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# **As Strict as Possible: Centre-Right Parties' Approach to Immigration in the Netherlands, France and Belgium**

**Master's Thesis**

Author: **Jeroen Spieker**

Email address: **[j.spieker@umail.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:j.spieker@umail.leidenuniv.nl)**

Supervisor: **dr. Brian Shaev**

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## Abstract

The literature on the party politics of immigration has paid increasing attention to the role of centre-right parties. Over the years these parties have often adopted more restrictive positions on immigration policy. However, as traditional parties of government they are faced with various legal and political constraints on the extent to which they can actually change policies when in office. This thesis studies the tensions between the office-seeking and policy-seeking goals of centre-right parties on immigration. It does so by analysing the asylum policies pursued by centre-right ministers in the Netherlands, France and Belgium in 2022-2023, as well as the way their parties' parliamentary groups positioned themselves towards their own ministers. Through a comparative qualitative analysis of policy and policy framing, this thesis argues the role of individual ministers and party ideology are crucial in understanding the impact centre-right parties have on asylum policies as well as in creating tensions between the party in office and in parliament.

### Note to the reader

- 1) This thesis makes frequent reference to Dutch-language names. It maintains the Dutch capitalization rules for these names, meaning the prepositions of last names are not capitalized when the first name is mentioned (e.g. Eric van der Burg, Nicole de Moor), but are capitalized when the first name is left out (e.g. Van der Burg, minister De Moor).
- 2) This thesis features quotes in English, translated from the original Dutch or French. These translations are my own, verified using DeepL Translator (‘DeepL Translate: The World’s Most Accurate Translator’. <https://www.deepl.com/translator>).

## Table of contents

Abstract.....	1
Table of contents.....	2
Tables and figures.....	3
List of abbreviations.....	3
<b>Introduction: Disentangling Centre-Right Immigration Policy.....</b>	<b>4-11</b>
Literature review.....	4
Research design.....	6
Theoretical framework and methodology.....	9
<b>Chapter I: Parties in Office.....</b>	<b>12-28</b>
The Netherlands: technocracy and redistribution.....	12
France: implicit deterrence.....	17
Belgium: explicit deterrence.....	23
Chapter conclusion.....	27
<b>Chapter II: Parties in Parliament.....</b>	<b>29-43</b>
The Netherlands: an ideological gap.....	29
France: an unsteady compromise.....	34
Belgium: following the minister's lead.....	38
Chapter conclusion.....	42
<b>Conclusion: Between Office and Policy.....</b>	<b>44-46</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>47-56</b>
<b>Appendix: Coding of parliamentary tools.....</b>	<b>57-60.</b>

## **Tables and figures**

Figure 1: the French reception system before 2024.....	22
Table 1: coding of written questions by the VVD group.....	30
Table 2: amount of motions filed by Ruben Brekelmans (VVD).....	31
Table 3: coding of motions filed by Ruben Brekelmans (VVD).....	32
Table 4: amount of written questions by the Renaissance group.....	35
Table 5: coding of written questions by the Renaissance group.....	35
Table 6: coding of written questions by the CD&V group.....	39

## **List of abbreviations**

BBB – BoerBurgerBeweging (Farmer-Citizen Movement)

CD&V – Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams (Christian-Democratic and Flemish)

CEAS – Common European Asylum System

CNDA – Cour Nationale du Droit d’Asile (National Court for Asylum law)

IND – Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst (Immigration and Naturalization Agency)

N-VA – Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (New Flemish Alliance)

OFFI – Office Français de l’immigration et de l’intégration (French Office for Immigration and Integration)

OFPRO – Office Française de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides (French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons)

RN – Rassemblement National (National Rally)

VVD – Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy)

# Introduction: Disentangling Centre-Right Immigration Policy

## Literature review

For decades the mainstream right – defined as Christian democratic, conservative and liberal parties – has played a central role in European political history. But the mainstream right is in crisis. Although not as spectacularly as social democratic parties, centre-right parties have seen an overall electoral decline, at least since the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> Bale and Kaltwasser posit that comparative research into the mainstream right has not received as much attention as the rise of the radical right and the decline of social democracy.<sup>2</sup> They argue the centre-right is in crisis due to its conflicted position over a new political cleavage between progressive and nativist values that has increasingly come to shape European politics.<sup>3</sup> Resulting from the economic and cultural changes caused by globalization, this cleavage has received ample attention in the comparative politics literature.<sup>4</sup> It presents a fundamental challenge for the mainstream right, as these parties are electorally torn between the progressive values of part of their university-educated middle-class electorate and the nativist views of the voters they lose to the radical right.<sup>5</sup>

The challenge for the centre-right is perhaps most clear on the issue of immigration. Abou-Chadi and Krause have shown that centre-right party positions on immigration policy have shifted to the right, while programmatic changes on other issues – such as European integration – are not as profound.<sup>6</sup> Literature discussing centre-right party positions on immigration often study this topic in the context of these parties' electoral competition with the radical right.<sup>7</sup> Such analyses argue that electoral incentives are key to centre-right accommodation of some radical right policies on immigration.<sup>8</sup> However, centre-right parties have grappled with immigration for a long time. Bale argues the politicization of immigration by centre-right parties in various western European countries goes back decades. The centre-right and immigration should thus be examined in a broader context, rather than solely within the context of the ascendant radical

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Bale and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, "The Mainstream Right in Western Europe: Caught between the Silent Revolution and Silent Counter-Revolution", in *Riding the Populist Wave: Europe's Mainstream Right in Crisis*, edited by Tim Bale and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021) 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> Bale and Kaltwasser, "The Mainstream Right in Western Europe", 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

<sup>4</sup> For example; Hanspeter Kriesi et al., 'Globalization and the Transformation of the National Political Space: Six European Countries Compared', *European Journal of Political Research* 45, no. 6 (2006): 921–956 / Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, 'Cleavage Theory Meets Europe's Crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the Transnational Cleavage', *Journal of European Public Policy* 25, no. 1 (2018): 109–135 / Wouter van der Brug and Joost van Spanje, 'Immigration, Europe and the "New" Cultural Dimension', *European Journal of Political Research* 48 (2009): 309–334.

<sup>5</sup> Bale and Kaltwasser, "The Mainstream Right in Western Europe", 22.

<sup>6</sup> Tarik Abou-Chadi and Werner Krause, 'The Supply Side: Mainstream Right Party Policy Positions in a Changing Political Space in Western Europe', in *Riding the Populist Wave: Europe's Mainstream Right in Crisis*, edited by Tim Bale and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021) 68.

<sup>7</sup> For example; Tarik Abou-Chadi and Werner Krause, 'The Causal Effect of Radical Right Success on Mainstream Parties' Policy Positions: A Regression Discontinuity Approach', *British Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 3 (July 2020). And Werner Krause, Denis Cohen, and Tarik Abou-Chadi, 'Does Accommodation Work? Mainstream Party Strategies and the Success of Radical Right Parties', *Political Science Research and Methods* 11, nr. 1 (January 2022) 172-179.

<sup>8</sup> Abou-Chadi and Krause, "The Supply Side", 68.

right.<sup>9</sup> This is especially relevant considering Christian democratic, liberal and conservatives parties are traditionally parties of government in much of Europe.<sup>10</sup> With their ability to directly control policy from the cabinet as well as through parliamentary work, centre-right parties have considerable agency in which policies are actually pursued.

Strøm and Müller's work conceptualizing parties as policy-seeking, vote-seeking and office-seeking parties has been foundational to much of the literature on political parties.<sup>11</sup> Notably, centre-right parties are often described as primarily office-seeking.<sup>12</sup> Aside from being considered an intrinsic good, holding office may also be a means towards electoral benefits or policy goals.<sup>13</sup> However, when it comes to policy goals a challenge presents itself for the centre-right. These parties' office-seeking motivations may conflict with pressures to push for stricter policies regarding immigration, as the extent to which centre-right parties can deliver on such policy promises in office faces significant constraints.

At least three factors limit the ability of centre-right parties to change immigration policies. First, there is the fact that holding office requires compromising with coalition partners. In most European countries coalition government is the norm. When coalitions are formed with more progressive or centre-left parties who do not share the restrictive attitudes of the centre-right, this limits the scope of policy change. Secondly, the centre-right is internally conflicted over immigration. A sometimes uneasy alliance between economic liberalism and cultural conservatism pulls the centre-right in two directions.<sup>14</sup> The pro-market wings of these parties tend to favour labour migration, whereas cultural conservatives are more sceptical about its socio-cultural consequences. Equally, asylum and family migration are points of contention as conservative or Christian democratic pro-reunification policies rooted in 'family values' might conflict with an economic liberalism that emphasizes the economic contribution – or lack thereof – of immigrants.<sup>15</sup>

Thirdly, immigration policy is subject to extensive legal constraints. The free movement of people – and their freedom to work abroad – is a fundamental aspect of the European Union. Additionally, international law and human rights law limit the ability of governments to restrict the inflow of asylum seekers.<sup>16</sup> Since the Treaty of Amsterdam, EU member states have gradually developed common criteria and procedures concerning asylum policy.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, EU member states are increasingly subject to jurisprudence by the Court of Justice of the European

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<sup>9</sup> Tim Bale, 'Turning Round the Telescope: Centre-Right Parties and Immigration and Integration Policy in Europe', *Journal of European Public Policy* 15, no. 3 (1 April 2008): 321.

<sup>10</sup> Leila Hadj Abdou, Tim Bale, and Andrew Peter Geddes, 'Centre-Right Parties and Immigration in an Era of Politicisation', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48, no. 2 (25 January 2022): 327.

<sup>11</sup> Kaare Strøm and Wolfgang C. Müller, 'Chapter 1 – Political Parties and Hard Choices', in *Policy, Office, or Votes?: How Political Parties in Western Europe Make Hard Decisions*, edited by Wolfgang C. Müller and Kaare Strøm (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 5-8.

<sup>12</sup> Abdou, Bale, and Geddes, 'Centre-Right Parties and Immigration in an Era of Politicisation', 338.

<sup>13</sup> Strøm and Müller, 'Political Parties and Hard Choices', 6.

<sup>14</sup> Pontus Odmalm and Tim Bale, 'Immigration into the Mainstream: Conflicting Ideological Streams, Strategic Reasoning and Party Competition', *Acta Politica* 50, no. 4 (1 October 2015): 368.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 368.

<sup>16</sup> Mathias Czaika and Hein De Haas, 'The Effectiveness of Immigration Policies', *Population and Development Review* 39, no. 3 (2013): 496.

<sup>17</sup> Kees Groenendijk, 'Introduction: Migration and Law in Europe', in *The First Decade of EU Migration and Asylum Law*, ed. Elspeth Guild and Paul Minderhoud (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers (Leiden, 2012), 8.

Union regarding asylum and migration policy.<sup>18</sup> Central to the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is the Dublin Regulation, last updated in its third form in 2013. Perhaps its most notable element is the obligation – in most cases – for the first country of arrival to consider an asylum seeker’s application, a rule meant to prevent the lodging of asylum applications in multiple countries; so called “asylum shopping”.<sup>19</sup>

Considering these various constraints, it is perhaps not surprising that which parties are in power seems to have little impact on immigration policy. Research by Natter, Czaika and De Haas found that the political orientation of governments on a left-right dimension had no effect on the overall restrictiveness of immigration policy between 1970 and 2012, only finding an effect in some specific policies towards illegal and asylum migration as well as integration policy.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, De Haas, Natter and Vezzoli argue that the growing restrictiveness of asylum policies in Europe mostly takes the form of changes to the implementation of existing policies rather than explicit changes in policy and asylum law.<sup>21</sup> Connecting these findings to the rightward turn of centre-right parties on immigration discussed above, there appears what De Haas and Czaika call a “discursive gap” between government policy and rhetoric regarding immigration.<sup>22</sup>

The tension between the pressure on centre-right parties to position themselves in the immigration debate and their ability to actually shape policy in government is the starting point for the research conducted in this thesis.

## Research design

This thesis presents a comparative analysis of the impact of centre-right parties on asylum policy in the Netherlands, France and Belgium. Comparative studies of the centre-right have received increasing attention. However, many of the contributions to this topic study centre-right parties from the perspective of electoral politics, analysing their role in the politicization of immigration, radical right competition and changes to the party system. Methodologically, such analyses often focus on examining manifestoes and formal policy positions.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Diego Acosta Arcarazo and Andrew Geddes, ‘The Development, Application and Implications of an EU Rule of Law in the Area of Migration Policy’, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 51, no. 2 (2013): 179.

<sup>19</sup> J.-P. Brekke and G. Brochmann, ‘Stuck in Transit: Secondary Migration of Asylum Seekers in Europe, National Differences, and the Dublin Regulation’, *Journal of Refugee Studies* 28, no. 2 (1 June 2015): 147.

<sup>20</sup> Katharina Natter, Mathias Czaika, and Hein de Haas, ‘Political Party Ideology and Immigration Policy Reform: An Empirical Enquiry’, *Political Research Exchange* 2, no. 1 (1 January 2020): 1-26.

<sup>21</sup> Hein de Haas, Katharina Natter and Simona Vezzoli, ‘Growing Restrictiveness or Changing Selection? The Nature and Evolution of Migration Policies’, *International Migration Review* 52, no. 2 (13 August 2018): 352.

<sup>22</sup> Czaika and De Haas, ‘The Effectiveness of Immigration Policies’, 494.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example: Leila Hadj Abdou and Didier Ruedin, ‘The Austrian People’s Party: An Anti-Immigrant Right Party?’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48, no. 2 (25 January 2022): 385–404. / Marie Demker and Pontus Odmalm, ‘From Governmental Success to Governmental Breakdown: How a New Dimension of Conflict Tore Apart the Politics of Migration of the Swedish Centre-Right’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48, no. 2 (25 January 2022): 425–440. / Isabelle Hertner, ‘Germany as “a Country of Integration”? The CDU/CSU’s Policies and Discourses on Immigration during Angela Merkel’s Chancellorship’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48, no. 2 (25 January 2022): 461–481.

This thesis follows Bale's contention that researching the centre-right benefits from an integration of research on parties with research on policy.<sup>24</sup> This is guided by the following main research question:

*How do centre-right parties in government shape asylum policy in the Netherlands, France and Belgium, and how does this impact the relationship between the party in office and the party in parliament?*

The research question is further operationalized in the following subquestions, which will guide the research in Chapter I and II respectively:

- 1) *How do centre-right migration ministers impact asylum policy?*
- 2) *How do the ministers' parliamentary groups position themselves towards their minister?*

The next section will expand on the various elements of the research question

### **Ministers and parties**

The emphasis on the relationship between ministers responsible for asylum policy and their parties in parliament represents the tensions between the office-seeking and policy-seeking goals of centre-right parties. Whereas ministers face the aforementioned constraints on their policies, this is less the case for parties in parliament. Parties in parliament are not bound to the unity of cabinet positions that constrain ministers from voicing their opinions. As such, studying individual ministers and parliamentary groups provides a means to study the tensions centre-right parties face as a result of the politicization of immigration.

In France asylum policy falls under the purview of the minister of the interior, while in the Netherlands and Belgium it is governed by a *staatssecretaris* ("state secretary"). In Belgium the state secretary for asylum and migration falls under the ministry of the interior, while in the Netherlands they fall under the ministry of justice and security. A state secretary is a deputy minister who is responsible for a specific part of the ministry's policy. State secretaries for asylum and migration represent the government's asylum policy in front of parliament, are part of the Council of Ministers of the EU and participate in cabinet meetings on asylum policy.<sup>25</sup> Their prominent role in the development of policy as well as parliamentary accountability is thus not fundamentally different than that of a minister, meaning this thesis uses the term minister for all three.

### **Asylum policy**

There are three reasons this thesis looks at asylum policy specifically. First, analysing one area of immigration policy allows this thesis to conduct a more in-depth qualitative analysis. Second, as discussed, asylum policy is one of the immigration policy areas where the ideological orientation of a government has some impact.<sup>26</sup> Thirdly, asylum policy is strongly politicized. The migration crisis of 2015-2016 revolved primarily around asylum migration.<sup>27</sup> Of course, immigration had

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<sup>24</sup> Bale, 'Turning Round the Telescope', 316.

<sup>25</sup> 'Over de regering', *Rijksoverheid.nl* <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/regering/over-de-regering#:~:text=Een%20staatssecretaris%20neemt%20bij%20afwezigheid,volgens%20zijn%20taakomschrijving%20overantwoordelijk%20is> last accessed on 14-06-2024, and 'Ministerraad', *premier.be* (1 October 2020) <https://www.premier.be/nl/ministerraad> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>26</sup> Natter, Czaika, and De Haas, 'Political Party Ideology and Immigration Policy Reform', 19.

<sup>27</sup> Arne Niemann and Natascha Zaun, "EU Refugee Policies and Politics in Times of Crisis: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 56, no. 1 (2018): 4.



been a politicized issue long before the crisis. However, the migration crisis brought asylum migration to the forefront of political debate, making it an even more salient issue in large part as a result of mobilization of the issue by radical right parties.<sup>28</sup> Consequently, as a policy area which is both politicized and subject to policy change, asylum policy is a fitting means to study the impact of centre-right parties on immigration policy.

### **Selection of case studies**

This thesis considers three countries and, as such, three centre-right parties and ministers; the Dutch *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (“People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy; VVD), French *Renaissance* and Belgian *Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams* (“Christian Democratic and Flemish”; CD&V). The period discussed consists of 2022 and 2023. There are two reasons to choose this two-year timeframe. First, a relatively short time span allows for an in-depth analysis of asylum policies and minister-party relations regarding these policies. Considering the observation by De Haas and Czaika that asylum policies mostly change in their implementation, rather than explicit changes to asylum law, a qualitative analysis of a relatively short time period will provide the means to study these more subtle changes in asylum policy.<sup>29</sup> Second, the global coronavirus pandemic significantly influenced migration flows, as the closing of national borders to limit the spread of the crisis brought international migration to a halt.<sup>30</sup> This thesis thus starts from the period after the pandemic.

The Netherlands, France and Belgium are chosen because of a number of similarities. In all three countries the ministry responsible for asylum policy was held by a centre-right party. Despite their ideological and historical differences, as liberal (VVD & Renaissance) and Christian democratic (CD&V) parties, they all qualify as part of the broad centre-right.<sup>31</sup> Renaissance is perhaps the most debatable, as Macron’s political project is often described as centrist.<sup>32</sup> However, pro-free market attitudes have been central to Macron’s and his party’s programme from the beginning.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, in government Macron has positioned the party moderately to the right, and a majority of French voters place the party on the right.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, Green-Pederson and Otjes have shown that political parties in all three countries have increasingly put immigration on the agenda since at least the 1980s.<sup>35</sup> This is closely linked to both increases in immigration and the rise of radical right parties.<sup>36</sup> Of course there are notable differences in government structure and parliamentary culture, as well as different structural factors concerning asylum migration – such as the rate of recognition

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<sup>28</sup> Swen Hutter and Hanspeter Kriesi, ‘Politicising Immigration in Times of Crisis’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48, no. 2 (25 January 2022): 356-357.

<sup>29</sup> De Haas, Natter and Vezzoli, ‘Growing Restrictiveness or Changing Selection?’, 352.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Chamie, ‘International Migration amid a World in Crisis’, *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 8, no. 3 (1 September 2020): 235.

<sup>31</sup> Bale and Kaltwasser, ‘The Mainstream Right in Western Europe’, 34-35.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>33</sup> Camille Bedock, ‘Understanding the Unexpected: Emmanuel Macron’s Victory in the 2017 French Presidential Election’, in *Developments in French Politics*, edited by Helen Drake et al (Macmillan Education Limited, 2021): 52.

<sup>34</sup> Rainbow Murray, ‘All Change? Partisan Realignment and Parliamentary Reform under Emmanuel Macron’, in *Developments in French Politics*, edited by Helen Drake et al (Macmillan Education Limited, 2021): 66.

<sup>35</sup> Christoffer Green-Pedersen and Simon Otjes, ‘A Hot Topic? Immigration on the Agenda in Western Europe’, *Party Politics* 25, no. 3 (1 May 2019): 424.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 430.

of asylum requests and the main countries of origin. Where relevant, these factors will be included in the analysis.

## Theoretical framework and methodology

### Disentangling the ministers

Ministers are tied to the unity of their cabinets and will thus usually not openly state their personal views or explain their disagreements with other cabinet members. Furthermore, it often takes years for the minutes of cabinet meetings to be made public. Disentangling the role of the individual minister thus requires a clear theoretical framework. This thesis employs Despina Alexiadou's typology of ministers as Loyalists, Partisans and Ideologues.<sup>37</sup> These ministerial types can be identified based on party rank, professional experience and party affiliation.<sup>38</sup>

According to Alexiadou, the most common type of ministers are Loyalists. Loyalist ministers are not policy entrepreneurs. They join governments out of loyalty to their party.<sup>39</sup> Loyalists are often low-ranking party members without strong policy preferences.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, they rely on the government's coalition agreement to guide their policies and depend strongly on their civil servants, rather than actively pursuing particular policies. Their role is primarily managerial.<sup>41</sup> In asylum policy this can be operationalized as a technocratic form of governance. This means Loyalists pursue policies "handed" to them, for example by advisors, are more likely to focus on specific problems rather than overall policy changes and are likely to frame asylum policy decisions as necessities rather than political choices.

Partisans, contrarily, are motivated by the party interest. Partisan ministers have often played prominent roles in their party over a long period of time.<sup>42</sup> As experienced party members they will actively pursue certain policies when these are seen as in the party's interest.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, on asylum policy such a minister would likely follow their party's programme or the most popular policies.

Ideologues, lastly, are conceptualized as ministers with clear policy preferences. As such, Alexiadou's definition does not see them as radically ideological, which is the more common definition of an ideologue, but rather as ministers who enter government because they have strong views on what policies should be pursued.<sup>44</sup> Ideologues can also be low-ranking party members.<sup>45</sup> Professional background and (previous) party membership can be predictors of particular policy preferences.<sup>46</sup>

Ideologues and partisans both have a strong impact on policy, while Loyalists do not.<sup>47</sup> The motivations described above make Partisans and Ideologues more likely to have both the

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<sup>37</sup> Despina Alexiadou, *Ideologues, Partisans, and Loyalists: Ministers and Policymaking in Parliamentary Cabinets*, 1st edition. (Oxford ; Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

incentive – electoral or ideological – and influence – due to expertise or seniority – to push particular policies. The analysis of each country in Chapter I will include a discussion of the professional and party background of each minister and argue why they represent particular types.

### **Asylum policy analysis: methodology and key concepts**

Methodologically, this thesis conducts a qualitative policy analysis by comparing policy framing by ministers and parliamentary groups to the actual policies they pursue. Following Helbling, framing is defined as “how political actors define a particular problem and which justifications are related to which positions”.<sup>48</sup> Fundamentally, when political actors discuss an issue – in this case, asylum migration – they limit the scope of political alternatives by paying differing degrees of attention to various aspects of a policy area.<sup>49</sup> As such, what problems ministers and parliamentary groups define and what solutions they propose, sheds light on their political goals. Consequently, the extent to which there is congruence between the minister and the parliamentary group in policy framing and the policies they pursue, provides insight into the political tensions between the party in office and the party in parliament this thesis studies.

Qualitative frame analysis requires theory to identify frames.<sup>50</sup> As such, concepts can be used as a lens through which to analyse both the policies and the policy framing of the ministers. Regarding framing, a major question in asylum policy is the extent to which ministers and parliamentary groups problematize the functioning of the reception system or the inflow of asylum seekers. Whereas the former could lead to policies attempting to reform the reception system, the latter may lead to a focus on policies of deterrence. Hassan defines deterrence as “a mixture of restrictive and punitive measures taken in the country of asylum”.<sup>51</sup> This takes shape in the form of, for example, limits on the amount of appeals in the case of rejections of asylum applications, negative campaigning or forms of detention.<sup>52</sup> Such measures serve to make lodging asylum requests more difficult and less attractive. Hassan describes how government actors will often deny that their policies are aimed at deterring asylum seekers.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, the aforementioned discursive gap between restrictive rhetoric and liberal policies can also be inverted.

Where instead the reception system is problematized, this could lead to “logistification”. This concept has received increasing attention in the policy literature. Vianelli describes it as a process by which asylum reception is increasingly organized in ways that resemble supply chain logistics. Central to this process is control over mobility. This process consists of both confinement to specific reception centres or regions, but also the transfer of asylum seekers through an organizational chain of organizations and locations.<sup>54</sup> Logistification thus treats issues

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<sup>48</sup> Marc Helbling, ‘Framing Immigration in Western Europe’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40, no. 1 (2014): 22-23.

<sup>49</sup> Maria Löblich, “Analyzing Talk and Text IV: Frame Analysis”, in Hilde Van den Bulck et al., *The Palgrave Handbook of Methods for Media Policy Research* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG, 2019), 421.

<sup>50</sup> Löblich, ‘Analyzing Talk and Text IV: Frame Analysis’, 424.

<sup>51</sup> Lisa Hassan, ‘Deterrence Measures and the Preservation of Asylum in the United Kingdom and United States’, *Journal of Refugee Studies* 13, no. 2 (2000): 185.

<sup>52</sup> Hassan, ‘Deterrence Measures’, 186.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 186-187.

<sup>54</sup> Lorenzo Vianelli, ‘Warehousing Asylum Seekers: The Logistification of Reception’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 40, no. 1 (1 February 2022): 49.

surrounding asylum policy largely as a question of the (re)distribution of asylum seekers throughout the asylum system. Central to this process are stated goals of “efficiency”.<sup>55</sup>

Chapter I analyses the extent to which the ministers problematize the reception system or the inflow of asylum seekers. This is then connected to their policies, where I analyse the extent to which they exhibit deterrence and logistification. Employing Alexiadou’s typology, I argue that the degree to which policies of deterrence and logistification are pursued, as well as the presence of a discursive gap between policies and policy framing, is directly impacted by the type of minister responsible for asylum policy.

The second chapter brings the parties’ parliamentary groups into the analysis. By coding written parliamentary questions and motions directed at the minister by their own party’s group it analyses which issues the parliamentary group raises attention to regarding asylum policy, and to what extent this aligns with the minister’s policy framing. A qualitative analysis of these questions and motions – as well as legislative amendments, when available – studies the extent to which they attempt to “push” their minister in a particular policy direction. Here I argue the individual ministers’ significant impact on policy and the degree to which this reflects the groups’ ideological position are crucial to understanding why parliamentary groups position themselves towards their ministers in different ways.

As such, this thesis contributes to the literature on centre-right parties and immigration by examining both these parties’ impact on asylum policy, as well as why tensions can appear between their policy goals and participation in government.

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<sup>55</sup> Vianelli, ‘Warehousing Asylum Seekers’, 51.

# Chapter I: Parties in Office

This chapter analyses the impact of individual ministers on asylum policy in the Netherlands, France and Belgium in 2022-2023. Using the contributions of ministers during parliamentary committee meetings and policy documents I analyse the extent to which the ministers problematized asylum migration or the reception system and how this relates to the extent to which their policies focused on deterrence or the functioning of the reception system. The three country sections are followed by a conclusion, where I argue that the individual minister was a crucial factor in which asylum policies were – or were not – pursued in all three cases.

## The Netherlands: technocracy and redistribution

### Setting the scene

The Rutte-IV government came into being after a record-length coalition negotiation between the conservative-liberal VVD, progressive-liberal D66, Christian democratic CDA and protestant ChristenUnie. Cooperation with the radical right PVV had been ruled out and VVD and CDA refused to form a coalition with included both the social democratic PvdA and green progressive GroenLinks, who had agreed to only join a coalition together. In the deadlock that ensued, the only possibility seemed to be a continuation of the previous Rutte-III coalition. D66 opposed this on account of fundamental differences in views on ethical issues with the socially conservative ChristenUnie. Eventually, D66 caved and agreed to continue the coalition.<sup>56</sup> Migration divided VVD and D66 in particular.<sup>57</sup> It was reported in 2021 that migration and asylum policy were one of the main points of tension in the negotiations, as VVD and CDA supported more restrictive policies, while D66 and ChristenUnie emphasized improvements to the reception system.<sup>58</sup> Indeed it was these tensions which led to the collapse of the coalition in July 2023. Due to the central role of the VVD, this will be discussed in Chapter II.

It is in this context that Eric van der Burg was appointed as state secretary for Asylum and Migration. Considering Alexiadou's typology, Van der Burg clearly represents the "Loyalist" type. Van der Burg's professional background revolved largely around local politics in Amsterdam, having been a member of the municipal council and alderman for the local VVD for years. Before being appointed minister in January 2022, he was a member of the Senate.<sup>59</sup> Van der Burg had no previous experience in ministerial office nor had he been elected as a member of the *Tweede Kamer*. As such, he did not hold the weight and seniority associated with partisan ministers. Additionally, Van der Burg is commonly perceived – and considered himself – as representing the "left-wing" of the VVD.<sup>60</sup> With the VVD's overall position as the main party of the Dutch

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<sup>56</sup> Joop J. M. Van Holsteyn and Galen A. Irwin, 'The Dutch Parliamentary Elections of March 2021', *West European Politics* 45, no. 7 (10 November 2022): 1502.

<sup>57</sup> Simon Otjes, 'From eurorealism to europhilia? The 2021 Dutch elections and the new approach of the Netherlands in EU politics', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 60 (2022) 66.

<sup>58</sup> Hans van Soest, 'Altijd weer asiel: het was de weeffout in deze coalitie', *Het Parool* (7 July 2023) <https://www.parool.nl/nederland/altijd-weer-asiel-het-was-de-weeffout-in-deze-coalitie~b9ae1226/>.

<sup>59</sup> 'Eric van der Burg', *Rijksoverheid.nl*; <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/regering/bewindspersonen/eric-van-der-burg> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>60</sup> Jaap Stam, 'Nieuwe staatssecretaris Asiel en Migratie Eric van der Burg wil als "linkse VVD'er" een brugfunctie vervullen', *volkskrant.nl* (8 February 2022) <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/nieuwe-staatssecretaris->

right, Van der Burg cannot be considered an Ideologue. Considering the difficulty of forming a coalition and the stark divisions between the parties on immigration, Van der Burg's appointment as a Loyalist minister would reduce the risk of alienating D66 on asylum and migration policy.

The following analysis shows how, both in the policies pursued and the way these policies were framed, Van der Burg represents the technocratic rather than entrepreneurial governance of asylum policy reflective of Loyalist ministers.

### **Framing crisis measures**

Asylum policy in the Netherlands in 2022-2023 was dominated by crisis. The amount of asylum requests had started increasing in the summer of 2021.<sup>61</sup> Combined with a large existing backlog of pending asylum requests, this led to the overcrowding of the main reception centre in the northern village of Ter Apel, causing hundreds of asylum seekers to sleep outside.<sup>62</sup> Many asylum seekers were housed in crisis reception centres, as there was a large shortage of "regular" places.<sup>63</sup> The Netherlands had been dealing with a housing crisis for years.<sup>64</sup> This contributed to a large amount of people with an asylum status remaining in the reception system, leading to shortages in reception places.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, delays in the handling of asylum requests had led to numerous court cases against the *Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst* ("Immigration and Naturalization Agency"; IND), causing the IND to pay out 3,5 million euros in fines to asylum seekers in 2022 alone.<sup>66</sup>

Regarding policy framing, from the beginning of the crisis Van der Burg problematized both the inflow of asylum seekers as well as the functioning of the reception system. In a letter to parliament in August 2022 Van der Burg argued that a combination of a higher inflow of asylum seekers with a lack of available housing for those with an asylum status had caused the crisis. Consequently, the solution was to "(temporarily) limit the inflow" and to accelerate the movement of those with an asylum status within the asylum system.<sup>67</sup>

Consequently, both deterrence and measures addressing the reception system defined Van der Burg's initial approach to tackling the crisis. In the aforementioned letter, Van der Burg describes the agreement that was reached within the cabinet and with other executive governmental bodies,

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[asiel-en-migratie-eric-van-der-burg-wil-als-linkse-vvd-er-een-brugfunctie-vervullen~bd16850d/](https://asiel-en-migratie-eric-van-der-burg-wil-als-linkse-vvd-er-een-brugfunctie-vervullen~bd16850d/). last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>61</sup> Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 'Asielinstroom 2021 vooral tweede helft van het jaar toegenomen', *cbs.nl* (31 January 2022) <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2022/05/asielinstroom-2021-vooral-tweede-helft-van-het-jaar-toegenomen> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>62</sup> 'Artsen zonder Grenzen naar Ter Apel, waar opnieuw 700 mensen buiten slapen', *NOS.nl* (25 August 2022) <https://nos.nl/collectie/13898/artikel/2441954-artsen-zonder-grenzen-naar-ter-apel-waar-opnieuw-700-mensen-buiten-slapen> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>63</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Verslag van een commissiedebat', *Vreemdelingenbeleid*, 19637, nr. 3001 (3 November 2022): 43.

<sup>64</sup> Sjoerd Moussie and Leen Kraniotis, 'Schreeuwend tekort aan woningen en hoge huizenprijzen: hoe is het zo gekomen?', *NOS.nl* (11 November 2023) <https://nos.nl/collectie/13960/artikel/2497415-schreeuwend-tekort-aan-woningen-en-hoge-huizenprijzen-hoe-is-het-zo-gekomen> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>65</sup> Valentijn Bartels, 'Tekort opvangplekken leidt tot dure maatregelen: hotels nu ingezet als noodoplossing', *Telegraaf.nl* (18 March 2024) <https://www.telegraaf.nl/nieuws/1174047297/tekort-opvangplekken-leidt-tot-dure-maatregel-hotels-nu-ingezet-als-noodoplossing> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>66</sup> 'Dwangsommen en de IND', *IND.nl* <https://ind.nl/over-ons/achtergrondartikelen/dwangsommen-en-de-ind#:~:text=Tijdelijk%20geen%20dwangsommen%20voor%20asiel&text=Eind%202022%20besluit%20de%20Raad,tijd%20een%20besluit%20te%20nemen> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>67</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Brief van de staatssecretaris van Justitie en Veiligheid', *Vreemdelingenbeleid*, 19637, nr. 2992 (26 August 2022): 2.

such as the municipalities and provinces. The disagreements over asylum policy that were apparent within the coalition were clearly reflected in these measures, as they contained a combination of measures aimed at deterrence and improving the reception system.

On the one hand, the government intended to accelerate the construction of social housing, especially by building more “flexible residencies”, of which a third would be reserved for those with an asylum status. Additionally, existing programmes to foster the flexibility of the asylum system would be implemented more quickly.<sup>68</sup> On ensuring enough places for asylum seekers, the letter mentions the “legal task for municipalities on asylum reception”.<sup>69</sup> This refers to a law that came to be known as the *Spreidingswet* (“distribution law”), which creates a legal responsibility for municipalities to provide accommodation for asylum seekers, and will be discussed further below. The *Spreidingswet* was borne of compromise, as VVD and CDA wanted measures to restrict migration and D66 and ChristenUnie favoured the *Spreidingswet*.<sup>70</sup>

When it comes to deterrence, a number of measures were introduced. This included a temporary end to relocations of refugees from Turkey in the context of the EU-Turkey Joint Statement of 2016.<sup>71</sup> Most significant, however, was a restriction on family reunification. Previously, the law stated a request for family reunification was to be handled within six months after the rendering of an asylum status. This period was extended to fifteen months in cases in which the asylum seeker requesting reunification was not in an adequate housing situation to also accommodate their family member(s).<sup>72</sup> Considering the high rate of recognition in the Netherlands as well as the housing crisis, this would apply to a large group of asylum seekers applying for reunification. Interestingly, in the letter to parliament explaining the measures the minister mentions how the EU’s family reunification directive does not allow for the introduction of the condition of adequate housing.<sup>73</sup> To circumvent this legal constraint, the IND would continue to render positive decisions to requests for family reunification, but the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would not provide family members with a visa until adequate housing is found.<sup>74</sup> This reflects the argument by De Haas, Natter and Vezzoli discussed in the introductory chapter, that restrictiveness in European asylum policies often takes the form of adjustments to the implementation of policy.<sup>75</sup> Here this is clearly the result of legal constraints on asylum policy.

However, the restriction on reunification was successfully challenged in various lower courts. This caused Van der Burg to inform parliament that the cases would be referred to the *Raad van*

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 2, 5.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>70</sup> Denise Retera, ‘Waarom zette de VVD juist nu de hakken in het zand? Vier vragen over de asielwet’, *NRC.nl* (8 November 2022) <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2022/11/08/waarom-zette-de-vvd-juist-nu-de-hakken-in-het-zand-vier-vragen-over-de-asielwet-2-a4147585> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>71</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, ‘Brief van de staatssecretaris van Justitie en Veiligheid’, *Vreemdelingenbeleid*, 19637, nr. 2992 (26 August 2022): 4.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>75</sup> De Haas, Natter and Vezzoli., ‘Growing Restrictiveness or Changing Selection?’, 352.

*State* in December 2022.<sup>76</sup> In the meantime the measure would be upheld.<sup>77</sup> Not long after, however, on 11 January 2023, Van der Burg informed parliament that the measure would be temporarily suspended to prevent further legal challenges, as these had all led to court decisions which forced the government to provide a visa in individual cases.<sup>78</sup> On 8 February the *Raad van State* ruled that the measure violated both Dutch and European law, leading to its permanent repeal.<sup>79</sup> Despite appealing the decisions, Van der Burg kept strictly within the legal constraints imposed by the *Raad van State*. When pressed on the measure by opposition parties, Van der Burg stated he simply intended to follow the law.<sup>80</sup>

### **The Spreidingswet: logistification as policy**

Legal constraints on deterrence thus meant that Van der Burg's policies treated the crisis as a reception crisis, despite his framing of the inflow of asylum seekers as a problem. This can be seen most evidently in the *Spreidingswet*. Dutch municipalities have a formal "task" to provide accommodation for asylum seekers. The amount of places to be provided is set by the minister and divided proportionally between all municipalities, relative to their size. This task is, however, not a legal obligation, causing various municipalities to not shelter any asylum seekers. Instead, the *Spreidingswet* would make this mandatory and enforceable by the national government.<sup>81</sup>

The next section presents two aspects of the *Spreidingswet* and Van der Burg's position. First, the background of the law shows that, as a Loyalist minister, Van der Burg did not play an entrepreneurial role in its development. Second, his framing of the law shows an emphasis on efficiency and the distribution of asylum seekers. This shows how processes of logistification can originate at the political level.

Although the *Spreidingswet* had not been part of the Rutte-IV government's coalition agreement, it was not a case of policy entrepreneurship by the minister either. In December 2021, before the advent of the crisis, the *Adviescommissie voor Vreemdelingenzaken* ("Advisory Commission for Immigration Affairs") first proposed introducing a legal obligation for municipalities to provide places for asylum seekers.<sup>82</sup> Additionally, in a committee meeting in November 2022 Van der Burg stated that he was asked to develop such a law by other government bodies, including the provinces, *Veiligheidsregio's* (bodies of multiple municipalities tasked with maintaining security and safety) and national government organs.<sup>83</sup> It is noteworthy that the measures aimed at deterrence in the agreement of August 2022 had always been intended to be temporary, whereas the

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<sup>76</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Brief van de staatssecretaris van Justitie en Veiligheid', *Vreemdelingenbeleid*, 19637, nr. 3054 (27 December 2022).

<sup>77</sup> 'Maatregel gezinshereniging blijft overeind, asieladvocaten boos', *NOS.nl* (7 December 2022) <https://nos.nl/artikel/2455461-maatregel-gezinshereniging-blijft-overeind-asieladvocaten-boos> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>78</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Brief van de staatssecretaris van Justitie en Veiligheid', *Vreemdelingenbeleid*, 19637, nr. 3055 (11 January 2023).

<sup>79</sup> Uitspraak 202207360/1/V1, *Raad van State* (8 February 2023).

<sup>80</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Verslag van een commissiedebat', *Vreemdelingenbeleid*, 19637, nr. 3079 (23 March 2023): 50.

<sup>81</sup> 'Memorie van toelichting', *Regels inzake een wettelijke taak van gemeenten om opvangvoorzieningen voor asielzoekers mogelijk te maken (Wet gemeentelijke taak mogelijk maken asielopvangvoorzieningen)*, 36333, nr. 3 (28 March 2023): 24.

<sup>82</sup> Reinalda Start, 'Geen migratiecrisis, maar opvangcrisis: dwing alle gemeenten asielzoekers op te vangen', *NOS.nl* (9 December 2021) <https://nos.nl/artikel/2408848-geen-migratiecrisis-maar-opvangcrisis-dwing-alle-gemeenten-asielzoekers-op-te-vangen> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>83</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Verslag van een wetgevingsoverleg', *Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaten van het Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid (VI) voor het jaar 2023*, 36200 VI, nr. 107 (28 November 2022): 17.



*Spreidingswet* was already conceived as a permanent measure.<sup>84</sup> As discussed, deterrence was the result of a political compromise between the parties in the coalition, while the *Spreidingswet* originated in policy-making circuits. The fact the *Spreidingswet* remained key to Van der Burg's approach to asylum policy, while deterrence was not pursued, shows that he did not take an active role in pushing policy.

The *Spreidingswet* shows how logistification was central to Van der Burg's response to the crisis, resulting from his technocratic approach to asylum policy. This was made explicit by Van der Burg early on in the crisis, as during a committee debate in October 2022 he remarked.

*"In any case, what I observe [...] is that I am less concerned with politics and more concerned with finding solutions. In doing so, I am of course confronted with politics, but I have less time to do politics. We are simply dealing with a problem. Whether we call it, as the right does, an 'asylum problem' or, as the left does, a 'reception problem', I consider less relevant."*<sup>85</sup>

This emphasis on depoliticization and problem-solving is reflective of Van der Burg's technocratic approach. Consequently, when pressed in a committee debate on how to prevent a future crisis, the minister stated the *Spreidingswet* would create a more equal distribution of asylum seekers across the country.<sup>86</sup> However, the minister also downplayed the political nature of the law. In committee, he explicitly stated that he did not consider it part of a "systemic overhaul".<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, he argued he would prefer – and expected – not to have to use the element of "force" in the law, as the law would already incentivize municipalities to provide enough places.<sup>88</sup> Contrarily, in its commentary on the *Spreidingswet* the *Raad van State* emphasized how the law creates a "new administrative system" and is "a systemic overhaul and not a temporary emergency law".<sup>89</sup> The framing of the law as concerned with efficiency and distribution, while downplaying its political nature shows how logistification can have political origins in a depoliticized approach to asylum policy. In the Dutch case, this push to depoliticize asylum policy is clearly linked to the role of the individual minister.

## Deferring to Europe

From the beginning Van der Burg emphasized how reducing the inflow of asylum seekers was a goal as much as improving the reception system was.<sup>90</sup> As such, a discursive gap can be observed, as the previous sections explained how Van der Burg's policies eventually focused exclusively on the reception system. The minister clearly attempted to deal with this by framing measures to reduce the inflow of asylum seekers as a European matter. Responding to parliamentary

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<sup>84</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Brief van de staatssecretaris van Justitie en Veiligheid', *Vreemdelingenbeleid*, 19637, nr. 2992 (26 August 2022): 3.

<sup>85</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Verslag van een commissiedebat', *Vreemdelingenbeleid*, 19637, nr. 3001 (3 November 2022): 34.

<sup>86</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Verslag van een commissiedebat', *Vreemdelingenbeleid*, 19637, nr. 3115 (5 June 2023): 50

<sup>87</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Verslag van een commissiedebat', *Vreemdelingenbeleid*, 19637, nr. 3095 (25 April 2023): 54.

<sup>88</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Verslag van een wetgevingsoverleg', *Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaten van het Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid (VI) voor het jaar 2023*, 36200 VI, nr. 107 (28 November 2022): 17.

<sup>89</sup> 'Wet gemeentelijke taak mogelijk maken asielopvangvoorzieningen', *Raad van State*, 36333, nr. 4 (1 February 2023), 2.

<sup>90</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Verslag van een wetgevingsoverleg', *Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaten van het Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid (VI) voor het jaar 2023*, 36200 VI, nr. 107 (28 November 2022): 13.

questions by the radical right PVV pressuring him to reduce the inflow of asylum seekers, Van der Burg argued that “[I]f you’re talking about limiting the inflow, you are talking about agreements you have to make at the European level [...] In Europe we are negotiating about a new pact [...] It contains a number of steps which can contribute to a decreased inflow both in Europe as well as the Netherlands”.<sup>91</sup> Additionally, Van der Burg drew parallels between his support for a national system of mandatory redistribution to the European Pact on Migration and Asylum being discussed at that time. In defending the pact Van der Burg argued he supports mandatory redistributions of asylum seekers as part of the pact because a more equal distribution would mean a reduced inflow of asylum seekers in the Netherlands.<sup>92</sup> Again, this concern with (re)distribution shows a logistical framing of asylum policy.

### **Conclusion: technocratic governance**

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of Eric van der Burg’s approach to the asylum crisis in the Netherlands. First, as theorized, his position as a Loyalist minister led to a technocratic approach to asylum policy, relying on policies “handed” to the minister by coalition agreements and civil servants. The more “political” approach initially pursued by the minister was a result of a compromise between the coalition parties, but when the measures aimed at deterrence were struck down by courts, Van der Burg continued with the remaining policy he had been handed; the *Spreadingswet*. This proposal originated in advisory committees and was presented by Van der Burg in apolitical terms of necessity. The unequal distribution of asylum seekers across the country was the issue addressed by the law. As such, it shows how logistification can result from political contingencies, in this case the role of the individual minister. Additionally, the analysis of the Dutch case shows how a discursive gap between a problematization of the inflow of asylum seekers and the lack of deterrence policies pursued can equally be related to the role of the individual minister. Deferring to Europe on restrictive migration policies can then be a discursive solution to constraints on national measures to pursue deterrence.

## **France: implicit deterrence**

### **Setting the scene**

Unlike the Netherlands and Belgium, France did not face an acute asylum crisis. However, migration has been a highly salient issue in French politics for decades, with major reforms in immigration policy dating back to at least the 1980s.<sup>93</sup> Discussions regarding immigration are strongly connected to debates on the role of Islam, *laïcité* and terrorism in France; issues closely linked to the rise of the radical right *Front National* (now *Rassemblement National*, RN).<sup>94</sup> This is the context in which Macron and his centrist platform rose to the presidency in 2017 after beating RN’s Marine Le Pen by a large margin in the second round of the elections. During this

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<sup>91</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, ‘Verslag van een commissiedebat’, *Vreemdelingenbeleid*, 19637, nr. 3115 (5 June 2023): 47.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>93</sup> Ahmet Berdiyev and Nurettin Can, ‘The Revival of Nationalism in Europe and the Immigration Challenges in France’, *International Migration* 60, no. 6 (2022): 16.

<sup>94</sup> Aprilia Firmonasari, Wening Udasmoro, and Yohanes Tri Mastoyo, ‘Understanding Secularism and National Identity in French Political Discourses’, *Jurnal Humaniora* 32, no. 2 (1 June 2020): 135-136.

second round Macron presented himself primarily in opposition to RN, adopting an image as *the* anti-Le Pen candidate.<sup>95</sup>

Since 2017, Macron had leaned to the right on issues of immigration and security.<sup>96</sup> In 2018 Macron's interior minister Gérard Collomb passed a new immigration bill. Regarding asylum, notable reforms included a restriction on the application time for asylum requests and the criminalization of unauthorized border crossings.<sup>97</sup> The law was subsequently criticized by parliamentarians from Macron's own party for being too restrictive, causing a number of them to abstain and one MP to vote against the bill.<sup>98</sup>

A key moment in this rightward shift was Macron's appointment of Gérald Darmanin as interior minister in July 2020. Macron's previous ministers for the interior, Gérard Collomb and Christophe Castaner, had been former members of the *Parti Socialiste*.<sup>\*</sup> Contrarily, Darmanin had a clearly conservative profile. As a former member of the conservative *Les Républicains* (LR), he had been a spokesman and campaign coordinator for Nicolas Sarkozy, before joining Macron's party in 2017.<sup>99</sup> Darmanin thus resembles the "Ideologue" type. The interior ministry governs highly salient issues such as security and migration, and Darmanin played a key role in the passing of the so-called "separatism law" in 2021, which aimed to combat Islamism and Islamic terrorism in France. This proposal has been considered an example of Macron's rightward tilt since 2017.<sup>100</sup> As such, Darmanin's appointment in 2020 can be seen as a strategic choice. Appointing a more right-wing minister to handle a highly politicized topic like immigration could reflect a continuation of Macron's strategy during his first term, in which he leaned slightly right-of-centre to accommodate the median voter and disqualify LR, which were still seen as his main competitor at the time.<sup>101</sup> In the 2022 legislative elections Macron's coalition *Ensemble* lost its parliamentary majority, so keeping Darmanin as head of the interior ministry can be seen as a continuation of this approach.

Darmanin thus tabled the Macron government's *projet de loi pour contrôler l'immigration, améliorer l'intégration* ("bill to control immigration, improve integration") on 1 February 2023 in a context of a high salience of immigration and tensions within Macron's parliamentary alliance *Ensemble*. This section will focus on the immigration bill, as this constituted the main development regarding asylum policy and became a central topic in French politics, especially in 2023. Additionally, legislative and presidential elections dominated political debate in the first half of 2022.

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<sup>95</sup> Lise Esther Herman and Marta Lorimer, 'Dancing with the Devil? Emmanuel Macron, Marine Le Pen and the Articulation of a New Political Divide in France', *Nations and Nationalism / Early view* (16 January 2023): 8.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>97</sup> Silvia D'Amato and Anna Lavizzari, 'The Migration Triangle: Narratives, Justice and the Politics of Migration in France', *The International Spectator* 54, no. 3 (3 July 2019): 43.

<sup>98</sup> Iris Ouedraogo, 'Loi asile et immigration : de quoi parle-t-on?', *lejdd.fr* (19 April 2018)

<https://www.lejdd.fr/Politique/loi-asile-et-immigration-de-quoi-parle-t-on-3630776> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>99</sup> Elisa Braun, 'Gérald Darmanin, Macron's Risky Gamble', *POLITICO.eu* (22 December 2020)

<https://www.politico.eu/article/gerald-darmanin-emmanuel-macron-risky-gamble/>. last accessed on 14-06-2024,

and 'Gérald Darmanin, le jeune loup de droite qui veut parler "aux classes populaires"', *France3-regions.francetvinfo.fr* (17 May 2017) <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/hauts-de-france/nord-0/gerald-darmanin-jeune-loup-droite-qui-veut-parler-aux-classes-populaires-1255823.html> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>100</sup> 'France's Lower House Approves Anti-Separatism Bill to Battle Islamist Extremism', *France 24.com* (23 July 2021) <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210723-france-s-lower-house-approves-separatism-law-to-battle-islamist-extremism>. last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>101</sup> Murray, 'All Change?', 66.

\* With the exception of Édouard Philippe. Yet he only acted as interior minister for a few days as a placeholder.

## Developing the immigration bill

The tabling of French bills is traditionally accompanied by an *exposé des motifs* (“statement of intent”) in which the contents and goals of a bill are elaborated. In the statement on the immigration bill Darmanin, Éric Dupond-Moretti, minister of justice, and Olivier Dussopt, labour minister, echo the centrist framing that characterizes Macron’s presidency. After describing France as proud to be a country of immigration and mentioning the increase in migration inflow, the statement outlines the goals of the bill as improving border control and countering illegal immigration, granting legitimate asylum claims and ensuring effective integration.<sup>102</sup>

Overall, immigration was not framed in restrictive terms. Describing the political project, Darmanin stated: “*We believe that immigration has always been a part of France and the French. Immigration is a fact which also makes France what it is [...]. It makes no sense to be against it.*”<sup>103</sup> This logic extended to asylum migration, where Darmanin argued: “*What sense does it make being against it, when since 1 January 2022, asylum requests have jumped 68% in Europe, whether the governments were far-right or left-wing?*”<sup>104</sup>

Additionally, during the first committee session of the *commission des lois* (committee of laws) of the *assemblée*, Darmanin stressed how the amendments adopted in the Senate had come from all sides of the political spectrum.<sup>105</sup> Clearly, in framing migration Darmanin emphasizes an effectively centrist or even somewhat pro-immigration approach.

After having been rejected in the *assemblée* the bill was eventually passed in modified form by a mixed committee of members of both houses of parliament. This involved accepting a number of restrictive amendments by LR, allowing Darmanin to reach a majority.<sup>106</sup> However, this section will argue the initial bill already contained many elements pointing at a more restrictive asylum policy. This can be observed already when considering the five titles within the bill:

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Translation</b>
I	Assurer une meilleure intégration des étrangers par le travail et la langue	Ensure a better integration of foreigners through work and language
II	Améliorer le dispositif d'éloignement des étrangers représentant une menace grave pour l'ordre public	Improve the system for the removal of foreigners who present a serious threat to public order
III	Sanctionner l'exploitation des migrants et contrôler les frontières	Punish the exploitation of migrants and control the borders
IV	Engager une réforme structurelle du système de l'asile	Initiate a structural reform of the asylum system

<sup>102</sup> ‘Exposé des motifs’, *Immigration et intégration*, Sénat: Texte nr. 304 (2022-2023), (1 February 2023) <https://www.senat.fr/leg/exposes-des-motifs/pjl22-304-expose.html> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>103</sup> Assemblée Nationale, ‘Compte rendu intégral: 2e séance du mardi 06 décembre 2022’, Session ordinaire de 2022-2023: 85e séance, *Journal officiel de la République Française* 96, nr. 2 (7 December 2022): 6581.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 6581.

<sup>105</sup> Sénat, ‘Compte rendu analytique officiel: séance du mardi 14 novembre 2023’ (14 November 2023): 7.

<sup>106</sup> Margaux Duguet and Fabien Jannic-Cherbonnel, ‘Projet de loi immigration : ce que contient le texte négocié entre le camp présidentiel et LR, largement durci par rapport à la version initiale’, *Francetvinfo.fr* (19 December 2023) [https://www.francetvinfo.fr/societe/immigration/projet-de-loi-immigration-ce-que-contient-le-texte-negocie-entre-la-majorite-presidentielle-et-la-droite-largement-durci-par-rapport-a-la-version-initiale\\_6251754.html](https://www.francetvinfo.fr/societe/immigration/projet-de-loi-immigration-ce-que-contient-le-texte-negocie-entre-la-majorite-presidentielle-et-la-droite-largement-durci-par-rapport-a-la-version-initiale_6251754.html) last accessed on 14-06-2024.

V	Simplifier les règles du contentieux relatif à l'entrée, au séjour et à l'éloignement des étrangers	Simplify the rules concerning litigation related to the entry, residence and the removal of foreigners
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Although titles I and IV seem mostly apolitical at face value, II, III and V show a clear emphasis on the ability of the government to deport certain migrants and protect French borders. This suggests a discursive gap between the seemingly restrictive approach of the bill and Darmanin's earlier framing of the intentions of the bill

To an extent this discursive gap extends to the reform of the asylum system. In the statement of intent Darmanin presents the bill as initiating a major overhaul of immigration policy, including the asylum system.<sup>107</sup> In his initial statement during the *assemblée nationale's* first committee session, Darmanin detailed how the reform did not aim to change the rules governing asylum. Instead, he argued the reform aimed to improve the speed with which asylum requests are handled.<sup>108</sup> In a later plenary session in December 2023 Darmanin repeated how the reform does not mean to reduce the amount of asylum requests, as these were already much lower relative to countries such as Germany, Spain and Austria.<sup>109</sup>

To some extent this framing of the reform as not pursuing deterrence was reflected in the bill's proposal to accelerate access to the labour market for asylum seekers with a high chance of receiving a positive decision. With this measure, asylum migrants from countries with high recognition rates can apply for a work permit while submitting their asylum procedure.<sup>110</sup> As such, the bill blurs the lines between asylum and labour migration. Tying this back to the framing of asylum policy as well as the more conservative measures regarding border control and expulsions, Darmanin's bill seems to have attempted to strike a balance between the various tensions on immigration within the centre-right. It appears as a compromise between economic liberalism, securitization and humanitarian concerns.

### **Asylum reform: logistification as efficiency**

However, the aforementioned liberalization was combined with measures which do in fact exhibit deterrence. Firstly, the law introduced an obligation for all migrants to respect the principles of the Republic, which are defined among others as freedom of expression, gender equality and the symbols of the Republic. Consequently, residence permits can be withdrawn when these principles are not respected, for which the migrant's behaviour does not need to threaten public order. Darmanin mentions the example of rejecting equality between the sexes, freedom of conscience or disrespecting the French flag.<sup>111</sup> However, aside from such more explicitly restrictive proposals, there are more subtle ways the bill exhibits deterrence.

<sup>107</sup> 'Exposé des motifs'.

<sup>108</sup> Assemblée Nationale, 'Tome II: Comptes rendus de la commission des lois', *Rapport fait au nom de la commission des lois constitutionnelles, de la législation et de l'administration Générale de la République, Sur le projet de loi, adopté par le sénat après engagement de la Procédure accélérée, pour contrôler l'immigration, améliorer l'intégration*, Nr 1943, (2 December 2023): 11.

<sup>109</sup> Assemblée Nationale, 'Compte rendu intégral: 2e séance du mardi 06 décembre 2022', Session ordinaire de 2022-2023: 85e séance, *Journal officiel de la République Française* 96, nr. 2 (7 December 2022): 6582-6583.

<sup>110</sup> 'Exposé des motifs', Titre I, Chapitre I, l'article 4.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., Titre II, Chapitre II, l'article 13

Giorgio Grappi has argued how earlier reforms of the French asylum system have integrated calls for efficiency with a practice of deterrence. Giving asylum seekers the sometimes vague duty of cooperation with administrative authorities and acting against spontaneous camps as a form of “dispersal strategies” constitute forms of deterrence that have become central to French asylum policy.<sup>112</sup> Grappi argues French policy has historically constituted a move towards logistification, which takes the form of a clear division between migrants based on economic utility.<sup>113</sup> Such a process of logistification can be clearly observed in Darmanin’s immigration bill.

Firstly, it is important to note that the recognition rate for asylum requests in France is low. The first instance recognition rate was 29% in 2022 and 33% in 2023.<sup>114</sup> Consequently, the emphasis Darmanin placed on combating irregular migration and strengthening expulsions has to be seen in a context in which a majority of asylum requests is rejected. Thirty days after a definitive rejection migrants receive an *Obligation de Quitter le Territoire Français* (“obligation to leave French territory”), at which point asylum seekers are thus considered irregular migrants.<sup>115</sup> The emphasis the bill placed on economic and cultural integration on the one hand and tougher measures on irregular migration on the other hand, cannot be separated from the discussion on asylum. Combined with low overall recognition rates and the stated desire by Darmanin to reduce the length of procedures, this means asylum migrants are quickly pushed into either the category of economic migrant or – in the majority of cases – irregular migrant. Additionally, article 9 aimed to abolish protections on deportations of migrants who present a threat to public order, which naturally also applies to asylum migrants.<sup>116</sup> As such, the liberalization of access to work for some asylum seekers should be seen in relation to the increasing restrictiveness the bill proposes towards rejected asylum seekers. As described by Grappi, this is a key component of the logistification of French asylum policy.

Regarding asylum reception specifically, the bill initiated an overhaul of the reception system which exemplifies logistification. The French asylum chain is overseen by the *Office Français de l’immigration et de l’intégration* (French Office for Immigration and Integration, OFFI) and involves a transfer of asylum seekers between various organizations, shown in Figure 1 below. The bill allows for the creation of territorial centres, dubbed *France Asile*, spread across the country in which the various steps in the asylum system are centralized in order to improve efficiency.<sup>117</sup> These centres would be tested in three pilots, after which they could be expanded.<sup>118</sup> Additionally, the bill creates regional chambers of the *Cour Nationale du Droit d’Asile* (“national court for asylum law”; CNDA), which Darmanin argued is meant to lessen the burden on the CNDA in Ile-de-

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<sup>112</sup> Giorgio Grappi, “France and Migration Between Logistification and Ethical Minimalism”, in *The EU Migration System of Governance: Justice on the Move*, edited by Michela Ceccorulli, Enrico Fassi, and Sonia Lucarelli, (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021): 155.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>114</sup> ‘Les premières données de l’asile 2022 à l’Ofpra sont disponibles [Chiffres provisoires]’, *OFPRA.gouv.fr* (17 January 2023) <https://www.ofpra.gouv.fr/actualites/les-premieres-donnees-de-lasile-2022-a-lofpra-sont-disponibles-chiffres-provisoires> last accessed on 14-06-2024, and ‘Premières données de l’asile 2023 [Chiffres provisoires]’, *OFPRA.gouv.fr* (23 January 2024) <https://www.ofpra.gouv.fr/actualites/premieres-donnees-de-lasile-2023-chiffres-provisoires> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>115</sup> ‘Obligation de quitter le territoire français (OQTF)’, *service-public.fr* (updated 20 March 2024) <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F18362?lang=en> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>116</sup> ‘Exposé des motifs, Titre II, Chapitre I, l’article 9.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, Titre IV, l’article 19.

<sup>118</sup> Synthèse: Loi du 26 janvier 2024 « Pour contrôler l’immigration et améliorer l’intégration », *France Terre d’asile* (31 January 2024), 1.

France.<sup>119</sup> The centralization of asylum reception around Paris has presented a core issue in French asylum policy for decades.<sup>120</sup> The concerns of these reforms with efficiency and the geographic distribution of asylum seekers are thus a clear example of logistification.

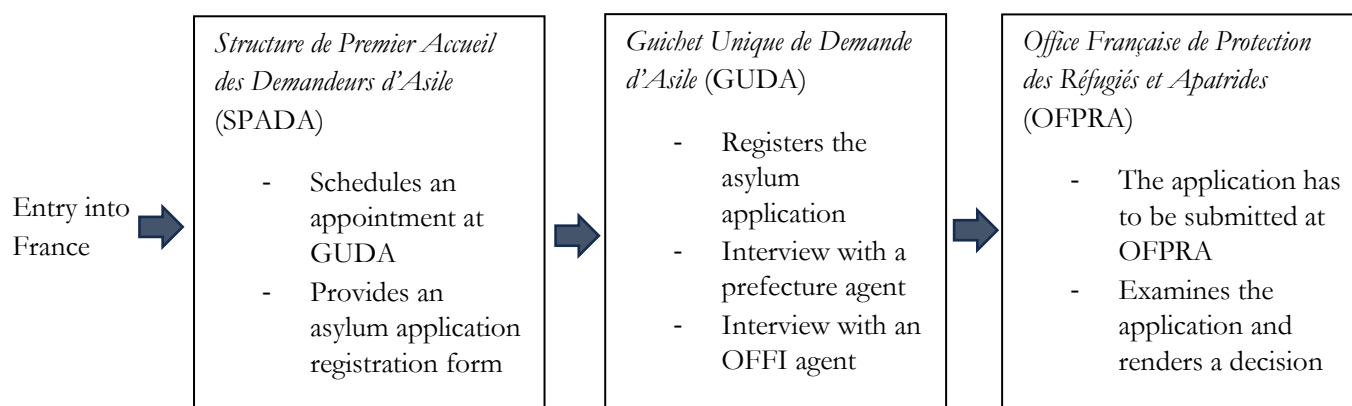


Figure 1: the French reception system before 2024  
Source: OFPRA (<https://www.ofpra.gouv.fr/en/applying-asylum>)

However, contrary to the Netherlands, the logistification of the French asylum system exhibits elements of deterrence. An example is Darmanin’s proposal that rulings by a single judge would become the norm for the CNDA, rather than cases being brought before a panel.<sup>121</sup> Previously this had been an exception for cases where a decision could be made quickly. Importantly, Darmanin himself mentioned in committee that the recognition rate at OFPRA is around 25%, while it increases to 40% after the case has come before the CNDA.<sup>122</sup> When criticized for the measure by various left-wing parliamentarians, Darmanin argued rulings by a single judge already made up 50% of cases and referring the case to a panel would still be possible.<sup>123</sup> However, an analysis by French refugee organization *Forum Réfugiés* argued that making single judges the norm would likely mean less qualified judges become more important in rendering decisions, and that it is less likely asylum seekers will be given the benefit of the doubt. Furthermore, the roughly 50% of cases brought before a panel more often resulted in a positive decision than cases before a single judge.<sup>124</sup> Consequently, Darmanin’s calls for simplification and efficiency in the asylum system have to be seen in a broader context in which such measures can constitute a form of deterrence.

## Conclusion

Although LR introduced more explicit measures aimed at deterrence, Darmanin’s immigration bill contained such elements from the beginning. The emphasis on making the reception system more simple, effective and regional fits within a longer trend of logistification that can be

<sup>119</sup> ‘Exposé des motifs’, Titre IV, l’article 20.

<sup>120</sup> Grappi, ‘France and Migration Between Logistification and Ethical Minimalism’, 154.

<sup>121</sup> ‘Exposé des motifs’, Titre IV, l’article 20

<sup>122</sup> Assemblée Nationale, ‘Tome II: Comptes rendus de la commission des lois’: 38. The figure of 25% seems to be based on numbers from 2021.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>124</sup> ‘La collégialité à la Cour nationale du droit d’asile, une garantie procédurale essentielle pour les demandeurs d’asile’, *forumrefugiés.org* (20 October 2022) <https://www.forumrefugiés.org/s-informer/publications/articles-d-actualites/en-france/1113-la-collegialite-a-la-cour-nationale-du-droit-d-asile-une-garantie-procedurale-essentielle-pour-les-demandeurs-d-asile> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

observed in French asylum policy. Furthermore, the end of Macron's parliamentary majority meant any immigration bill would be heavily edited by parliament. That is why Darmanin's position as an Ideologue minister is key; his initial framing of the law allowed the more progressive elements of *Ensemble* to embrace the law, while the actual measures pursued opened the door for a more conservative reorientation of asylum policy.

## Belgium: explicit deterrence

### Setting the scene

After a deadlock lasting over a year the Belgian De Croo government was sworn in on 1 October 2020. As a federal coalition of the liberal Open VLD and MR, green Groen and Ecolo, social democratic PS and sp.a as well as the Christian-democratic CD&V, the broad coalition coalescing around the political centre was dubbed the "Vivaldi" coalition.<sup>125</sup> Having come to life during the COVID-19 pandemic, the presence of crisis became a constant for the Vivaldi coalition. Over the years a shortage of reception places for asylum seekers had gradually developed into a crisis, causing the Belgian immigration service Fedasil to refuse places to hundreds of asylum seekers.<sup>126</sup> Consequently, asylum policy became a salient political issue. Important to note is that in the past few decades, immigration has consistently been a more salient political issue in Flanders than in Wallonia.<sup>127</sup> As a consequence of the crisis, similarly to the Netherlands, asylum policy in Belgium during this period was made solely within the context of the crisis.

This is the context in which Nicole de Moor became state secretary for Asylum and Migration, taking over from Sammy Mahdi in June 2022, who had been elected party leader of CD&V. In Alexiadou's typology De Moor seems closest to the Ideologue type. As discussed in the introductory chapter, an Ideologue in Alexiadou's typology is defined as a minister who is strongly policy-focused.<sup>128</sup> De Moor had never held political office before. However, she had years of experience in migration policy-making. She obtained a PhD in migration policy and worked at the Belgian asylum agency.<sup>129</sup> Over the years De Moor had worked as a migration policy expert for multiple CD&V ministers.<sup>130</sup> Lastly, before becoming minister, she had been the senior official in Mahdi's ministerial cabinet, which meant she played a key role in her predecessor's policies.<sup>131</sup>

Consequently, while being closely connected to the ministerial office, De Moor's professional and party background shows a primary occupation with policy-making. Accordingly, she fits within

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<sup>125</sup> Benoît Rihouc et al, "Belgium: Political Developments and Data in 2020", *European Journal of Political Research Political Data Yearbook* 60, no. 1 (26 June 2021): 34.

<sup>126</sup> Lonne van Erp and Nico Cardone, 'Brusselse rechtbank neemt staatssecretaris Mahdi onder vuur: "Doelbewust en systematisch geen opvang voor asielzoekers"', *vrt.be* (14 June 2022) <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2022/06/14/brusselse-rechtbank-systematisch-te-weinig-opvangplaatsen-voor/> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>127</sup> Van Goidsenhoven and Pilet, 'The Politicisation of Immigration in Belgium', 56.

<sup>128</sup> Alexiadou, *Ideologues, Partisans, and Loyalists*, 25.

<sup>129</sup> 'Nicole de Moor: Staatssecretaris Asiel & Migratie', *cdenv.be* [https://www.cdenv.be/nicole\\_de\\_moor](https://www.cdenv.be/nicole_de_moor) last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>130</sup> 'Wie is Nicole de Moor, de nieuwe staatssecretaris voor Asiel en Migratie? "We noemen haar wel eens de Warme Thatcher van Vlaanderen"', *nieuwsblad.be* (27 June 2022) [https://www.nieuwsblad.be/cnt/dmf20220627\\_96585912](https://www.nieuwsblad.be/cnt/dmf20220627_96585912) last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>131</sup> Valerie Vanhelden, 'CD&V verrast met nieuwe staatssecretaris voor Asiel en Migratie: wie is Nicole de Moor?', *vrt.be* (27 June 2022) <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2022/06/27/nieuwe-staatssecretaris-asiel-en-migratie/> last accessed on 14-06-2024.



Alexiadou's definition of an Ideologue minister. Contrary to Darmanin it is not evident that De Moor's views on policy clearly lean towards a more restrictive or liberal direction. The empirical analysis below, however, will show that she impacted Belgian asylum policy by pushing policies of deterrence.

### Responding to the crisis

Due to the overcrowding of Belgium's main reception centre in Brussels many asylum seekers had been refused access to the reception system. By 2022 this had caused hundreds of successful court cases against Fedasil, obliging the government to pay large fines for not respecting the right to request asylum.<sup>132</sup> Consequently, the situation was similar to that in the Netherlands. However, regarding the fines there is already a clear contrast between the two countries. Under Van der Burg the IND had paid millions in fines for delays in the rendering of decisions on asylum applications.<sup>133</sup> Despite the numerous convictions of the Belgian state and Fedasil, De Moor refused to pay the fines. This caused the court to mandate the confiscation of various objects in Fedasil as well as De Moor's cabinet office.<sup>134</sup> Addressing a parliamentary committee, De Moor argued she would do whatever it takes to prevent the payment of these fines, as "people do not pay taxes to pay for convictions of the State".<sup>135</sup> Additionally, in a plenary session of the house of representatives she argued paying the fines out to individual asylum seekers would make the reception crisis worse, as it would increase the inflow of asylum seekers.<sup>136</sup> This means that, contrary to Van der Burg, De Moor openly refused to pay these fines for political reasons.

From the beginning of her tenure De Moor problematized the inflow of asylum seekers. In a committee meeting in September 2022 she emphasized how the inflow of asylum seekers in Europe and in Belgium in particular had grown and that other countries could not "blame [Belgium] for not showing solidarity".<sup>137</sup> Additionally, she stated that the fact that more than 50% of all requests had a Eurodac-hit (meaning they had been registered in another EU member state) showed that a European reform was necessary to ensure a more equal distribution.<sup>138</sup> In some sense her framing was thus similar to that of Van der Burg, as both ensuring more reception places and limiting the inflow of asylum seekers were presented as the main issues. Early on, De Moor already emphasized the importance of every EU member state "taking its responsibility" and an improved functioning of the Dublin system, especially concerning registrations.<sup>139</sup> Additionally, in a policy note for 2023 the first two out of nine policy "lines" to be pursued

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<sup>132</sup> Tex Van berlaer, 'Niemand kan Nicole de Moor dwingen om dwangsommen te betalen: 'Je kunt de schatkist niet openbreken met een koevoet'', *knack.be* (8 June 2023) <https://www.knack.be/nieuws/belgie/nicole-de-moor-dwingen-dwangsommen-betalen/> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>133</sup> 'Dwangsommen en de IND', *IND.nl* <https://ind.nl/nl/over-ons/achtergrondartikelen/dwangsommen-en-de-ind#:~:text=Tijdelijk%20geen%20dwangsommen%20voor%20asiel&text=Eind%202022%20besluit%20de%20Raad,tijd%20een%20besluit%20te%20nemen> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>134</sup> Van berlaer, 'Niemand kan Nicole de Moor dwingen om dwangsommen te betalen'.

<sup>135</sup> Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 'Integraal verslag met vertaald beknopt verslag van de toespraken', *Commissie voor Binnenlandse Zaken, Veiligheid, Migratie en Bestuurszaken* CRIV 55 COM 852 (6 July 2022): 6.

<sup>136</sup> Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 'Integraal verslag', *Plenumvergadering*, CRIV 55 PLEN 229 (26 January 2023): 37. Due to her absence, De Moor's was represented by CD&V minister Peteghem.

<sup>137</sup> Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 'Integraal verslag met vertaald beknopt verslag van de toespraken', *Commissie voor Binnenlandse Zaken, Veiligheid, Migratie en Bestuurszaken* CRIV 55 COM 877 (21 September 2022): 3.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

focused on the EU and the proper functioning of international treaties.<sup>140</sup> Moreover, the minister argued that Belgium is a leading country in the European debate on asylum and migration, especially in reference to the Belgian presidency of the Council of the EU in early 2024.<sup>141</sup> This is similar to Van der Burg's emphasis on how a better functioning of the CEAS was a means to reduce the inflow of asylum seekers.

A major difference with Van der Burg, however, is that De Moor's policies emphasized deterrence at the national level. On the one hand she hired more personnel and attempted to find more reception places. However, she also created a specific centre for Dublin procedures with the explicit goal of discouraging asylum seekers travelling through other EU countries from starting an asylum procedure.<sup>142</sup> Additionally, she repeatedly emphasized the importance of prevention campaigns in countries of origin and transit to convince asylum seekers not to come to Belgium.<sup>143</sup>

### Tensions in the coalition

The deterrence approach became most clear in a deal reached by the cabinet in March 2023. Despite De Moor's earlier measures the crisis had persisted, causing mounting pressure on the coalition to agree on a crisis response. After long negotiations a deal was reached. The agreement contained many measures aimed at deterrence, including:<sup>144</sup>

- A negative asylum decision would lead to a refusal of access to asylum centres.
- Introduction of a duty for rejected asylum seekers to cooperate with their own return.
- A stricter and faster application of the Dublin Regulation.
- An additional criterium on family reunification to test whether parents are actually responsible for care for their children.
- No regularizations of irregular migrants.

Taken together these measures primarily aim at reducing the inflow of asylum seekers by restricting access to asylum centres and family reunification, as well as pursuing deterrence towards rejected asylum seekers.

During the parliamentary debate on the deal De Moor responded to criticism from the right-wing *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* ("New Flemish Alliance; N-VA) parliamentarian and former Minister for Asylum Theo Francken:

*"You ask me why those people [...] are still stuck in reception. It is because you did not change the law. U could limit reception to those in an asylum procedure, but you didn't do that. We do it. You could enforce that you have*

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<sup>140</sup> Nicole de Moor, 'Algemene beleidsnota Asiel en Migratie', DOC 55 2934/006 (28 October 2022): 4-7.

<sup>141</sup> Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 'Integraal verslag met vertaald beknopt verslag van de toespraken', *Commissie voor Binnenlandse Zaken, Veiligheid, Migratie en Bestuurszaken* CRIV 55 COM 887 (28 September 2022): 10.

<sup>142</sup> Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 'Integraal verslag met vertaald beknopt verslag van de toespraken', *Commissie voor Binnenlandse Zaken, Veiligheid, Migratie en Bestuurszaken* CRIV 55 COM 877 (21 September 2022): 4.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 4. / Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 'Integraal verslag met vertaald beknopt verslag van de toespraken', *Commissie voor Binnenlandse Zaken, Veiligheid, Migratie en Bestuurszaken* CRIV 55 COM 852 (6 July 2022): 8.

<sup>144</sup> 'Federale regering bereikt akkoord opvangcrisis: dit is er beslist', *demorgen.be* (9 March 2023) <https://www.demorgen.be/snelnieuws/federale-regering-bereikt-akkoord-opvangcrisis-dit-is-er-beslist~b9d2ebd0/> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

*to actually take care of your child to get the right to family reunification. You could do that, but did not do it. We do it. You could expand the pool for escorts for forced returns, but you didn't do it. We do it.*<sup>145</sup>

The core message seems to be that De Moor was actually delivering on the restrictive promises made by N-VA. This is notable, because many of these policies were not proposed by CD&V before. Chapter II discusses this in more detail and shows how the CD&V manifesto was significantly less restrictive than the policies supported by De Moor. The measures do, however, reflect the policy framing by De Moor, who framed reducing the inflow of asylum seekers as a core policy goal. This suggests that De Moor's influence on asylum policy was crucial in these policy outcomes. This was further evidenced in August 2023, when De Moor gave Fedasil an instruction to explicitly refuse the asylum requests of single male asylum seekers. The measure was deemed illegal by the Belgian *Raad van State*.<sup>146</sup> De Moor defended the instruction in parliament, calling it an “exceptionally difficult decision to take” and argued she had to make hard choices.<sup>147</sup> Deputy prime minister for the green party Petra de Sutter openly criticized the policy. She claimed the decision had been made without coordination with other cabinet members and accused De Moor of catering to the far right, arguing liberal prime minister De Croo let De Moor do “whatever she wants”.<sup>148</sup>

Additionally, in the parliamentary debate on the instruction, De Moor addressed calls for a mandatory distribution of asylum seekers across all Belgian municipalities – a similar policy as proposed in the Dutch *Spreadingswet*. Left-wing parties in both the coalition and opposition had frequently pushed for such a policy.<sup>149</sup> De Moor opposed such an obligation, arguing most municipalities already house asylum seekers and that it would not work due to housing shortages.<sup>150</sup> The greens had already proposed a mandatory redistribution plan in late 2022, which De Moor had described as a “distraction”.<sup>151</sup> However, the situation was in many ways similar to the Netherlands. An overcrowded asylum system caused in part by housing shortages led to the inability of the asylum service to handle asylum requests properly, causing the government to be ordered to pay millions of euros in fines. However, the policy response is entirely different. The crucial difference is the minister. As a policy-focused Ideologue, De Moor clearly pursued policies of deterrence and refused to explore policy alternatives such as a mandatory distribution

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<sup>145</sup> Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, ‘Integraal verslag’, *Plenumvergadering*, CRIV 55 PLEN 234 (9 March 2023): 9.

<sup>146</sup> Jan-Frederik Abbeeloos, ‘De Raad van State fluit de beslissing van staatssecretaris Nicole de Moor om alleenstaande mannen niet meer op te vangen terug. ‘Dat verandert niets aan de feiten.’, *standaard.be* (13 September 2023) [https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20230913\\_94652464](https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20230913_94652464) last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>147</sup> Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, ‘Integraal verslag met vertaald beknopt verslag van de toespraken’, *Commissie voor Binnenlandse Zaken, Veiligheid, Migratie en Bestuurszaken*, CRIV 55 COM 1169 (20 September 2023): 3.

<sup>148</sup> Jan-Frederik Abbeeloos, ‘De Croo laat haar doen en reageert slap.’ Hoe Petra De Sutter intern de frustraties van Groen over De Moor ventileert’, *standaard.be* (28 September 2023) [https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20230927\\_94250915](https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20230927_94250915) last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>149</sup> Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, ‘Integraal verslag met vertaald beknopt verslag van de toespraken’, *Commissie voor Binnenlandse Zaken, Veiligheid, Migratie en Bestuurszaken*, CRIV 55 COM 1169 (20 September 2023): 14.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>151</sup> Marjan Temmerman and Pieterjan Huyghebaert, ‘Groen eist een spreidingsplan voor asielzoekers, maar krijgt geen bijval van bevoegd staatssecretaris’, *vrt.be* (14 November 2022) <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2022/11/14/groen-spreidingsplan-de-moor/> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

of asylum seekers, despite both opposition from within the governing coalition and legal constraints on her policies.

### **Conclusion**

Belgium is the only of the three countries in which there is no obvious discursive gap. De Moor consistently framed the asylum crisis as related to inflow as much as the reception system, and besides creating more reception places, deterrence was central to her policy approach from the onset. The asylum deal reached by the De Croo government again showed how De Moor had managed to translate her policy preferences into cabinet policy despite protests by other coalition members. Due to De Moor's explicit emphasis on deterrence in both policy and framing, there was no clear trend of logistification, contrary to France and the Netherlands, where calls for efficiency and geographic redistribution of asylum seekers were central to the ministers' approach.

### **Chapter conclusion**

Naturally, the contexts in which ministers developed asylum policies was very different in the three countries analysed. Regardless, there are certain noticeable similarities and differences between the three cases. A major dividing line between the countries is the dominance of crisis in the Netherlands and Belgium on the one hand and France on the other. The analysis showed that the overall framing of asylum policy was similar between the Netherlands and Belgium, where both the functioning of the reception system as well as the inflow of asylum seekers was problematized. Contrarily, Darmanin did not problematize the inflow of asylum seekers, and focused on the reception system.

Due to the crisis, De Moor and Van der Burg operated in a very similar context. In both cases their parties represented the right-wing of a centrist coalition, they had just become minister for migration, faced very similar challenges regarding overcrowded reception centres, large scale secondary migration and saw their deterrence policies questioned by the courts. Consequently, both emphasized the importance of European solutions, which relates back to the issue of secondary migration and the (non-)functioning of the Dublin Regulation. However, national policy outcomes were drastically different. De Moor's position as an Ideologue can clearly be seen in the manner in which she managed to push through her own policy preferences regarding a more restrictive asylum policy, despite disagreements within the coalition. Contrarily, as a Loyalist, Van der Burg presented a form of technocratic governance. This is evidenced by the fact that he did not pursue policies of deterrence after the courts struck down the measures the coalition had agreed on, despite his own party's restrictive views. This is further compounded by his framing of the *Spreidingswet* as a technocratic necessity.

In France and the Netherlands logistification was almost explicitly embraced as a policy goal, as reforms aimed at the geographic redistribution of asylum reception across the country were presented in terms of efficiency. The analysis in this chapter suggests that a purposeful policy of logistification is linked to constraints on asylum policy. In the Netherlands this concerned legal constraints which prevented deterrence measures, causing Van der Burg to address the asylum crisis by focusing exclusively on the *Spreidingswet* at the domestic level. In France logistification resulted from political constraints, as openly proposing policies of deterrence was politically risky for Darmanin, considering his party's overall centrist leanings. The French case shows how

logistification can engender a more restrictive approach to asylum policy, but the Dutch case shows it does not necessarily have to.

The chapter showed that, as Ideologues in Alexiadou's conception of the term, Darmanin and De Moor both pursued policies of deterrence, but their national contexts meant this was pursued more explicitly in Belgium and more implicitly in France. In Belgium, neither legal nor political constraints played a significant role. On numerous occasions – regarding the fines imposed on Fedasil and the court ruling the refusal of male asylum seekers being illegal – De Moor was willing to challenge legal constraints with her policies. Additionally, her role as a policy-driven minister meant she openly argued for and pursued policies of deterrence, despite political opposition within her own coalition. Hence there is no clear discursive gap between De Moor's framing of asylum policy and her actual policies. Contrarily, Van der Burg and Darmanin show different versions of the discursive gap; problematizing the inflow of asylum seekers without actively pursuing deterrence (Van der Burg) and not problematizing the inflow of asylum seekers, but still pursuing deterrence (Darmanin).

What this chapter has thus argued, is that the differences in outcome between the three countries regarding the degree to which deterrence and logistification are pursued, as well as the presence of a discursive gap between policy and framing, are closely linked to the role of the individual minister.

## Chapter II: Parties in Parliament

This chapter examines how the parliamentary representations of the VVD, Renaissance and CD&V in the lower house of parliament positioned themselves towards their own minister on asylum policy. Most fundamentally, the chapter analyses the extent to which these parties attempt to “push” the policies of the minister in a particular direction.

Naturally, the three countries studied have different parliamentary rules and cultures. Due to the presidential system France has relatively weak parliamentary oversight of the executive. Conversely, The Netherlands and – to some extent – Belgium have a more robust system of oversight.<sup>152</sup> This has implications for available sources. In the Netherlands and Belgium MPs can propose motions, subject to a vote, through which parliament can call on the government to take action on particular issues or make statements. This tool is commonly used. France has “resolutions” which have the same function, but they are relatively uncommon. Concurrent with the executive-heavy French system, the government can consider a resolution inadmissible.<sup>153</sup> Additionally, MPs in some countries may file more questions and motions than in others. The analysis in this chapter focuses at first instance on written parliamentary questions. As argued by Otjes and Louwerse, written questions mostly have a communicative function, as they have little to no impact on policy.<sup>154</sup> As asking questions is entirely up to the discretion of MPs, asking questions of one’s own ministers must serve some communicative purpose. As such, analysing these questions provides insight into how parties position themselves towards their own ministers. Where relevant, the analysis of the questions is compounded by other parliamentary tools including oral questions during committee or plenary sessions. In the case of the Netherlands and France asylum policy in 2022-2023 was intertwined with legislative processes, concerning the *Spreidingswet* and immigration bill respectively. As such, some amendments proposed by the parties are considered. Additionally, the sections on The Netherlands and Belgium will include parliamentary motions in the analysis, as Renaissance did not propose resolutions regarding asylum policy in the period discussed.

The chapter is divided into three country sections. Each section first analyses the parliamentary behaviour of the party, to then explain this behaviour. In the different countries different issues in the area of asylum policy are salient. As such, the coding of written parliamentary questions (and motions, in the case of The Netherlands) relies on an inductive approach and mostly serves to structure the more in-depth analysis presented in each section. A full list of coded motions and written questions can be found in the appendix.

### The Netherlands: an ideological gap

As discussed in the previous chapter, Minister Van der Burg’s initial approach to dealing with the asylum crisis was the result of a compromise between the deterrence-focused views of the VVD

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<sup>152</sup> Hanna Bäck et al., ‘Ministerial Autonomy, Parliamentary Scrutiny and Government Reform Output in Parliamentary Democracies’, *Comparative Political Studies* 55, no. 2 (1 February 2022): 274.

<sup>153</sup> Gohar Karapetian, ‘Van croissants, pains au chocolat en parlementaire resoluties ex artikel 34-1 Franse Grondwet’, *RegelMaat* 37, no. 4 (December 2021): 373.

<sup>154</sup> Simon Otjes and Tom Louwerse, ‘Parliamentary Questions as Strategic Party Tools’, *West European Politics* 41, no. 2 (4 March 2018): 497.

and CDA and those of D66 and ChristenUnie, which emphasized the reception system. When courts struck down the policies of deterrence, Van der Burg’s position as a Loyalist-type meant he did not actively push for additional measures of deterrence, only framing the goal of reducing the inflow of asylum seekers in European terms. As this analysis will show, this caused a fundamental rift between enacted policies and the position of the VVD parliamentary group, causing it to act almost in opposition towards its own minister.

**Analysis of parliamentary tools**

Ruben Brekelmans was the VVD’s spokesperson for asylum policy.<sup>155</sup> In 2022-2023 Brekelmans filed seven written questions. Each “question” in fact contained a number of questions about a specific issue, as is common in Dutch parliamentary culture. The questions can be placed into three categories, shown in table 1.

*Table 1: coding of written questions by the VVD group*

Topic	Number of questions
EU/international/foreign policy	1
Deterrence at the national level	2 (same question twice)
Reception system	4

The framing of the questions clearly shows the VVD taking a restrictive position on asylum-related issues. The question coded as “EU/international/foreign policy” regarded an increase in migration to the EU through Serbia as a result of Serbia’s visa policies. In this set of questions Brekelmans asked, among others, whether the minister shared his concerns that due to the asylum crisis, The Netherlands cannot handle an increased inflow of migrants, and that decreasing the amount of migrants coming through the “western Balkan route” should be a priority. Additionally, he asked what The Netherlands could do to strengthen border protection on the Balkan route and to put pressure on Serbia to harmonize its visa policies with the EU.<sup>156</sup>

The two sets of questions labelled “deterrence at the national level” both concerned an internal instruction issued by the IND. Asylum seekers from countries with a high recognition rate (Syria, Yemen and Türkiye) were given the possibility to have their asylum request handled on paper rather than through an in-person interview. This was meant to allow the IND to render decisions more quickly.<sup>157</sup> In the first set of questions on 19 April 2023, Brekelmans (and René Peters, MP for the CDA) suggested this decision may lead to a higher recognition rate, as the lack of an in-person interview would mean there is not opportunity for follow-up questions. Additionally, they asked whether Van der Burg shares the concern that this makes the Netherlands a more attractive destination for asylum seekers from Syria, Yemen and Türkiye. They then ask whether Van der Burg would reconsider the IND’s decision.<sup>158</sup> In follow-up questions in September 2023, Brekelmans asked what percentage of written requests is rejected, how the amount of requests as

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<sup>155</sup> ‘Ruben Brekelmans’, *vvd.nl* <https://www.vvd.nl/profielen/ruben-brekelmans/> last accessed on 14-06-2024.  
<sup>156</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, ‘Vragen gesteld door de leden der Kamer’, 2022Z20811 (2 November 2022).  
<sup>157</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, ‘Vragen gesteld door de leden der Kamer’, 2023Z07133 (19 April 2023):1.  
<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

well as the recognition rate has developed since the start of the written procedures and again asks whether the minister agrees the written procedure should be abolished.<sup>159</sup>

Regarding the reception system, two of the sets of questions also employed clearly conservative framing. The first concerned a news report which discussed how some asylum seekers with an asylum status had refused accommodation in “flexible” housing they had been offered.

Brekelmans asked how this can be prevented and whether the Minister is “*willing to give refusing [asylum] status holders an ultimatum: either accept the flexible residence offered, or find housing themselves*”.<sup>160</sup>

Additionally, following disturbances and crimes committed by asylum seekers around the reception centre in the village of Gilze, Brekelmans asked what punitive measures were taken and how illegal migrants in the reception centre can be made to return to their country of origin.<sup>161</sup>

Both of these sets of questions clearly show an emphasis on strict measures towards undesirable behaviour by asylum seekers, showing the VVD positioning itself as a conservative law-and-order party.

The only questions by the VVD which did not frame asylum policy in restrictive terms were two sets of questions asked in March and April 2022 regarding the reception of refugees from Ukraine. Both sets of questions were asked together with a broad coalition of parties, including the other parties in the governing coalition. They asked the minister about issues regarding education, healthcare and economic integration faced by Ukrainian refugees and called on the minister and other ministers to improve Ukrainians’ access to education, healthcare and economic participation.<sup>162</sup>

### **The relationship with the minister**

The restrictive positions of the VVD is, to some extent, at odds with the policies by Van der Burg analysed in the first chapter. An analysis of the motions filed by the VVD shows this as well, leading the VVD to clearly attempt to push their own minister’s policies into a more deterrence-focused direction.

Tables 2 and 3 below present an overview of the motions filed by Brekelmans.

*Table 2: amount of motions filed by Ruben Brekelmans (VVD)*

<b>Total number of motions filed</b>	28
Motions filed exclusively by Brekelmans	8
Motions filed with CDA	16
Motions filed with coalition parties (+ others)	3
Motions filed with right-wing opposition parties	1

<sup>159</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, ‘Vragen gesteld door de leden der Kamer’, 2023Z14530 (1 September 2023).

<sup>160</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, ‘Vragen gesteld door de leden der Kamer’, 2023Z05834 (3 April 2023).

<sup>161</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, ‘Vragen gesteld door de leden der Kamer’, 2023Z07016 (18 April 2023): 2.

<sup>162</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, ‘Vragen gesteld door de leden der Kamer’, 2022Z10724 (31 May 2022) / Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, ‘Vragen gesteld door de leden der Kamer’, 2022Z07331 (13 April 2022).



Table 3: coding of motions filed by Ruben Brekelmans (VVD)

Topic	Number of motions
EU/international/foreign policy	11
Deterrence at the national level	11
Reception system	6

Notably, 11 of the 28 motions called on the minister to introduce measures which amount to deterrence. A full list of the motions can be found in the appendix, but these measures included, among others:

- Distinguishing between safe and unsafe regions within a country when considering asylum requests and returns
- Considering whether Algeria can be declared a safe country
- Abolishing the aforementioned decision to hear particular asylum requests on paper
- Reading phone data to verify asylum seekers' narratives during an interview

Interestingly, nearly all the motions calling for deterrence at the national level were filed together with the CDA. As mentioned, in the previous chapter, this reflects the tensions within the coalition between the more restrictive positions of the VVD and CDA and the more progressive views of D66 and ChristenUnie. The only motions which did not frame asylum policy in restrictive terms concern three motions regarding Ukrainian refugees. However, even there a motion in April 2022 argued that efforts to return rejected asylum seekers to countries of origin should be stepped up in order to ensure accommodation for Ukrainian refugees.<sup>163</sup>

11 motions concerned European affairs or foreign policy-related issues. Again, the emphasis on deterrence can be clearly observed. Four motions pushed for more deals with non-EU countries to reduce the inflow of asylum seekers, including calling on Van der Burg to contact his British counterpart to learn from the deal the United Kingdom struck to outsource asylum reception to Rwanda.<sup>164</sup> Van der Burg was hesitant about this latter plan, arguing that respecting international law is essential.<sup>165</sup> Other notable motions include a call for EU financing of the external European borders (7 December 2022), to change the European Directive granting protection to Ukrainian refugees to exclude third country nationals who fled Ukraine (7 July 2022) and pressuring the European Commission to monitor and make sure member states comply with the Dublin Regulation (14 November 2022 and 7 December 2022). Importantly, two motions were filed which seem to suggest The Netherlands should deviate from the European acquis. In November 2022 Brekelmans filed a motion calling on the minister to contact “like-minded” EU countries to see whether internal border controls can be instated.<sup>166</sup> Secondly, in April 2023

<sup>163</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, ‘Motie van het lid Brekelmans’, *Vreemdelingenbeleid*, 19637, nr. 2851 (5 April 2022).

<sup>164</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, ‘Motie van het lid Brekelmans’, *Vreemdelingenbeleid*, 19637, nr. 2866 (21 April 2022).

<sup>165</sup> Francesco Mascini and Monika Sie Dhian Ho, ‘Dealen met Rwanda: Dilemma’s bij bescherming van vluchtelingen in derde landen’, *Clingendael Institute* (31 October 2023) [https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/CA\\_Dealen\\_met\\_Rwanda.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/CA_Dealen_met_Rwanda.pdf)

<sup>166</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, ‘Motie van het lid Brekelmans’, *Vreemdelingenbeleid*, 36200 VI, nr. 23 (14 November 2022).

Brekelmans asked Van der Burg to ask other EU countries what legal basis they considered when taking emergency measures to control asylum migration.<sup>167</sup>

The questions and motions filed by the VVD group show a distinctly restrictive ideological profile. This deviated in notable ways from the position taken by Van der Burg, whose approach focused on the reception system. Contrarily, the parliamentary group frequently pushed their own minister to pursue more deterrence-based policies at the national level. There was some alignment between their positions on the European dimension, but here too the parliamentary group pushed for a more restrictive line. This is evidenced by their calls for more third-country deals and to explore the limits of the legal constraints imposed by the EU on issues such as border protection. On the one hand this confirms the trend observed by Simon Otjes that the VVD has become more pro-EU in recent years, precisely because it sees the EU as a tool to restrict immigration.<sup>168</sup> However, the discussion above shows that this is clearly based on instrumental reasoning, as the VVD group also pushed their own minister to explore the limits of what is legally possible to restrict asylum migration. Most importantly, the analysis shows how the tensions between the VVD in office and in parliament is directly related to the policies (not) pursued by the individual minister.

This divide is made even more evident by the *Spreidingswet*. As discussed, this was the core policy for Van der Burg to deal with the asylum crisis. Brekelmans proposed three amendments when the bill was discussed in parliament. The first asked the minister to set a maximum of reception places each municipality is obliged to offer, so that fluctuations in the inflow of asylum seekers would not overwhelm them.<sup>169</sup> The other two amendments both tried to make the law a temporary measure, only taking effect for one or two years.<sup>170</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, the *Spreidingswet* was a structural reform of reception policy, meaning these amendments were clearly at odds with the intentions behind the bill. All three amendments were rejected by a parliamentary majority, including all of the other parties in the coalition. Eventually, on 3 October 2023 the bill passed, despite the VVD group itself voting against it alongside the entire right-wing opposition.<sup>171</sup> Not only did the parliamentary group attempt to push their minister towards more deterrence-based policies, but they also rejected his core policy.

The Dutch governing coalition collapsed in July 2023. A full discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis, yet a few relevant points should be addressed. The coalition collapsed as the parties

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<sup>167</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Motie van het lid Brekelmans', *Vreemdelingenbeleid*, 19637, nr. 3082 (6 April 2023).

<sup>168</sup> Otjes, 'From eurorealism to europhilia?', 62.

<sup>169</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Amendement van het lid Brekelmans', Regels inzake een wettelijke taak van gemeenten om opvangvoorzieningen voor asielzoekers mogelijk te maken (Wet gemeentelijke taak mogelijk maken asielopvangvoorzieningen), 3633, nr. 333 (26 September 2023).

<sup>170</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Amendement van het lid Brekelmans', Regels inzake een wettelijke taak van gemeenten om opvangvoorzieningen voor asielzoekers mogelijk te maken (Wet gemeentelijke taak mogelijk maken asielopvangvoorzieningen), 3633, nr. 23 (26 September 2023) / Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Amendement van het lid Brekelmans', Regels inzake een wettelijke taak van gemeenten om opvangvoorzieningen voor asielzoekers mogelijk te maken (Wet gemeentelijke taak mogelijk maken asielopvangvoorzieningen), 3633, nr. 24 (26 September 2023).

<sup>171</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Stemming Wet gemeentelijke taak mogelijk maken asielopvangvoorzieningen' (10 October 2023). Accessed through:

[https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/wetsvoorstellen/detail?qry=wetsvoorstel%3A36333&cfg=wetsvoorstel\\_details](https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/wetsvoorstellen/detail?qry=wetsvoorstel%3A36333&cfg=wetsvoorstel_details)

could not come to an agreement on asylum policy.<sup>172</sup> The division between the restrictive positions of VVD and CDA and the more progressive views of D66 and CU resurfaced in 2023, as the VVD's call to restrict family reunification proved particularly divisive.<sup>173</sup> The negotiations on asylum policy came largely in response to internal tensions within the VVD. Criticism of the *Spreadingswet* came from many local VVD councillors, who believed the VVD had not achieved its side of the bargain; restrictions on the inflow of asylum seekers.<sup>174</sup> Much commentary has described the collapse of the coalition as a strategic power play by the VVD. Existing tensions within the coalition, coupled with the massive victory of the agrarian-populist *BoerBurgerBeweging* (Farmer-Citizen Movement; BBB) in the 2023 provincial elections had made the coalition untenable.<sup>175</sup> The CDA in particular had become an unstable partner because of electoral competition from the BBB, and allowing the coalition to collapse on the issue of asylum policy might have given the VVD a stronger position towards their right-wing competitors.<sup>176</sup> Yet, regardless of strategic considerations this chapter shows there were tensions between the VVD's minister and parliamentary group, resulting from a divide between the VVD's ideological profile and the role of Van der Burg as a Loyalist rather than Partisan or Ideological minister.

## France: an unsteady compromise

In France, the development of the immigration bill reflected Darmanin's conservative ideological profile. As discussed, there was a clear discursive gap between Darmanin's policies and rhetoric. Additionally, the bill unearthed tensions within Renaissance and Macron's parliamentary coalition *Ensemble*. A significant minority of *Ensemble* MPs eventually voted against or abstained from voting on the bill, including 37 members of Renaissance (20 voted against, 17 abstained, 131 voted in favour). By contrast, the entire parliamentary representations of LR and the RN supported the bill.<sup>177</sup> As the analysis below will show, Renaissance's parliamentary group's approach to asylum migration showed a clear combination of liberal, rights-based as well as restrictive positions. As such, the discursive gap present in Darmanin's approach as well as the minority of Renaissance rebelling against Darmanin can be explained by the minister not maintaining this careful balance between liberal and restrictive policies.

### Analysis of parliamentary tools

Parliamentary questions regarding asylum migration and policy were asked by a number of

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<sup>172</sup> 'Rutte: verschillen waren onoverbrugbaar, stekker er niet uit getrokken door één partij', *NOS.nl* (7 July 2023) <https://nos.nl/artikel/2481964-rutte-verschillen-waren-onoverbrugbaar-stekker-er-niet-uit-getrokken-door-een-partij> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> 'Rutte 'onverkort' achter belofte over beperkte instroom', *bmr.nl* (3 June 2023) <https://www.bmr.nl/nieuws/politiek/10514588/migratie-en-asiel-olifanten-in-kamer-op-vvd-congres> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>175</sup> 'Dit krachteloze kabinet was eigenlijk al eerder klinisch gevallen', *NRC.nl* (9 July 2023) <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2023/07/09/dit-krachteloze-kabinet-was-eigenlijk-al-eerder-klinisch-gevallen-a4169319> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>176</sup> Frank Hendrickx, 'Rutte IV valt na ongekend machtsspel van de VVD', *volkskrant.nl* <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/rutte-iv-valt-na-ongekend-machtsspel-van-de-vvd~b61f540c/> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

<sup>177</sup> 'Analyse du scrutin n°3213', *assemble-nationale.fr* <https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/16/scrutins/3213#groupeDEM> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

Renaissance MPs. Tables 4 and 5 below show the amount of questions by each MP, as well as the coding of the topics of the questions.

*Table 4: amount of written questions by the Renaissance group*

<b>Total number of questions</b>	<b>17</b>
Number of questions asked by Lefèvre	10
Number of questions asked by Dupont	4
Number of questions asked by others	3

*Table 5: coding of written questions by the Renaissance group*

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Number of motions</b>
International/Sea rescues	3
Reception system	7
Deterrence/public order	4
Economic integration	3

The topics of the questions stand out compared to those asked by the VVD. Notably, Renaissance paid more attention to what I have labelled “International/Sea rescues”, which concerned the situation in the Mediterranean as well as the Channel, where asylum seekers have attempted to cross the sea by boat for years. Another topic unique to the French case is economic integration, which concerned three questions on the access of asylum seekers to work.

The questions asked show the ideological mixture that is typical of Renaissance’s centrist position. The questions labelled “deterrence/public order” all framed asylum policy in restrictive and securitized terms. In one of these questions MP Mathieu Lefèvre specifically asked whether the amount of requests for reconsideration of a rejected asylum request can be limited under European law.<sup>178</sup> The other questions were phrased more informatively, but the choice of issues to address shows an emphasis on security and law and order. Lefèvre asked the minister for data on the amount of crimes committed by asylum seekers registered by OFPRA, the amount of fraudulent asylum claims lodged under false names and the amount of decisions rendered to expel asylum seekers who constitute a threat to public order.<sup>179</sup>

However, some questions framed asylum policy in more humanitarian or liberal terms. Lefèvre asked the minister to create a legal basis for the granting of welfare payments to unaccompanied minors in the asylum system.<sup>180</sup> Additionally, MP Stella Dupont asked three questions about access to work, two of which explicitly called on Darmanin to expand the opportunities to work for those with an asylum status.<sup>181</sup>

<sup>178</sup> Assemblée Nationale, ‘Question écrite N°9987 de M. Mathieu Lefèvre’, nr. 9987 (11/07/2023).

<sup>179</sup> Assemblée Nationale, ‘Question écrite N°9989 de M. Mathieu Lefèvre’, nr. 9989 (11/07/2023) / Assemblée Nationale, ‘Question écrite N°9988 de M. Mathieu Lefèvre’, nr. 9988 (11/07/2023) / Assemblée Nationale, ‘Question écrite N°9986 de M. Mathieu Lefèvre’, nr. 9986 (11/07/2023).

<sup>180</sup> Assemblée Nationale, ‘Question écrite N°13155 de M. Mathieu Lefèvre’, nr. 13155 (21/11/2023).

<sup>181</sup> Assemblée Nationale, ‘Question écrite N°11641 de Mme Stella Dupont’, nr. 11641 (26/09/2023) / Assemblée Nationale, ‘Question écrite N°11642 de Mme Stella Dupont’, nr. 11642 (26/09/2023) / Assemblée Nationale, ‘Question écrite N°7803 de Mme Stella Dupont’, nr. 7803 (09/05/2023)

The same mix of restrictive and more liberal, rights-based framing can be seen in questions asked about the reception system. Lefèvre asked Darmanin under which conditions the OFII will or must refuse accommodation of asylum seekers, for example if they do not show up for an interview or leave their “region of orientation” – meaning the region in which they are registered.<sup>182</sup> Additionally, Lefèvre asked Darmanin whether the government would refuse accommodation for asylum seekers whose requests were denied.<sup>183</sup> However, besides this more restrictive framing, Lefèvre also asked Darmanin whether he would take measures to ensure the protection of interpreters working in the asylum system.<sup>184</sup>

Additionally, the questions regarding sea rescues and Channel crossings were mostly presented in an informative way. Dupont asked Darmanin about the government’s approach to the “political, budgetary and humanitarian” challenges concerning the rescue of migrants in the Mediterranean.<sup>185</sup> The other two questions concerned the crossings of asylum seekers across the Channel to the UK. Both questions asked the minister to explain what measures he was taking to deal with this situation.<sup>186</sup> These latter two questions were both asked by MPs from the Pas-de-Calais region, from where the boats usually depart. As such, part of the explanation for the broader range of topics can be found in the fact that French MPs are elected for specific districts.

However, the analysis shows that, overall, the Renaissance group took ideologically varied positions. The questions, topics and framing were more diverse compared to the VVD. On the one hand, this might be due to the less rigid party discipline in France compared to the Netherlands. Renaissance does not have a “traditional” party structure, as the internal functioning of the party is loose and relatively informal.<sup>187</sup> Dupont exclusively asked questions about economic integration and sea rescues, whereas all questions framed in more restrictive terms were asked by Lefèvre. However, within the questions there is also diversity, as Lefèvre also asked a number of questions which were framed in more liberal terms and called for a liberalization of policies. Clearly, there is an ideological element at play.

The issues the Renaissance MPs considered salient and the manner in which they framed them reflect the positioning of Renaissance as a centrist party. Here the centrist label should, however, not be interpreted as describing an overall moderate position on most issues, but as explicitly borrowing from left and right positions. Renaissance’s economic liberalism was reflected in the emphasis on economic integration, and the questions regarding sea rescues and minors as well as translators working in the asylum system equally show a concern for liberal rights issues. This was then combined with a more conservative law and order approach to delinquency within the asylum system. This is congruent with Darmanin’s centrist framing discussed in Chapter I.

### **The relationship with the minister**

Considering the relationship to Darmanin, the questions were almost equally split between being purely informative (8 out of 17) and calling explicitly for policy changes (9 out of 17). However,

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<sup>182</sup> Assemblée Nationale, ‘Question écrite N°8288 de M. Mathieu Lefèvre’, nr. 8288 (23/05/2023).

<sup>183</sup> Assemblée Nationale, ‘Question écrite N°8287 de M. Mathieu Lefèvre’, nr. 8287 (23/05/2023).

<sup>184</sup> Assemblée Nationale, ‘Question écrite N°9990 de M. Mathieu Lefèvre’, nr. 9990 (11/07/2023).

<sup>185</sup> Assemblée Nationale, ‘Question écrite N°10762 de Mme Stella Dupont’, nr. 10762(01/08/2023).

<sup>186</sup> Assemblée Nationale, ‘Question écrite N°3318 de M. Philippe Fait’, nr. 3318 (22/11/2023) / Assemblée Nationale, ‘Question écrite N°12039 de M. Jean-Pierre Pont’, nr. 12039 (10/10/2023).

<sup>187</sup> Piero Ignazi, ‘The Failure of Mainstream Parties and the Impact of New Challenger Parties in France, Italy and Spain’, *Italian Political Science Review/Rivista Italiana Di Scienza Politica* 51, no. 1 (March 2021): 101.

there was clearly also an effort by the party to push Darmanin towards certain policy directions, both with more restrictive policies regarding law and order as well as more liberal views concerning economic integration and access to rights.

This explains why Darmanin's immigration bill challenged the minister's relationship with the party. As mentioned, a significant part of the Renaissance group voted against the bill. The analysis of questions above already shows the balance between left and right holding Renaissance's position on asylum policy together. It is not surprising, then, that a bill which did not reflect this balance would create opposition within the party.

As the previous chapter explored, Darmanin's position as an Ideologue-type minister meant he was – at the very least – willing to lean significantly to the right on the immigration bill. This meant the balance on asylum policy initially presented in the bill – despite, as I have argued, already showing a somewhat restrictive approach – was shifted to the right. The first senate reading of the bill – dominated by LR – introduced various amendments pushing the bill towards a more restrictive direction, including but not limited to:<sup>188</sup>

- Automatically issuing an obligation to leave the territory once an asylum request is rejected.
- Banning access to healthcare for rejected asylum seekers.
- Removing Darmanin's proposed liberalization of access to work for asylum seekers from countries with a high recognition rate

After these amendments, the *Assemblée* again modified the bill. Parliamentarians for Renaissance filed a long list of amendments, many of which overturned the restrictive measures introduced by the senate. A large group of Renaissance MPs, including Stella Dupont, argued that “*the Renaissance group is committed to the overall balance of this bill between being firm against illegal immigration and accelerating access to the labour market for asylum seekers [...]*”<sup>189</sup> Thus they reinstated Article 4, which would liberalize access to the labour market for some asylum seekers.

However, Renaissance MPs also proposed amendments to the original bill. Many of these amendments constituted either a liberalization of asylum policies or amended the more restrictive elements of Darmanin's original proposal. One amendment sought to reduce the waiting time for a work permit for asylum seekers from countries with high recognition rates from two months to one month. Additionally, if a decision was not rendered within the designated time, asylum seekers would be given access to the labour market automatically.<sup>190</sup> The MPs also introduced an amendment which would extend this liberalization to the right of asylum seekers to set up a one-person business, rather than only having the right to be employed.<sup>191</sup> Both of these amendments constituted a significant liberalization of Darmanin's original bill, and clearly reflect the economic liberalism of the Renaissance group.

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<sup>188</sup> Assemblée Nationale, ‘Amendement N°AE1’ (16 November 2023) / Assemblée Nationale, ‘Amendement N°2430’ (7 December 2023) / Assemblée Nationale, ‘Projet de loi adopté par le sénat pour contrôler l’immigration, améliorer l’intégration’ (14 November 2023): Titre IV, Article 19 *bis* B (*nouveau*)

<sup>189</sup> Assemblée Nationale, ‘Amendement N°AE1’ (16 November 2023).

<sup>190</sup> Assemblée Nationale, ‘Amendement N°495’ (6 December 2023).

<sup>191</sup> Assemblée Nationale, ‘Amendement N°2439’ (7 December 2023).

Another amendment proposed to remove the generalization of the single judge in CNDA cases.<sup>192</sup> As discussed in Chapter I, this was as a significant measure which could influence the recognition rate of asylum requests. The Renaissance MPs argued they supported the goal of reducing delays in the time it takes to render decisions, but argued judgement by a panel of judges ensures the complexity of an asylum request is handled in an integral and thorough way.<sup>193</sup> Additionally, Darmanin's original bill had introduced mandatory retirement for CNDA judges at 75, which an amendment by two MPs from Renaissance sought to abolish, calling it discriminatory.<sup>194</sup>

When the bill was voted down in the *assemblée* by the combined opposition on the left and right, a *commission mixte paritaire* – a commission representing both the senate and the *assemblée* – was convened to develop a compromise that could get a majority in both houses. The presidential coalition negotiated with LR, allowing the conservatives to heavily modify the bill again, in line with the earlier senate proposal. This scrapped most of the liberalization proposed by the Renaissance group in the *assemblée*, including article 4.<sup>195</sup> As Renaissance's support for the bill relied on a compromise between restrictive and liberal policies, these modifications were bound to lead to criticism within the presidential coalition. Considering the analysis of parliamentary questions above, it is not surprising that Dupont, for example, was part of the minority that voted against the bill, while Lefèvre supported it.<sup>196</sup>

Darmanin's position as an Ideologue minister clearly influenced the development of the bill, as discussed in the previous chapter. As a result the situation in France bears some striking similarities as well as differences to the situation in the Netherlands. In the Dutch case a Loyalist minister did not fight for the more restrictive VVD's part of the coalition compromise, causing the VVD's parliamentary group to reject his policies nearly entirely. With Renaissance, we again find a parliamentary group facing a minister who did not reflect their ideological position, however in this case this was because Darmanin was to the right of the parliamentary group. However, since Renaissance's position on asylum policy, as described above, already fundamentally entailed a compromise between restrictive and liberal measures, the removal of the liberal aspect of the compromise from the bill caused tensions between the minister and the parliamentary group, but did not lead to a wholesale rejection of his policies.

## **Belgium: following the minister's lead**

In the case of Belgium, the previous chapter showed how minister De Moor clearly pushed policies of deterrence, as evidenced both by the policies enacted and her framing of the asylum crisis. Contrary to Darmanin, De Moor did not appear to present her policies in moderate terms, as a compromise between right and left, despite CD&V's overall position as a party close to the political centre. As the analysis below will show, CD&V's parliamentary group barely engaged with their minister during the whole period of 2022-2023, despite the salience of the asylum crisis in Belgian politics. As such, De Moor took a leading role in defining CD&V's approach to

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<sup>192</sup> Assemblée Nationale, 'Amendement N°CL1437' (23 November 2023).

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Assemblée Nationale, 'Amendement N°CL262' (22 November 2023).

<sup>195</sup> Duguet and Jannic-Cherbonnel, 'Projet de loi immigration'.

<sup>196</sup> 'Analyse du scrutin n°3213', *assemblee-nationale.fr* <https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/16/scrutins/3213#groupeDEM> last accessed on 14-06-2024.

asylum policy, which the parliamentary group followed. The section explains this by considering the context of the Belgian government coalition and the party system in Flanders.

### Analysis of parliamentary tools

CD&V's MPs engaged very little with their own minister. In 2022-2023 they posed only five written questions, four of which by MP Franky Demon, as shown in table 6 below.

*Table 6: coding of written questions by the CD&V group*

Topic	Amount of questions
Deterrence policies	1
Reception system	1
International/EU	2
Other/specific issues	1

All the questions asked by Demon were phrased in purely informative terms. The set of questions labelled “deterrence policies” concerned the prevention campaigns the Belgian government organized in countries of origin and transit. Demon asked De Moor to give an overview of the campaigns that had been organized, how they were organized, how much they had cost and what De Moor was planning in terms of future campaigns.<sup>197</sup> The question regarding the reception system asked De Moor to give an update on the audit of the organizations in the asylum system the interior ministry had planned. Demon asked the minister whether any conclusions were already available, whether she could elaborate on them and what her action plan for the future was.<sup>198</sup> These questions both concerned actions already taken by De Moor and mostly give her room to explain them.

The two questions marked as “International/EU” show a similar approach. The first set of questions, in July 2022, asked the Minister to explain the conclusions of a meeting her predecessor had with the Dutch secretary of state for asylum and migration. Demon asked whether any agreements had been made for further cooperation between the countries, both bilaterally and concerning the EU’s migration pact.<sup>199</sup> Demon referred specifically to the “vulnerable group” of unaccompanied minors who often went missing because they are not registered under the Dublin Regulation. Demon drew attention to the issue in the text leading up to the specific questions, but then only asked what the minister discussed concerning the issue with her Dutch counterpart.<sup>200</sup> The other set of questions also asked the minister to explain what she was doing, in this case to ensure the “Dublin rules” are maintained at the European level. The context Demon gave to the questions was outright defensive of the minister. Regarding measures to deal with the asylum crisis, he wrote:

<sup>197</sup> Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, ‘Schriftelijke vraag en Antwoord nr: 0705’, *Bulletin nr. B094* (13 September 2022).

<sup>198</sup> Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, ‘Schriftelijke vraag en Antwoord nr: 0711’, *Bulletin nr. B095* (19 September 2022).

<sup>199</sup> Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, ‘Schriftelijke vraag en Antwoord nr: 0635’, *Bulletin nr. B094* (28 July 2022).

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*



*“You are continuing to search for additional places for as long as necessary. However, we cannot continue this forever. [...] [M]ore is needed and so we need to reform structurally. You have a series of measures ready. I sincerely hope everyone around the government table will support it”.*<sup>201</sup>

Demon seems to suggest the minister was ready to take new measures, but that it was up to the other members of government to agree to them as well.

The only question explicitly attempting to specifically push the minister towards a certain policy, concerned a specific issue. PM Nahima Lanjri called De Moor’s attention to Palestinian-Belgian poet Fatena Al Ghorra, who got stuck in Gaza visiting her parents after the outbreak of the war between Israel and Hamas in October 2023. Lanjri asked De Moor to consider allowing people to request a humanitarian visa through e-mail if it is impossible for them to reach a Belgian consulate.<sup>202</sup> In her response, De Moor said this was not possible, as humanitarian visa are not a right, but result from a discretionary decision by the minister. However, she said the question was being researched.<sup>203</sup>

### **The relationship with the minister**

Overall, the tendency of the questions was for the parliamentary group to align itself with De Moor’s existing policies. During debates, the CD&V MPs similarly allowed the minister to explain her policies in a general way, while defending her from criticism. During a debate in January 2023 Demon directed questions at De Moor after defending her, stating: *“While you do everything you can to manage this crisis, I see colleagues pointing fingers and hear them calling out that your efforts are not enough. I do want to point out to them that there is no miracle solution to get more reception places”.*<sup>204</sup>

Demon then summarized the efforts undertaken by De Moor to tackle the crisis, including the creation of 7.500 additional reception places, new structural measures and European cooperation. His questions to the minister then simply asked her to elaborate on these efforts.<sup>205</sup>

On 20 September 2023 the committee for the interior, security, migration and governing affairs discussed the measure taken by De Moor to refuse reception for single male asylum seekers. During the debate CD&V MP Jan Briers defended the policy. He first praised De Moor for her efforts to create more reception places. Then, he stated the CD&V parliamentary group supported her decision wholeheartedly. Considering the shortage of places, he argued this would mean families with children would get these places instead.<sup>206</sup>

Lastly, it is worth examining motions. As in the Netherlands, Belgian MPs may file motions calling on the government to take action on a particular issue. Yet, overall, parties file fewer motions than in the Netherlands. In Belgium, MPs can also file an *eenvoudige motie* (“simple motion”). If a simple motion passes, all other motions discussed during the interpellation are

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<sup>201</sup> Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, ‘Schriftelijke vraag en Antwoord nr: 0904’, *Bulletin nr. B108* (6 March 2023).

<sup>202</sup> Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, ‘Schriftelijke vraag en Antwoord nr: 1103’, *Bulletin nr. B126* (12 December 2023).

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, ‘Integraal verslag met vertaald beknopt verslag’, *Commissie voor Binnenlandse Zaken, Veiligheid, Migratie en Bestuurszaken* CRIV 55 COM 966 (24 January 2023): 10.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>206</sup> Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, ‘Integraal verslag met vertaald beknopt verslag’, *Commissie voor Binnenlandse Zaken, Veiligheid, Migratie en Bestuurszaken* CRIV 55 COM 1169 (20 September 2023): 15.

automatically voted down. It is notable that CD&V did not once direct a motion towards De Moor. However, on three occasions they filed a simple motion with the other parties in the governing coalition to strike down motions filed against De Moor by the opposition. This included three motions by the radical right Vlaams Belang, three by the conservative N-VA and one by the radical left PVDA-PTB.<sup>207</sup>

Contrary to the VVD and Renaissance, there was no clear tension between CD&V in office and in parliament. The parliamentary group positioned itself almost entirely in line with its minister, even defending her more controversial policies. Interestingly, while De Moor – as discussed in the previous chapter – pushed a clearly deterrence-focused policy – CD&V did not initially present itself as a party holding restrictive views on asylum policy. This can be observed in its manifesto for the 2019 elections. In the section discussing migration the party argued the debate surrounding asylum and migration was polarized and that CD&V wants to calm the discussions down, clearly presenting itself as a moderate party.<sup>208</sup> Consequently, asylum policy was not framed in restrictive terms. The party writes that it supports “*a humane and correct asylum and migration policy, with fast and qualitative procedures which swiftly offer those involved legal certainties*”.<sup>209</sup> Variations on the word “strict” (*streng, strikt*) only appear once, while variations on “humane” or “humanitarian” appear seven times. The manifesto made no specific mention of reducing the inflow of asylum seekers, except for calls for the EU to address the root causes of refugee flows.<sup>210</sup> This framing is very different from that of De Moor discussed in Chapter I. On a few specific policies, the manifesto also differs from De Moor’s policies:

- Returns should be voluntary as much as possible, forced only if absolutely necessary.<sup>211</sup>
- CD&V wants to look at alternatives to detention.<sup>212</sup>
- Barriers to family reunification for acknowledged refugees should be reduced and the decision time decreased from 9 to 6 months.<sup>213</sup>

These measures reflect the position of CD&V as a moderate and Christian democratic party. This contrasts considerably with the measures taken by De Moor. As discussed, the compromise the government coalition reached included policies which were clearly aimed at deterrence, reflecting De Moor’s earlier framing of the asylum crisis. Why, then, did CD&V’s parliamentary group “follow along” with De Moor’s restrictive policies on asylum?

As discussed, the federal “Vivaldi” coalition agreement was not struck in a spirit of enthusiasm, but rather out of necessity after a deadlock lasting over a year.<sup>214</sup> Notably, CD&V was the only party which joined the coalition without its Walloon counterpart, the *Centre démocrate humaniste* (Humanist democratic centre; cdH)\*. As a Flemish party, CD&V only participates in elections in

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<sup>207</sup> Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, ‘Moties’, *Plenumvergadering*, MOT 55 360/001 (15 December 2022) / Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, ‘Moties’, *Plenumvergadering*, MOT 55 372/001 (26 January 2023) / Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, ‘Moties’, *Plenumvergadering*, MOT 55 400/001 (13 April 2023)

<sup>208</sup> CD&V, ‘Verkiezingsprogramma CD&V Vlaamse, federale & Europese verkiezingen 2019’, *Verkiezingscongres* (28 April 2019): 173.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 175-176.

<sup>214</sup> Rihouc et al, “Belgium: Political Developments and Data in 2020”, 34.

\* CdH changed its name to *Les Engagés* in 2022.

Flanders, including during federal elections. This is relevant, considering the fact that immigration has been a more politicized issue in Flanders than in Wallonia.<sup>215</sup> Moreover, the only uniquely Flemish parties not in the federal government were the aforementioned right-wing N-VA and Vlaams Belang. Notably, N-VA spokesperson for migration Theo Francken was minister for asylum and migration in the Michel-I government between 2014 and 2018. The combined factors of participating in a broad, centrist coalition, holding the ministry responsible for asylum policy and strong electoral competition from two right-wing anti-immigration parties made it strategically beneficial for CD&V to follow along with the more restrictive turn initiated by De Moor. This can clearly be seen in the response by De Moor in a debate with N-VA in the previous chapter, where she defends her policies as finally delivering on what N-VA failed to do.

The pretext of the asylum crisis then provided an argument for a change in position. Defending De Moor's policies, MP Jan Briers argued that the decision to refuse reception for single men "made no one happy" but that the party still supported the instruction considering "the given circumstances".<sup>216</sup> When looking at CD&V's programme for the 2024 elections it is evident that De Moor caused an overall restrictive turn in CD&V policy, as the party now called for:<sup>217</sup>

- Asylum seekers registered in another country not having access to reception centres
- A stronger return policy with more forced measures, such as detention and house arrest
- Mandatory cultural integration

In conclusion, CD&V was faced with a crisis situation and a minister who clearly pushed for policies of deterrence. Additionally, CD&V faced electoral competition from the right as well as an incentive to maintain a clear identity despite being in a broad, ideologically diffuse government coalition. Combined with the relatively strong Belgian party discipline making open dissent within the party unlikely, this pushed CD&V's parliamentary group to follow De Moor's lead regarding a restrictive asylum policy.

## Chapter conclusion

This chapter's analysis presents three similar cases with different outcomes. In all three countries we find a minister whose policies diverge in some notable way from the position of their party's parliamentary group. To some extent this is normal in a coalition government, but Chapter I has shown how the extent to which particular asylum policies are pursued also depends on the role of the individual minister. Van der Burg's Loyalist position meant that he did not actively push the VVD's restrictive agenda when the measures supposed to cater to them were struck down by the courts. Consequently, the VVD group – which the analysis shows had clearly conservative views on asylum policy – did not see these views represented in government policy, causing them to almost act as opposition towards their own minister. The VVD group constantly pushed for deterrence policies, especially through parliamentary motions, and voted against the *Spreadingswet* when its amendments were not accepted.

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<sup>215</sup> Van Goidsenhoven and Pilet, 'The Politicisation of Immigration in Belgium', 56.

<sup>216</sup> Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 'Integraal verslag met vertaald beknopt verslag', *Commissie voor Binnenlandse Zaken, Veiligheid, Migratie en Bestuurszaken* CRIV 55 COM 1169 (20 September 2023): 15.

<sup>217</sup> 'Uw veiligheid', *cdem.be* [https://www.cdenv.be/uw\\_veiligheid](https://www.cdenv.be/uw_veiligheid) last accessed on 14-06-2024.

In some sense this is similar to France, where the Renaissance group's parliamentary behaviour also shows tensions between the minister's policies and party ideology. However, because Renaissance's position on asylum-related issues was already a compromise between liberal and restrictive views, its MPs as a whole did not outright reject their own minister's policies. Darmanin clearly leaned right handling the immigration bill, as discussed for ideological and strategic reasons, but this meant that part of Renaissance's policy positions were still represented, causing only the more progressive minority to oppose Darmanin's immigration bill.

To some extent the cases of France and Belgium are similar, in the sense that there was a minister whose policies were significantly more restrictive than that of the party. In France Darmanin did not frame policies in an explicitly restrictive way, but relied on support from LR, knowing this would lead to more restrictive amendments. As such, Darmanin's discursive gap can be explained by the fact that it was apparent that his own party could rebel against openly declared restrictive policies. In Belgium De Moor's restrictive approach was openly declared as a policy goal. However, here we see that contextual factors matter. The CD&V group's defence of their own minister should be seen in the context of the Flemish party system and electoral competition with N-VA and Vlaams Belang. As such, the Ideologue position of De Moor combined with such contextual factors triggered a significant shift in CD&V's position

Government policy will always deviate in some ways from governing party positions. This chapter has shown, however, that the way parliamentary parties respond to their own ministers responsible for asylum policy differs significantly. Chapter I has argued individual ministers matter to a considerable degree for which asylum policies are (not) pursued. This chapter has shown how party ideology mediates the degree to which centre-right parliamentary groups follow their own ministers when these ministers' policies diverge from the group's views, impacting their behaviour in parliament.

## Conclusion: Between Office and Policy

This thesis analysed the impact of centre-right parties on asylum policy as well as the tensions this creates between their office-seeking and policy-seeking goals. The following sections will answer the subquestions and main research question and discuss the implications for the broader literature. The conclusion ends with a discussion of the limitations of this thesis as well as avenues for further research.

### Disentangling the minister

Subquestion 1: *How do centre-right migration ministers impact asylum policy?*

Chapter I showed that in all three cases studied the individual minister matters significantly for the direction asylum policy took. The comparative analysis showed that, as Ideologies in Alexiadou's typology, Darmanin and De Moor both pushed for policies of deterrence. Contrarily, Van der Burg's position as a Loyalist minister was clearly reflected in his more technocratic form of governance, as he pursued policies set down in coalition agreements and presented to him by advisory organizations. Van der Burg's policies mainly addressed the reception system, despite his policy framing problematizing both the reception system and the inflow of asylum seekers. Contrarily, Darmanin's immigration reforms were framed in centrist and, on asylum migration, non-restrictive terms, but in practice amounted to a more restrictive policy. Lastly, in Belgium De Moor's framing of the crisis as caused by the inflow of asylum seekers was reflected in the policies of deterrence she pursued. Which minister is responsible for asylum policy is a key factor in explaining these differences regarding both policy outcomes and the degree of congruence between policy and rhetoric.

### The positioning of parliamentary groups

Subquestion 2: *How do the ministers' parliamentary groups position themselves towards their minister?*

In all three countries there are clear differences between how the groups position themselves towards their own minister. In Belgium CD&V's parliamentary group essentially followed the minister's lead, defending her policies and asking very few questions, most of which had a purely informative character. In France and the Netherlands the relation between the minister and parliamentary group is more complex. In the Netherlands the VVD group clearly attempted to push their own minister's policies in a more deterrence-based direction. Additionally, the group eventually rejected their own minister's *Spreadingswet*, which was the core of Van der Burg's response to the asylum crisis. In France, policy framing by Renaissance MPs was more mixed, reflecting their identity as a party combining left-wing and right-wing views. The balance between left and right that defined their ideological position was not upheld by Darmanin's immigration bill. This caused the group to attempt to amend the bill in a more liberal direction. When this failed, a significant part of its MPs rebelled by voting against their own minister's bill.

### Centre-right parties and asylum policy

The main research question analysed in this thesis was:

*How do centre-right parties in government shape asylum policy in the Netherlands, France and Belgium, and how does this impact the relationship between the party in office and the party in parliament?*

Through a comparative analysis of the Netherlands, France and Belgium this thesis argued that two factors have a considerable effect on which policies centre-right parties pursue in government as well as how this impacts the relationship between their ministers and parliamentary groups. First, the role of individual ministers responsible for asylum and migration policy matters considerably for which policies are and are not pursued. The second factor is the ideological position of the parliamentary group. The actions of ministers play a significant role in the degree to which the government's asylum policy reflects the policy views of the parliamentary group. Consequently, this thesis has shown how this impacts the degree to which the group aligns with or attempt to pressure its own minister to pursue its policy views in office. Consequently, the role of individual ministers and the policy views of parliamentary groups matter considerably for the extent to which centre-right parties office-seeking and policy-seeking goals conflict. This has implications for both the literature on (the politics of) asylum policy and the centre-right and immigration.

On asylum policy, the analysis has shown how the discursive gap between rhetoric and policy can appear in different ways. In the Netherlands Van der Burg's approach is a clear example of De Haas and Czaika's conception of the discursive gap as a gap between restrictive rhetoric and policies which do not reflect this.<sup>218</sup> Legal constraints on asylum policy are a key explanation of the presence of this discursive gap. In France the opposite can be seen, as a restrictive reform of the asylum system was framed as a matter of efficiency, rather than deterrence, in order to get sceptical MPs behind the bill. The lack of such a gap in Belgium was the result of an interplay between an entrepreneurial minister and a compliant party. Consequently, this thesis has shown that discursive gaps appear because of the various constraints – political and legal – on the ability of ministers to pursue particular policies.

Similarly, logistification – which is often explained in structural terms related to global capitalism – can have origins in the political agency of policy-makers.<sup>219</sup> In the Netherlands the *Spreadingswet* treated asylum policy in clearly logistical terms. This was rooted in Van der Burg's technocratic approach to asylum policy in connection with the shortage of accommodation for asylum seekers due to the housing and asylum crises. Contrarily, in France logistification developed as a form of deterrence, when ideological tensions within Darmanin's party constrained Darmanin's ability to explicitly pursue deterrence.

The introductory chapter to this thesis argued that literature on centre-right parties often builds on the assumption that these parties are primarily office-seeking actors, meaning their rightward shift on immigration is often explained as motivated by electoral goals to get into office. To some extent these assumptions are confirmed in the empirical analysis. In the case of CD&V a rightward shift can be seen in response to right-wing competitors. To a degree the primacy of office-seeking goals of centre-right parties can also be observed. The VVD appointing a Loyalist minister on a highly salient political post like asylum and migration policy was motivated by an attempt not to alienate their centre-left coalition partners. Additionally, the fact Macron gave this

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<sup>218</sup> Czaika and De Haas, 'The Effectiveness of Immigration Policies', 494.

<sup>219</sup> Vianelli, 'Warehousing Asylum Seekers', 46.

highly salient position to Darmanin shows Macron's willingness to lean to the right of his own party to maintain his position in office. However, this thesis nuances the above assumptions in a few notable ways.

Firstly, the analysis has shown that ministers are not simply an extension of the party, nor are parliamentary groups always willing to follow their minister and. Using Alexiadou's typology, I have shown that the degree to which migration ministers are willing to push particular policies despite opposition from their own parliamentary group or coalition partners clearly affects policy outcomes. The cases of France and Belgium, in particular, showed that a minister with clear policy goals will pursue these goals even without their parliamentary group pushing them to. To the contrary; ministers may pursue policies despite their parliamentary group pushing them in a different direction. This was the case to some extent in France, but very clearly in the Netherlands.

Importantly, the willingness of parliamentary groups to not just deviate from, but actively oppose (some of) their ministers' asylum policies shows their policy-seeking concerns. Bale already argued that centre-right parties should be studied in conjunction with policy, to take their policy-seeking motivations seriously.<sup>220</sup> This thesis has done exactly that, but has argued that the policy-seeking goals of centre-right parties on asylum and migration become most clear when disentangling them; by treating parties as internally diverse collective actors with sometimes conflicting goals. As such, I have shown how the policy-seeking and office-seeking goals of centre-right parties can clearly conflict on asylum policy, and that studying the role of individual ministers and parliamentary groups can nuance and add to the growing literature on the centre-right and immigration.

Naturally, this thesis' research is limited in scope. The literature could benefit from additional case studies looking at individual ministers and parliamentary groups in the asylum policy process. Due to the selected case studies Partisan ministers were not part of the analysis, while their preoccupation with the party interest is an interesting departure point for studies of centre-right asylum policy. Secondly, this thesis is fundamentally about the effect of political parties on policy. A more in-depth analysis of the policies pursued – and the extent to which they diverted from the previous ministers' policies – would benefit the literature on centre-right asylum policies and perhaps add more nuance to the case presented in this thesis. Lastly, this thesis analysed a two-year period (2022-2023). As a result, the specific contexts of the French immigration bill and crises in the Netherlands and Belgium dominated the analysis. This was purposefully done in order to conduct a qualitative analysis analysing both policy and the role of parties and ministers. A longer-term and perhaps more quantitative approach would expand the scope of this research and further contextualize the argument put forward in this thesis, by more explicitly testing the role of contextual factors such as the rate of asylum migration and differences in governmental structure and parliamentary norms. Regardless, by conducting a qualitative policy analysis of a specific period, this thesis has shown that the crisis of the centre-right that formed the starting point of this research becomes most clear by disentangling the party and its office-seeking and policy-seeking goals.

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<sup>220</sup> Bale, 'Turning Round the Telescope', 316.

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## Appendix: Coding of parliamentary tools

Document type	Country	MP(s)	Topic	Date	Coding	Link to webpage
Written question(s)	NL	Ruben Brekermans + others	Ukrainians	13-4-2022	Reception system	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/kamervragen/detail?id=2022Z07331&amp;did=2022D14887">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/kamervragen/detail?id=2022Z07331&amp;did=2022D14887</a>
Written question(s)	NL	Ruben Brekermans + others	Ukrainians	31-5-2022	Reception system	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/kamervragen/detail?id=2022Z10724&amp;did=2022D22084">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/kamervragen/detail?id=2022Z10724&amp;did=2022D22084</a>
Written question(s)	NL	Ruben Brekermans + Jeroen van Wijngaarden (VVD)	Migration route Serbia	2-11-2022	EU/international/foreign policy	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/kamervragen/detail?id=2022Z20811&amp;did=2022D44786">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/kamervragen/detail?id=2022Z20811&amp;did=2022D44786</a>
Written question(s)	NL	Ruben Brekermans + Peter de Groot (VVD)	Housing asylum seekers	3-4-2023	Reception system	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/kamervragen/detail?id=2023Z05834&amp;did=2023D13821">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/kamervragen/detail?id=2023Z05834&amp;did=2023D13821</a>
Written question(s)	NL	Ruben Brekermans	Disturbances asylum centre	18-4-2023	Reception system	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/kamervragen/detail?id=2023Z07016&amp;did=2023D16526">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/kamervragen/detail?id=2023Z07016&amp;did=2023D16526</a>
Written question(s)	NL	Ruben Brekermans + René Peters (CDA)	Written asylum requests	19-4-2023	Deterrence at the national level	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/kamervragen/detail?id=2023Z07133&amp;did=2023D16832">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/kamervragen/detail?id=2023Z07133&amp;did=2023D16832</a>
Written question(s)	NL	Ruben Brekermans	Written asylum requests	1-9-2023	Deterrence at the national level	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/kamervragen/detail?id=2023Z14530&amp;did=2023D35044">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/kamervragen/detail?id=2023Z14530&amp;did=2023D35044</a>
Motion	NL	Ruben Brekermans	Returns	5-4-2022	Reception system	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D13592&amp;did=2022D13592">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D13592&amp;did=2022D13592</a>
Motion	NL	Brekermans + Roelof Bisschop (SGP) + Joost Eerdmans (JA21)	Family reunification Eritrea	21-4-2022	Deterrence at the national level	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022Z08202&amp;did=2022D16544">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022Z08202&amp;did=2022D16544</a>
Motion	NL	Ruben Brekermans	Third country deals	21-4-2022	EU/international/foreign policy	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022Z08201&amp;did=2022D16542">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022Z08201&amp;did=2022D16542</a>
Motion	NL	Brekermans + many others	Reception for Ukrainians	21-4-2022	Reception system	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D16569&amp;did=2022D16569">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D16569&amp;did=2022D16569</a>
Motion	NL	Brekermans + Ceder (CU) + Kuik (CDA)	Housing Ukrainians and status holders	21-4-2022	Reception system	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D16567&amp;did=2022D16567">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D16567&amp;did=2022D16567</a>
Motion	NL	Brekermans + Slootweg (CDA)	Bilateral deals to reduce inflow	7-7-2022	EU/international/foreign policy	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D30281&amp;did=2022D30281">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D30281&amp;did=2022D30281</a>

## Appendix: Coding of parliamentary tools

Motion	NL	Brekelmans + Slootweg (CDA)	Third country refugees Ukraine	7-7-2022	EU/international/foreign policy	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022Z14706&amp;id=2022D30283">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022Z14706&amp;id=2022D30283</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans	Internal EU border protection	14-11-2022	EU/international/foreign policy	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022Z22031&amp;id=2022D47509">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022Z22031&amp;id=2022D47509</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans	Monitor implementation EU acquis	14-11-2022	EU/international/foreign policy	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D47510&amp;id=2022D47510">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D47510&amp;id=2022D47510</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans	EU differences recognition rate	14-11-2022	EU/international/foreign policy	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D47508&amp;id=2022D47508">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D47508&amp;id=2022D47508</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans + Mulder (CDA)	Third country deals	24-11-2022	EU/international/foreign policy	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D49750&amp;id=2022D49750">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D49750&amp;id=2022D49750</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans + Peters + Amhaouch (both CDA)	EU borders	7-12-2022	EU/international/foreign policy	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D52377&amp;id=2022D52377">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D52377&amp;id=2022D52377</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans + Peters (CDA)	Dublin compliance	7-12-2022	EU/international/foreign policy	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D52375&amp;id=2022D52375">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D52375&amp;id=2022D52375</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans + Peters (CDA)	Safe and unsafe regions within countries	22-12-2022	Deterrence at the national level	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D56518&amp;id=2022D56518">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D56518&amp;id=2022D56518</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans + Peters (CDA)	Country information Algeria	22-12-2022	Deterrence at the national level	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D56519&amp;id=2022D56519">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D56519&amp;id=2022D56519</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans + Peters (CDA)	Third country status outside EU	22-12-2022	Deterrence at the national level	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D56520&amp;id=2022D56520">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2022D56520&amp;id=2022D56520</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans	Inform EU countries emergency measures	6-4-2023	EU/international/foreign policy	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D14473&amp;id=2023D14473">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D14473&amp;id=2023D14473</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans	Crime asylum seekers	6-4-2023	Reception system	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D14472&amp;id=2023D14472">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D14472&amp;id=2023D14472</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans + Van den Brink (CDA)	Third country deals and returns	7-6-2023	EU/international/foreign policy	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D24629&amp;id=2023D24629">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D24629&amp;id=2023D24629</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans	Opened or closed "azc's	26-6-2023	Reception system	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D28440&amp;id=2023D28440">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D28440&amp;id=2023D28440</a>

## Appendix: Coding of parliamentary tools

Motion	NL	Brekelmans + Van den Brink (CDA)	Returns	6-7-2023	Deterrence at the national level	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023Z13411&amp;id=2023D31821">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023Z13411&amp;id=2023D31821</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans + Podt (D66) + Ceder (CU) + Van den Brink (CDA)	Spreadingswet	6-7-2023	Reception system	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D31820&amp;id=2023D31820">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D31820&amp;id=2023D31820</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans + Van den Brink (CDA)	Handling requests on paper	27-9-2023	Deterrence at the national level	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D39302&amp;id=2023D39302">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D39302&amp;id=2023D39302</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans + Van den Brink (CDA)	Reading phone data	27-9-2023	Deterrence at the national level	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D39301&amp;id=2023D39301">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D39301&amp;id=2023D39301</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans + Van den Brink (CDA)	amv (changed)	27-9-2023	Deterrence at the national level	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D39313&amp;id=2023D39313">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D39313&amp;id=2023D39313</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans + Van den Brink (CDA)	Sober reception low chance	27-9-2023	Deterrence at the national level	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D39303&amp;id=2023D39303">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D39303&amp;id=2023D39303</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans + Van den Brink (CDA)	Less benefit of the doubt	27-9-2023	Deterrence at the national level	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D39286&amp;id=2023D39286">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D39286&amp;id=2023D39286</a>
Motion	NL	Brekelmans + Van den Brink (CDA)	Publicity of instructions	27-9-2023	Deterrence at the national level	<a href="https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D39300&amp;id=2023D39300">https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2023D39300&amp;id=2023D39300</a>
Written question(s)	FRA	Philippe Fait	Rescue at sea (Channel)	22-11-2022	International/Sea rescues	<a href="https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-3318QE.htm">https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-3318QE.htm</a>
Written question(s)	FRA	Charles Sitzenstuhl	Amount of OQTF issued	4-4-2023	Reception system	<a href="https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-6930QE.htm">https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-6930QE.htm</a>
Written question(s)	FRA	Mathieu Lefèvre	Refusal of reception	23-5-2023	Reception system	<a href="https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-8288QE.htm">https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-8288QE.htm</a>
Written question(s)	FRA	Mathieu Lefèvre	Accommodation for rejected asylum seeker	23-5-2023	Reception system	<a href="https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-8287QE.htm">https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-8287QE.htm</a>
Written question(s)	FRA	Mathieu Lefèvre	Protecting interpreters in asylum cases	11-7-2023	Reception system	<a href="https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-9990QE.htm">https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-9990QE.htm</a>
Written question(s)	FRA	Mathieu Lefèvre	Crime by asylum seekers	11-7-2023	Deterrence/public order	<a href="https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-9989QE.htm">https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-9989QE.htm</a>
Written question(s)	FRA	Mathieu Lefèvre	Fraudulent asylum claims	11-7-2023	Deterrence/public order	<a href="https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-9988QE.htm">https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-9988QE.htm</a>
Written question(s)	FRA	Mathieu Lefèvre	Number of appeals	11-7-2023	Deterrence/public order	<a href="https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-9987QE.htm">https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-9987QE.htm</a>
Written question(s)	FRA	Mathieu Lefèvre	Refugies and threat to public order	11-7-2023	Deterrence/public order	<a href="https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-9986QE.htm">https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-9986QE.htm</a>

## Appendix: Coding of parliamentary tools

Written question(s)	FRA	Mathieu Lefèvre	Video interviews	11-7-2023	Deterrence/public order	<a href="https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-9985QE.htm">https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-9985QE.htm</a>
Written question(s)	FRA	Stella Dupont	Rescue at sea (Med)	1-8-2023	International/Sea rescues	<a href="https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-10762QE.htm">https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-10762QE.htm</a>
Written question(s)	FRA	Stella Dupont	Integration into workforce (security jobs)	5-9-2023	Economic integration	<a href="https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-7803QE.htm">https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-7803QE.htm</a>
Written question(s)	FRA	Stella Dupont	Integration into workforce (security jobs)	26-9-2023	Economic integration	<a href="https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-11642QE.htm">https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-11642QE.htm</a>
Written question(s)	FRA	Stella Dupont	Integration into workforce (Dublin)	26-9-2023	Economic integration	<a href="https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-11641QE.htm">https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-11641QE.htm</a>
Written question(s)	FRA	Mathieu Lefèvre	Implementation of CESEDA	10-10-2023	Reception system	<a href="https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-12107QE.htm">https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-12107QE.htm</a>
Written question(s)	FRA	Jean-Pierre Pont	Calais	10-10-2023	International/Sea rescues	<a href="https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-12039QE.htm">https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-12039QE.htm</a>
Written question(s)	FRA	Mathieu Lefèvre	Asylum requests of minors	21-11-2023	Reception system	<a href="https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-13155QE.htm">https://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q16/16-13155QE.htm</a>
Written question(s)	BEL	Franky Demon	Work visit to the Netherlands	28-7-2022	EU/international/foreign policy	<a href="https://www.dekamer.be/kvocr/showpage.cfm?section=qrva&amp;language=nl&amp;cfm=qrvaXml.cfm?legislat=55&amp;dossierID=55-b094-1242-0635-2020202111084.xml">https://www.dekamer.be/kvocr/showpage.cfm?section=qrva&amp;language=nl&amp;cfm=qrvaXml.cfm?legislat=55&amp;dossierID=55-b094-1242-0635-2020202111084.xml</a>
Written question(s)	BEL	Franky Demon	Prevention campaigns	13-9-2022	Deterrence	<a href="https://www.dekamer.be/kvocr/showpage.cfm?section=qrva&amp;language=nl&amp;cfm=qrvaXml.cfm?legislat=55&amp;dossierID=55-b094-1242-0705-2021202216807.xml">https://www.dekamer.be/kvocr/showpage.cfm?section=qrva&amp;language=nl&amp;cfm=qrvaXml.cfm?legislat=55&amp;dossierID=55-b094-1242-0705-2021202216807.xml</a>
Written question(s)	BEL	Franky Demon	Audit asylum agencies	19-9-2022	Reception system	<a href="https://www.dekamer.be/kvocr/showpage.cfm?section=qrva&amp;language=nl&amp;cfm=qrvaXml.cfm?legislat=55&amp;dossierID=55-b095-1242-0711-2021202216865.xml">https://www.dekamer.be/kvocr/showpage.cfm?section=qrva&amp;language=nl&amp;cfm=qrvaXml.cfm?legislat=55&amp;dossierID=55-b095-1242-0711-2021202216865.xml</a>
Written question(s)	BEL	Franky Demon	Dublin procedure	6-3-2023	EU/international/foreign policy	<a href="https://www.dekamer.be/kvocr/showpage.cfm?section=qrva&amp;language=nl&amp;cfm=qrvaXml.cfm?legislat=55&amp;dossierID=55-b108-1242-0904-2022202319340.xml">https://www.dekamer.be/kvocr/showpage.cfm?section=qrva&amp;language=nl&amp;cfm=qrvaXml.cfm?legislat=55&amp;dossierID=55-b108-1242-0904-2022202319340.xml</a>
Written question(s)	BEL	Nahima Lanjri	Al Ghorra in Gaza	12-12-2023	Other	<a href="https://www.dekamer.be/kvocr/showpage.cfm?section=qrva&amp;language=nl&amp;cfm=qrvaXml.cfm?legislat=55&amp;dossierID=55-b126-1242-1103-2023202422790.xml">https://www.dekamer.be/kvocr/showpage.cfm?section=qrva&amp;language=nl&amp;cfm=qrvaXml.cfm?legislat=55&amp;dossierID=55-b126-1242-1103-2023202422790.xml</a>