams Blok and Front National agree should fall under European jurisdiction, both parties agree on the policy. One example is a common defence of Europe's borders against immigrants. This means that when Front National and Vlaams Blok are faced

with disagreement over a certain policy area, they do agree that this policy area should be left to the member states, thereby avoiding conflict.

Given these conclusions and the continued and successful cooperation between Front National and Vlaams Blok, there is enough proof to conclude that within the Technical Group of the European Right there was a common policy platform, making their long-term cooperation durable. I therefore disagree with Paoli and Startin, who believed long-term cooperation between Vlaams Blok and Front National to be impossible.

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