Right-Wing Extremist Exploitation of the Covid-19 Pandemic

A Study on the Framing of the Covid-19 Pandemic by Dutch Right-Wing Extremist Groups

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Preface

Conflict has been of particular interest to me ever since my bachelor in history at Utrecht University, where I specialized in modern-day conflicts. As such, I was fortunate to find a master's program that fit with my particular interest allowing me to aim to acquire a master's in Human Geography, specialising in conflict territories and identities.

I would like to use the preface to first and foremost thank Open Up, Let Youth be Heard! which allowed me to intern there for three month, and where I was able learn a great deal in terms of practical application within the field. In particular, much thanks is given to Yvonne Heselmans and the board of Open Up for giving me those responsibilities that allowed me to experience personal growth and experience the practical field. Additionally, I would like to thank my supervisor M. van Leeuwen who helped my progress every time I experienced difficulties. Lastly, I need to thank those around me, who that kept me motivated to the end.

Abstract

The present study's primary objective has been to respond to the growing concerns among security experts and the media about the growing influence of right-wing extremism within Dutch society and gain a better understanding on current right-wing extremist goals and activities. To achieve this, this thesis has aimed to answer the question: How to understand the framing of the Covid-19 pandemic by right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands? To provide an answer to this, first, a critical literature review of the historical and current state of right-wing extremism within the Netherlands was conducted to gain an understanding of the current context right-wing extremist groups operate in. This was followed by a frame identification analysis of Telegram posts disseminated during the Covid-19 pandemic and related to the Covid-19 pandemic, inspired by Entman's (1991) definition of framing and Matthes and Kohring's (2008) four-variable coding methodology. Finally, the frames were analysed through the perspective of social movement theory to gain a better understanding of why particular frames were deployed and why certain frames more frequently than others.

The findings of the study mainly presented a clear preference by right-wing extremist groups to frame the Covid-19 pandemic within anti-governmental and anti-institutional frameworks, rather than ideological movement-specific frames. This shows a pragmatic recognition by right-wing extremist groups of the current state of the right-wing extremist movement within the Netherlands as well as a specific strategy to undermine and destabilize the current democratic system. This similarly seemingly suggests a needed change in our understanding of how social movement organizations usually operate within social movement theory.

Keywords: Right-wing extremism, social movement theory, framing, social movement organizations, mobilization, ideology.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Communication does not stand apart from reality. There is not, first, reality and then, second, communication. Communication participates in the formulization and change of reality.

—Richard Ericson (1998)

On the eleventh of March, 2020, The World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the coronavirus, COVID-19, a pandemic. Following the proclamation, the virus continued to spread and mutate, affecting virtually all aspects of ordinary life and forcing people to adapt to an ever-changing reality. With more than 650 million confirmed cases and 6,6 million COVID-19-related deaths worldwide at the time of writing this, it is clear that COVID-19 presented the world with an unprecedented health crisis in modern history. Aside from the apparent health crisis it presented, the pandemic greatly affected the social and political order in countries affected by COVID-19. Increased economic uncertainty, rise in political mistrust, and increased fear of polarization and radicalization have all partially or in whole been attributed to the pandemic (Hwang & Höllerer, 2020).

The increased fears surrounding the lasting political and social consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic can easily be seen in the various news and security reports from all parts of the western world. In particular, fear of an increase in extremism of all kinds, but specifically right-wing extremism, among citizens of western nations has been cited as one of the lasting impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the political and social spheres (McNeil-Wilson, 2020). The UN, for instance, noted to be wary of an upcoming "tsunami of hate" (The Guardian, 2020), while German politicians and security authorities in the wake of the pandemic stressed that "right-wing extremism poses as serious a threat as militant jihadism" (Bossong, 2021). On the other side of the world, the ASIO, the Australian Security Intelligence Organization, warned that increasingly, "COVID-19 restrictions are being exploited by extreme right-wing narratives" (Christodoulou, 2020), the goal of exploitation here being the mobilization of supporters and the mobilization of beliefs and ideas.

Similar to other parts of the Western world, there have been increasing concerns about the rise of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands following the Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, news outlets, politicians and experts have warned against the growing threat of extremism, in particular right-wing extremism. Like in other countries, right-wing extremism has been able to capitalize on the growing insecurities and dissatisfaction within Dutch society, frequently appropriating protests against Covid-19 measures and dominating the public debate. The '*Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst'* (AIVD), the Dutch national intelligence agency, similarly warned

of an increase in right-wing extremist activity following their latest annual security report (AIVD 2022). Even though there has been relatively little violent right-wing extremist activity in the past two years, and extremist groups have refrained from many "aggressive showings in public" (AIVD, 2022, p. 5). As in other nations, effective exploitation of the Covid-19 pandemic to mobilize supporters, ideas and beliefs, especially through social media platforms, has been highly attributed as the main factor in this seeming rise of right-wing extremist support in the Netherlands. As such, research into the precise mechanism of how this came to be and what this entails for the future of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands is needed. This study will try to understand this phenomenon more in-depth by analysing how Dutch right-wing extremist groups have aimed to exploit the Covid-19 pandemic in their online rhetoric through the concept of 'framing,' framing here referring to the process of construing frameworks through which people understand reality and interpret future information.

1.2 Aim

This study aims to add to the growing body of literature looking at the consequences the Covid-19 pandemic has had on societies around the world. What its impact has been, and what this suggests for future crises. In particular, this study aims to respond to the growing concerns within the Netherlands about right-wing extremism and look at how this movement has used the pandemic to further its own goals and agenda.

Crises and general upheavals have, in the past, often provided fertile ground for extremism to fester (Chapelan, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic as arguably one of the biggest international health crises in modern history, in particular, has given rise to extremism of all kinds. Strikingly though, in contrast to right-wing movements, left-wing and religious extremist groups within western societies seem to have failed to capitalize on their position properly and have stayed relatively out of the proverbial spotlight in recent years. Overall, societal and political fear over the growth of left-wing and religious extremism seems to have been largely eclipsed by the rise of right-wing extremism. As such, this study will solely focus on right-wing extremism to give a call to the growing social and political attention to this topic. As a result, the main research question of this study is formulated as follows:

How to understand the employment of particular frames in the framing of the Covid-19 pandemic by right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands?

To answer the main research question, three important sub-research questions need to be answered first. Firstly, this study will need to look at the historical and current state of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands to outline the context in which this study takes place. Understanding

both the historical and the current state of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands can reveal particular aspects of Dutch right-wing extremism that may have impacted frame development or frame use. The first sub-question is thus as follows:

SQ1: What has been the historical and current state of right-wing extremism within the Netherlands?

The second sub-question that needs to be answered is which particular frames have been used in the framing of the Covid-19 pandemic. Before being able to answer the main research question of *how* different frames have been used in the Dutch context, this study first needs to answer *which* frames have been used. As social media has proven itself as an effective way of disseminating frames for non-traditional media groups in the modern world and can quickly reach a large number of recipients, it is arguably most effective to look at social media posts by right-wing extremist groups to identify specific frames. The second sub-question thus looks at:

SQ2: What frames did right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands employ in online social network discourse on the Covid-19 pandemic?

The last sub-question relates to interpreting what has been found in the second sub-question. To understand how frames have been used during the Covid-19 pandemic, we must look at why specific frames were used and why some more often than others. Why right-wing extremist groups favoured specific frames over others. The third sub-question thus asks:

SQ3: What may account for the use and frequency of use of particular frames employed by right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands?

The framing of the Covid-19 pandemic by right-wing extremist groups has already been investigated in an earlier study by Richard McNeil-Willson (2020), who, in his study on the framing of the Covid-19 pandemic by six European right-wing extremist groups in the first two months of the pandemic, found six 'crisis frames,' those being migration-, globalization-, governance-, liberty-resilience- and conspiracy frames. Whereas McNeil (2020), however, focussed his study on six specific European right-wing extremist groups and limited the time frame to the first two months following the outbreak of the pandemic, this thesis will look specifically at the Netherlands and extend the time frame to the entirety of the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, besides answering the main and sub-research question of this study, this thesis aims to compare its results with McNeil (2020) to see whether or not the findings by McNeil can be validated when given a country-specific focus in the form of the Netherlands, as well as have its time frame extended to cover the entirety of the Covid-19 crisis.

1.3 Societal relevance

This study contributes to two main growing societal concerns, the recent rise in the influence of extremist groups, especially in times of societal crises, and the still relatively unknown effect of social media on social movement mobilization and recruitment.

Firstly, it is likely that international crises of increasing scale will continue to occur in the immediate future. With the world becoming more and more interconnected every day, with national boundaries becoming ever more blurred, small-scale or national crises may quickly develop into large-scale international crises prone to exploitation by extremists. As has been seen with the on-going Covid-19 pandemic, extremist groups have stood well-positioned to take advantage of such crises. As Chapelan (2021) noted: "extremist subcultures of all kinds are ideally positioned to tap into fluxes of fear, anger and disenfranchisement" (p. 283). General upheavals and disturbances of "normal political rhythms" (Chapelan, 2021, p. 283), amplify and expose these fluxes, leaving extremist groups in a unique position to capitalize on them. As such, there is an immediate and growing need for research such as this one to develop a rigorous understanding of what mechanisms were used to exploit and capitalize on such crises. With authors and organizations around the world signalling the growing threat that extremism, and in particular, right-wing extremism poses, this need has only grown (Cross & Liang, 2020). By looking at the mechanism of framing, this study contributes to understanding one aspect of crisis exploitation by extremist groups and responds to the large number of reports and warnings in recent years of the growing threat of right-wing extremism.

In addition to this, over the past few years, it has become more and more common for social movements and protest groups to use the internet and social media to mobilize, recruit members and disseminate ideas, as it has proven an ideal place for it (Schwemmer, 2021). This shift from offline to online has greatly impacted the way social movements currently operate and their immediate impact. As a recent study, for instance, has shown, the use of social media by social movement organizations significantly steered popular contention and largely affected on-site mobilization in the case of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, showing that the online presence of social movement organizations interacts not in isolation but leaves far-reaching implications (Poell et. a. 2016). Such findings have only become more relevant in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. With the Covid-19 pandemic forcing people to stay at home and banning physical contact, almost all of daily life had gone digital (Siste et al., 2021). As a result, social media use spiked during this time, leading to an increase in both the absorption and dissemination of ideas and opinions (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020). The lack of control regarding information distribution, however, has also allowed for rampant disinformation and further anxiety within society (Siste et al., 2021). This study thus also aims to respond to the seemingly increasing importance of the internet and social media to social movements' success.

1.4 Scientific relevance

In terms of scientific relevance, this research will add to a growing body of literature dedicated to understanding how social movements, in particular extremist fringe social movements, are able to capitalize on international crises by framing them in such a way as to serve their own ideological agendas. In recent years, the framing perspective on social movement theory, as part of the larger 'social movement theory,' has gained track in explaining why and how social movement organizations attract support, recruit and mobilize adherents (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008). The growing body of literature looking at social movement frames and framing processes in the context of social movements (e.g. Benford & Snow, 2000; Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008; Snow et al., 2019; Bolsen et al., 2020) seems to signal that framing has come to be regarded as a central process in understanding the characteristics and discursive practices of social movements. However, whereas much research has already identified various frames that occur commonly in the news, very few studies have investigated which frames have been used in times of crisis by social movements (Poirier et al., 2020; McNeil-Wilson, 2020). This, despite that this perspective can provide new insights into framing by social movements and can have various policy implications for future crises. As Richard McNeil-Wilson (2020), for instance, found in his study on frames during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, in contrast to regular frames, crisis frames in regard to right-wing extremist groups tended to emphasise community support while deemphasizing contention. This study will thus look specifically at one of the biggest health crises in modern history, the Covid-19 pandemic, to further our understanding of framing processes by social movement organizations and, in particular, 'crisis framing.'

In addition to this, by geographically focussing the study on right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands, this research aims to create a better understanding of currently active right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands and add to existing studies which have focussed on other parts of the world. While a few studies have already looked at linking the extreme right and the Covid-19 pandemic through various means, these have generally focussed their study on the United States and France (Chapelan, 2021). Australia (Campion et al., 2021), or only a select few right-wing extremist groups spread around Europe (McNeil-Wilson, 2020). As of yet, no study has focussed explicitly on right-wing extremist groups within the Netherlands. This is despite the fact that the Netherlands may provide new insights into this research or validate the research already done. For example, Dutch identity has often been typified by a form of civic nationalism which describes itself as anti-nationalistic in nature (Cammaerts, 2018). In fact, according to both Cammaerts (2018) and Van Reekum (2012, p. 591), the Netherlands can be seen as an example of what has been called "the constitutions of the national through the discourse of a public of highly differentiated members" (Calhoun, 1997, p. 94). This type of nationalism prides itself on being tolerant towards differences. Other values that have been used to describe Dutch identity have been internationalist, egalitarian, multi-cultural, open, and progressive towards gender, sexuality and drugs (Cammaerts, 2018; Maussen & Bogers, 2010: p. 4). These values stand in stark contrast to common values often espoused in right-wing extremist ideologies. These aspects of Dutch cultures thus may or may not have had an influence

on the frame development during the Covid-19 pandemic, with right-wing extremist groups possibly focussing less on negatively framing globalization, for instance, a common frame within McNeil's (2020) findings. By looking specifically at the Netherlands as a case study, this study thus provides an opportunity to both validate and add to the current findings of a growing body of literature.

1.5 Literature Review

1.5.1 The Framing Perspective on Social Movement Theory

To properly understand the dynamics and different phenomena at play, this research will look at the case study through the lens of Social Movement Theory and, in particular, the framing perspective on social movement theory. According to Zald and McCarthy (1987), social movements can be defined as "a set of opinions and beliefs in a population, which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society" (p. 2). Most often, we associate this meaning with large-scale reform movements such as the civil rights movements, the late 20th-century peace movements, or the recent LGBTQ and environmental movements. This definition is, however, not solely confined to such large-scale and culture-defining movements. In a similar vein, this definition of social movements can be applied to large or small-scale political extremist movements such as those on the fringes of the political left or right. As social movement theory underpins the understanding of the origins and workings of social movements, as well as social movement organization, it provides a proper theoretical framework for understanding right-wing extremist groups.

Starting in the 1940s, social movement theory began in an attempt to understand why and how social mobilization occurs, how social movements operate, which forms they take and their potential consequences. Over the years, social movement theory has developed into an interdisciplinary study within the social sciences, encompassing a wide array of different disciplines such as behavioural sciences, psychology, anthropology, human geography and political sciences. Whereas in the early days of social movement theory, it was argued that social movements arose as a result of "irrational processes of collective behaviour occurring under strained environmental conditions, producing a mass feeling of discontent" (Borum, 2011, p. 17), nowadays, theories within social movement theory argue that more strategic and rational processes are at play (Snow et al., 2019; Oliver, 2016; Jasper, 2010; Borum, 2011). Rather than passively succumbing to structural forces, individuals and groups are understood as having agency in their choices and actions. A core aspect of present-day social movement research is the belief that the main task of any organization, group or movement is to maintain its own survival (Borum, 2011, p. 17). To do this, already active members need to be maintained, and new members need to be added in case of losses through attrition (Borum, 2011). As a secondary purpose, recruitment of new members also further supports the movement by allowing it to

grow, in turn increasing the group or movement its influence and capacity. Members of the movements are thus seen within social movement theory as 'rational prospectors' (Brady et al., 1999), rational actors with agency who act strategically in order to reach their goals.

Drawing on this belief, social movement theory has developed a significant number of new theories in the past few decades, drawing on a large number of different disciplines. These include Relative Deprivation Theory, rooted in the work of Ted Gurr (1970) which focusses on the relative deprivation between expectations and reality (see also Morrison, 1971; Gurney & Tierney, 1982); Mass Society Theory, underpinned by Emile Durkheim's (1897) analysis of modern society and individualism and applied by for instance Arthur Kornhauser (1998) to social movements (see also Thomson, 2005); Resource Mobilization Theory, which has looked at how social movement organizations mobilize and best deploy their resources, differentiated between material, morale, social-organizational, human and cultural resources (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; see also Jenkins, 1983; McCarthy & Wolfson, 1996; Bob & McCarthy, 2004); Political Opportunity Theory, which focusses primarily on the political contexts social movements are active in (McAdam, 1982; see also Tarrow, 1998; Meyer et. al., 2004); and finally New Social Movements Theory, which argues that modern social movements are different from those before the 1960s, and focuses on post-materialism and the role of identity within social movements (Buechler, 1995; see also Buechler 1999; Meluchi, 1998; Castells, 2004). A relatively recent perspective on social movements, however, has, starting from the 1990s, led to a meteoric rise in the number of works on the topic, congealing into what is commonly called 'the framing perspective on social movement theory (Snow & Benford, 1988; see also Benford & Snow, 2000; Della Porta, 2006; Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008; Borum, 2011).

Rooted in a constructivist ontology and drawing on the work of academics such as Goffman (1974), Entman (1993) and Benford and Snow (2000), the framing perspective on social movement theory aims to explain how movements strategically construct, produce and disseminate meaning through the application of the concept of framing (Snow et al., 2019; Borum, 2011). The notion of framing was first adopted into sociology by Goffman in 1974 and has since been used in a wide range of different fields within sociology. Due to its wide application both within sociology and in other disciplines, however, the concept of framing has been defined and redefined numerous times, leading to a vast array of different definitions currently existing. Within the context of this study, then, the working definition of framing will be based on Entman's (1993) definition of framing as being the process of "selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating context, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, or treatment recommendation for the item described." (p. 52) A frame, then, can be considered an element of framing, a conceptual tool through which reality is understood, and meaning is constructed. While other definitions of framing may have equal merit to be used as a working definition, Entman's (1993) definition simultaneously defines the action of framing and provides a toolkit by which to detect frames by signifying the elements which combined

or separate make up a frame, those being a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation.

As argued by researchers on framing, individuals lack the necessary skills to classify information and interpret the world around them meaningfully (Goffman, 1974). Frames aid in this process by offering a basic set of frameworks through which to interpret said information. Applying this concept to social movements, the concept of framing problematizes the meanings associated with events, places and people, suggesting that they are open to interpretation and are often contestable (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow et al., 2019). The mobilization of grievances and people then is neither seen as stemming from naturally occurring sentiments nor from material conditions but rather as the outcome of 'interactively-based interpretation' or signifying work (Snow et al., 2019, p. 393). Framing conceptualizes this signifying work and, as a process, is infused within a social movement's communication to, and interaction with the outside world. In part, the success of a movement then depends on the ability of social movement organizations to create and disseminate frames with which to attract and mobilize adherents (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008).

In part, this success is often seen as depended on the degree to which frames may resonate with their target audience. The degree to which frames may resonate, or 'frame resonance', is one of the most utilized concepts within the framing perspective on social movements (McCannon, 2013). Snow and Benford (1988) introduced the concept to account for the differences in appeal some social movement frames have over others. They posed the question: "under what conditions do framing efforts strike a responsive chord or resonate with the targets of mobilization?" (Snow & Benford; 1988: p. 198). Since then, various studies have looked into the precise conditions under which frame resonance occurs. Some have pointed toward the potential for frame resonance when frames correspond with the pre-existing ideational beliefs of their target audience (Trevizo, 2006; McCammon et al., 2001; Snow & Benford, 1988). Others at the current cultural elements within societies which might determine degrees of frame resonance (Maney et al., 2005; Mansbridge & Morris, 2001; Rohlinger, 2002). Others still have looked at the degree to which the frames are empirically credible to the target audience (Zuo & Benford, 1995; Einwohner, 2009) or the degree to which the frame encompasses a range of beliefs and values rather than just one key attitudinal or value domain (McCannon, 2013; Snow and Corrigall-Brown 2005, Gerhards and Rucht, 1992). The degree to which frames resonate and why will be used in part to understand the choices and frequency within the framing of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to the degree to which frames resonate with their target audience, according to Benford and Snow (1988), there are three "core framing tasks" to a successful process of frame development by social movements (p. 199). These are 'diagnostic framing,' referring to the identification of the cause of a particular problem; 'prognostic framing,' where a method or plan to solve the problem is proposed; and 'motivational framing,' where reasons to support this solution are put forward by utilizing what Benford and Snow call "vocabularies of motive" (Benford & Snow,

2000: p. 617). Later, Entman (1993) further expanded on these tasks by clearly defining the various elements that make up a convincing frame. According to Entman (1993), frames "define problems" - determine what someone or something is doing with what costs and benefits;- "diagnose causes" - identify who or what is causing the defined problem;- "make moral judgments" -evaluate the causal agents and the consequences;- and/or "suggest remedies," -offer solutions to the problem and consider their potential effects (p. 52). These functions can all four simultaneously be performed within an extensive news article or can be contained within a single sentence (Entman, 1993).

Whereas Benford and Snow (2000) thus identify what social movements need to do in order to mobilize people and ideas through framing successfully, Entman (1993) operationalizes the concept of frames and offers a conceptual toolkit with which to detect them by identifying the elements that make up a frame. This proverbial toolkit was later developed into a specific methodology by Matthes and Kohring (2008) in which the four functions of frames are seen as variables making up a frame. These variables are each separately given a code, creating a dataset of texts with different framing variable codes. After this, through hierarchical cluster analysis, patterns are determined. A more detailed description of this method will be given in the methodology section below.

Besides offering a clear conceptual toolkit with which to detect frames, using Entman's (1993) work on the function of frames and the subsequent method outlined by Matthes and Kohring (2008) based on this partly answers an on-going critique within the social movement theory on applying the perspective. Following its inception, the framing perspective on social movements has produced a significant number of works. As Richard Benford (1997), a man considered one of the founders of the framing perspective on social movements, however also noted in his 'insiders' critique, the study of the framing perspective on social movements has suffered from a lack of systematic empirical approaches and an overabundance of self-interpretation biases. More than two decades later, this is arguably still the case. While most articles on framing by social movements are extensively argued and substantiated, frames are still often self-assigned, and while the risk of self-interpretation bias is often acknowledged, little is done to mitigate this risk. While initially developed for frame analysis of news articles within media studies, the method developed by Matthes and Kohring (2008) offers an opportunity to at least in part answer Benford's (1997) main critiques of a lack of systemic empirical analysis and self-interpretation bias. While not wholly resolving these two issues, seeing as it still hinges on a human coder interpretating discourse, it is a move towards a systematic empirical approach and a move away from self-interpretation bias. Thus, whereas the concept of framing, Entman's (1993) identification of the four variables constituting frames and Matthes and Kohring's (2008) method will be used to identify the frames used by Dutch right-wing extremist groups in their online rhetoric, the framing perspective on social movement theory and frame resonance will be applied to understand the choices and actions of said groups.

1.5.2 Conceptualizing Right-Wing Extremism

Similar to the concept of framing, it is essential to define what is meant by right-wing extremism and what defines right-wing extremist organizations. Because of the highly political nature of the term, it has often been used liberally by both the general public and by politically motivated individuals, such as politicians or journalists. This misunderstanding, or misuse, of the term, has often led individuals, organizations, or political parties to be labelled as right-wing extremist undeservedly. For this research, it is thus vital to have a clear operationalisation of the term right-wing extremism.

Defining right-wing extremism, and distinguishing it from the closely related term right-wing radicalism, has been an on-going debate within academics. Numerous researches have theorized on the term, which has led to a significant number of different definitions currently existing. According to Seymour M. Lipset and Early Raab (1977), for instance, extremists are those who exist on the far ends of the political spectrum. For them, it is the degree of acceptance of violence to achieve their political goals which defines whether or not an individual or group can be considered extremist. While this is often an essential aspect of extremism as a whole, this definition is somewhat flawed in that it heavily relies on actually committed violence or openly shared statements. Furthermore, definitions such as these often require crime statistics to determine violence by individuals or groups accurately. It is, however, not always clear whether or not violence against ethnic, racial or political targets was committed for political goals or for other non-related reasons (Sterkenburg, 2021). Similarly, this definition is hindered in that it becomes difficult to define individuals or groups as right-wing extremists who have not openly shown an acceptance of violence.

A different perspective on the question of how to define right-wing extremism comes from Bert Klandermans and Nonna Mayer (2006). Their research was conducted out of an understanding of right-wing extremism as those political parties located furthest on the right in each country (p. 4). From this understanding of the extreme right, they then set out to interview the members of each party to investigate their ideological stances and democratic values. While this method certainly has merit in that the political parties on the furthest right have often in the past attracted right-wing extremists, it somewhat ignores a critical aspect of right-wing extremism that many researchers have agreed upon, anti-democratic values (Sterkenburg, 2021; de Vetten, 2016). Seeing as political parties still operate within the boundaries of parliamentary democracy, it is important to distinguish those political parties that simply exist on the far right of the political spectrum and those actively engaged in anti-democratic reform or possess autocratic beliefs. In the case of the Netherlands, political parties such as *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (LPF), *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* (PVV) and *Forum van Democratie* (FvD) have, for instance, often spurred up controversy as political parties on the far right of the political spectrum and have on occasion been labelled as right-wing extremists. As argued by de Vetten (2016), however, it would be better to consider such parties as radical right, those with radical ideologically right-wing characteristics but still willing to work within the democratic system (p. 17).

What, then, are those characteristics and values that define right-wing extremist ideology? In 1996, Cas Mudde looked at the various studies done on the extreme right family tree between 1980 and 1995 and found over 26 different definitions and 56 different characteristics of right-wing extremist ideology. Out of these, he identified five core characteristics, namely nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democratic values and the ideal of a strong state (Sterkenburg, 2021). Of course, besides these five, other characteristics are often included, such as chauvinism, anti-communism, pessimism, victim mentality, conspiratorial beliefs and acceptance of violence, to name but a few.

In quantitative approaches to identifying right-wing extremist groups, the degree to which individuals or groups can be considered as right-wing extremists is often measured by the number of characteristics that can be assigned to an individual or group. However, this approach is put into question in cases where a group has a racist, xenophobic and nationalist ideology but no anti-democratic values. Again, at least according to writers such as de Vetten (2016) or Lucardi (2010), such a group would be better defined by the term 'radical right'. In a qualitative approach, the characteristic of anti-democratic values is put at the centre and is considered a prerequisite when determining whether or not an individual or group can be considered right-wing extremist (Sterkenburg, 2021, p. 30). This, however, similarly complicates cases where individuals or groups are purely anti-governmental and wish for a stronger, perhaps authoritarian, state but do not share the same racist, xenophobic or nationalist ideology as other right-wing extremist groups. Similarly, if anti-democratic values were to be the only characteristic considered important in defining right-wing extremism, anarchism, historically considered a left-wing movement, becomes a candidate to be included within right-wing extremism. As a result, a mixed approach is often used in which two elements are prerequisites, those being an exclusionary element, such as nationalism, xenophobia or racism, and a hierarchical element, such as authoritarian values (Sterkenburg, 2021). Of course, others still, such as Blee (2010) and Minkenberg (2003), believe there can not be one single definition or checklist with which to determine whether or not an individual or group can be considered right-wing extremist but that instead, each case has to be analysed on its own, through empirical research.

The mixed approach, based on Cas Mudde's (1996) five core characteristics, became widely accepted after 1996. However, in 2005, an important addition to the characteristics was introduced by Elizabeth Carter. She, too, worked with Mudde's five core characteristics but believed two additional characteristics were necessary, those being the rejection of social equality and the rejection of the rule of law, the philosophical principle that states that all citizens are equal before the law and that the state is similarly bound by it. Both these characteristics seem similar, but whereas the former rejects the belief that all ethnic or social groups should be awarded the same legal rights, the latter would allow specific individuals or groups to be above the law and the state to be unchecked.

With these approaches and characteristics in mind, this thesis will use the mixed approach definition as described in Nikki Sterkenburg's (2021) study '*Van actie tot zelfverwezenlijking: routes*

van toetreding tot radicaal- en extreemrechts,' however, will be slightly altered as Sterkenburg's definition specifically focusses on individuals whereas this thesis focusses on right-wing extremist groups. The definition thus follows: *"Individuals and groups can be defined as right-wing extremists when they have an outspoken ideology, characterized by nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democratic beliefs, and/or the call for a strong state. This manifests itself in their desire for an authoritarian state, the willingness to use violence, the desire to restrict parliamentary democracy, their aim for a homogonous ethnic state, the rejection of social equality, and/or the wish to restrict certain constitutional rights (of citizens in general, or of certain ethnic or religious groups)"* (Sterkenburg, 2021, p. 35). As can be seen, this definition adheres to the five core ideological characteristics that Mudde (1996) identified but adds to it by emphasizing the importance of additional characteristics needed for a group or organization to be considered right-wing extreme. This creates an essential boundary between groups with similar ideological characteristics but different ideas on how to achieve those goals.

This delineation responds to the important difference between right-wing radical groups and right-wing extremist groups that writers such as de Vetten (2016) and Carter (2005) emphasize, mainly that a right-wing extremist group only having ideological characteristics of right-wing extremism is not enough to be identified as such. Groups or organizations with right-wing extremist ideological beliefs such as nationalism and xenophobia but attempting to achieve those peacefully, through gradual social or political change, would not be considered right-wing extremist groups. Groups that share similar nationalist or xenophobic beliefs but, for instance, wish to achieve this anti-democratically or through the restriction of constitutional rights would. In cases where the delineation becomes ambiguous, however, Sterkenburg (2021) did still distinguish between groups that wish to restrict constitutional rights from social groups completely and those whose ideas are at odds with them, as with, for instance, the PVV's wish to restrict the building of new Mosques within the Netherlands, reserving right-wing extremism for the former, and right-wing radical for the latter (p. 3).

Finally, by including the characteristic of willingness to use violence that Lipset and Raab (1977) emphasized, Sterkenburg's (2021) definition includes those groups or organizations that may be willing to work through the democratic system but do so while endorsing, advocating, supporting or using violence, including threats of violence. While willingness to use or endorse violence is not necessary to be considered a right-wing extremist group (AIVD, 2021), its presence would elevate a group or organization to the position of 'extreme.'

1.5 Methodology

In terms of methodology, to answer the first sub-question, a critical analysis and in-depth literature review will be conducted into the history and present state of right-wing extremism in the

Netherlands. In particular, through extensive literature research, this study aims to give an answer to the question of what the historical and current state of right-wing extremism has been in the Netherlands. To give an answer to the second sub-questions, research will be conducted through a discourse analysis of a number of social media posts posted by Dutch right-wing extremist groups on Telegram during the Covid-19 pandemic. In particular, as mentioned before, qualitative discourse analysis coding based on the method of Matthes and Kohring (2008), further explained below, will be used to identify which types of frames have been used by Dutch right-wing extremist groups and in what frequency. Coding in discourse analysis refers to applying topics to texts and later analysing these topics for patterns. In this study, a substantial amount of social media posts will be coded based on their content to determine which types of frames have been used. Lastly, to answer the third sub-question, the findings of sub-question two will be analysed first through statistical analysis to determine the frequency of use of particular frames and subsequently through a critical frame analysis to try to determine why certain frames were used more often than others by specific right-wing extremist groups.

In regards to the second sub-question, the identification and coding of frames is often accompanied by certain risks. Often times, studies attempt to identify specific frames by qualitatively interpreting text and connecting them to broader events, thus assigning frames to texts based on the author's own interpretation. This is what is often called the hermeneutical approach (Boni, 2002; see also Coleman & Dysart, 2005; Downs, 2002; Haller & Ralph, 2001; Hanson, 1995; Tucker, 1998). This approach, however, has the downside and pitfall in that the identification of the different possible frames is made arbitrarily by the researchers themselves, possibly resulting in the researchers finding frames they were consciously or unconsciously looking for (Matthes & Kohring, 2008). Empirically proofing as to where the frames one found derive from thus becomes somewhat problematic with this approach.

A different, more quantitative approach can consist of a computer-assisted approach, where a researcher assigns keywords to a search engine to sift through large sets of data, coding that data based on their dictionary content (Miller, 1997; see also Shah et al., 2002; Miller et al., 1998). While it allows for content analysis coding to be applied to larger sets of data than qualitative methods and mostly prevents selection-bias and subjective interpretation, it, similarly to the hermeneutical approach, is accompanied by its own limitations. Most notably, computer-assisted methods assert that a word and a phrase always have exactly one meaning in every context. Because of this, meaningful data may be overlooked or discarded through a computer-assisted method. While this is also sometimes a problem in content analysis, it may be assumed that a human coder is better able to detect these various meanings (Conway, 2006). As Adam Simon (2001), for example, states, ''The chief disadvantage is that the computer is simply unable to understand human language in all its richness, complexity, and subtlety as can a human coder'' (p. 87).

Mainly to avoid the two issues raised here, this study will use the method outlined by Matthes and Kohring (2008), which is based on a method of four-variable coding. While it still relies on self-interpretation by a human coder, it can be seen as more empirically sound as coders do not know which frame they are currently coding, seeing as they are not coding frames as single units. Matthes and Kohring (2008) construe their method around an operationalization of definitions of framing consisting of clear-cut elements. While thus applicable to various different definitions of framing, Matthes and Kohring (2008) base their method on Entman's (1993) definition of framing, outlined in the theoretical framework chapter. Matthes and Kohring see the four elements in Entman's definition, a *problem definition,* a *causal interpretation,* a *moral evaluation,* and/or a *treatment recommendation,* as variables making up a particular frame. Each of these variables is looked at separately and coded as a particular frame element. After this, Matthes and Kohring (2008) applied hierarchical cluster analysis to find specific patterns. These patterns, in turn, signify different frames. While this method does not entirely solve the self-interpretation problem described above, it helps lessen its impact. By separately coding variables, the analysis becomes less subjective and more empirically sound (Matthes & Kohring, 2008).

Rather than the hierarchical cluster analysis through an automated process that Matthes and Kohring (2008) used, however, this thesis will cluster by hand through the use of sub-frames. Due to the relatively low amount of data, as well as the fact that an automated cluster analysis may miss certain significant but low-frequency occurring frames, a cluster analysis by hand is preferred. The use of clustering sub-frames was used by Harlow (2011) in his analysis of the frames employed by the Guatemalan justice movement and has been shown to lead to a more structured and systematic analysis of the types of frames used, preventing separate analyses of only slightly differing frames.

Data for the second sub-question will be gathered by scouring through social media posts by Dutch right-wing extremist groups posted on Telegram. While including other social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook or Instagram would broaden the available data, due to the limited scope of the study, a selection has to be made in regard to from which social media platforms to gather data. Telegram was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, Telegram distinguishes itself from other social media platforms for its lack of regulation and censorship. Both Twitter and Facebook have, in recent years, increased their control over what can and cannot be posted, with a significant number of posts being removed from their platforms. Telegram does not share this limitation. Right-wing extremist groups can thus be more liberal in their communication towards the outside world. The second benefit of using Telegram is that it is relatively open-source and accessible. Anyone can open an account and view posts from any group. This prevents the researcher from having to scour through the 'dark web' or deal with ethical issues which may arise from integrating into online extremist groups by pretending to share a similar belief set (Marzano, 2021). The third benefit is the anonymity Telegram provides to its users. While social media users often hide behind anonymity on any platform, Telegram has become famous for its insurance on user anonymity. This aspect has led Telegram to become one of

the main channels for criminals and fringe groups, such as extremist groups, to communicate (Walther & McCoy, 2021). As such, it provides the opportunity to extract large amounts of data from a single platform.

Relevant right-wing extremist groups for this study will be chosen by selecting them from a potential list of right-wing extremist groups drafted in April 2021 by the Anne Frank institute. Commissioned by the Expertise-unit Social Stability (ESS) of the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, the report portrays the current state of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands and lists 27 right-wing extremist groups which in the 24 months prior to the report were visibly active. Out of these 27 groups, this study will make a selection based on their commensurability with this study's definition of right-wing extremism and whether or not they have an official Telegram presence.

Chapter 2: Historic and Current State of Right-Wing Extremism in the Netherlands

2.1 Introduction

In order to understand framing by right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands, it is necessary to properly understand the context in which Dutch right-wing extremism developed and currently operates. To do this, a historical perspective can be helpful. By outlining the most important aspects of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands, this research paper gains an important historical perspective with which to understand current trends within Dutch right-wing extremism and aids in answering the main research question of this research paper, which seeks to explain actions by right-wing extremist groups in their context.

When writing a history of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands, the end of world war two has often been chosen as a departure point from which to write, as the disastrous outcomes of the war pushed right-wing extremist ideologies to the very fringes of society. To structure it, this thesis will draw on Wagenaar's (2021) post world war two periodization of the history of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands. Whereas Wagenaar (2021), however, periodized 1945 to the present into five distinct periods, this thesis periodizes it into four parts, combining the periods of 1970 to 1981 and 1981 to 2000 into one, as both periods describe early manifestations of right-wing extremist ideology developing within the Dutch political landscape, and are similar examples of the then still precarious position of right-wing ideology within Dutch society. Thus, this chapter is divided into four parts: a period characterized by the continuation of people and ideas following the end of world war two, 1945-1970, one characterized by the re-emergence of right-wing extremist ideology with the political landscape through political movements such as the NVU (*Nederlandse Volks Unie*) and the Centre Movement (*Centrumbeweging*), 1971-2000, a period of shifting ideological themes and youth sub-cultures, 2000-2015, and a period of increasing normalization, individualization and digitization, 2015-Present.[1] The following chapter will thus address these four periods and attempt to answer the first sub-question of this research: "*What has been the historical and current state of right-wing extremism within the Netherlands?*"

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[1] For a more detailed history of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands, see a decade by decade post-world war two history in Sterkenburg, N. (2021). Van actie tot zelfverwezenlijking: routes van toetreding tot radicaal- en extreemrechts. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3176648.

2.2 1945-1970: Social Experiments and the Farmers Party

The period shortly following the end of world war two saw the Dutch state firmly distancing itself from the national socialist ideology that had inspired Nazi Germany. More than 300.000 Dutch citizens were accused of collaboration with the German occupier, treason against the Dutch state, entering into the armed services of an enemy state, or to have been a member of the Waffen SS or the NSB, the political party in collaboration with Nazi Germany (Sterkenburg, 2021). Of those 300.000 accused, around 100.000 were eventually imprisoned and labelled as 'political delinquents,' of which 14.000 received actual sentencing (Sterkenburg, 2021). In addition, through the 'Decree Dissolution of Treasonous Organizations,' around thirty national socialist organizations were disbanded and outlawed, among which the NSB (van Donselaar, 1991). The years directly following the capitulation of the German empire thus saw a thorough purge of national socialism and, through it, right-wing extremist sympathies within the Netherlands, ensuring a relatively long period of inactivity of right-wing extremism.

While, however, a certain stigma was created around right-wing extremist ideology, it would not simply die out. Following the release of the tens of thousands of accused collaborators, the early 1950s saw those branded as 'political delinquents' strictly monitored, hampered in finding jobs and housing, kicked out of church communities and had their voting rights taken away, in effect, relegating them to a marginalized position within society (Thames, 2013). While most seemed to accept this position, a small group of former national socialists felt victimized, feeling wronged by the Dutch government as they believed their actions during the war had been in service to the Dutch state (Sterkenburg, 2021). Others still defended national socialism on the grounds that not all aspects of the ideology had necessarily been wrong (Thames, 2013).

In response to the marginalisation of 'political delinquents,' several small organizations were erected beginning in the late 1940s. These organizations helped those branded as 'political delinquents' to find work and housing. One example of such an organization was the SOPD, *'Stichting Oud Politieke Deliquenten.'* Erected in 1951 by self-declared national socialist Jan Wolthuis and former Waffen-SS fighter Jan Hartman, the SOPD set out to help those labelled as political delinquents to find work and endeavoured to receive official political amnesty from the government for political delinquents (Sterkenburg, 2021). Even though the SOPD portrayed itself as a charitable organization, according to van Donselaar (1991), its politically activist nature was clearly visible through the organization their attempts to organize commemorations for the deceased former leader of the NSB, Anton Mussert, and attempt to organize a commemoration for fallen SS members. According to van Donselaar (1991), the SOPD existed as "an experiment to see how society would react to the existence of a new organization of national socialists" (p. 37). If considered an experiment, as van Donselaar put it, it can be argued to have had mixed results. On the one hand, the organization remained very small, with only six members on the SOPD main board of executives and having

roughly only a hundred donors to the organization (van Donselaar, 1991). On the other hand, though critics consistently accused the SOPD of aiming to keep the ideology of national socialism alive, they were left relatively alone by the government, neither getting banned nor their members being prosecuted (Sterkenburg, 2021).

Two years following the erection of the SOPD, Wolthuis, together with another former Waffen-SS fighter, Paul van Tienen, formed a political party to gain a formal voice within the parliamentary democracy of the Netherlands, the NESB, '*Nationaal Europees Sociale Beweging'*. This time, however, the government did move against the party. Seeing the NESB simply as a continuation of the banned war-time NSB and an attempt to revive national socialism, the government officially banned the party four months after its formation (Thames, 2013). This ban was consequently upheld by the Dutch courts two years later, and Wolthuis and van Tienen were sentenced to two months in prison. Whereas the SOPD was thus seemingly left alone by the government, blatant attempts for a continuation of the NSB and nationalist socialist ideology were quickly struck down (Sterkenburg, 2021).

A final example of both the continuation of nationalist socialism staying alive in the post-world war two Netherlands and the continued stigma and rejection surrounding it can be seen through the formation of the '*Boerenpartij,'* the Farmers Party, formed in 1958 by Henrik Koekoek. Koekoek, who had previously belonged to the collective opposition party, the NOU, and had deep ties to former wartime collaborators and political delinquents, responded to the widespread dissatisfaction among Dutch farmers against state intervention and oppression (Sterkenburg, 2021). While having only limited success in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Farmers Party would quickly grow into a general protest party against the political establishment, winning nearly 7% of the seats in the 1966 provincial council elections, compared to the 0,19% in the 1962 elections, going up from one provincial council seat to 44 (NLVerkiezingen, 2021). Additionally, the Farmers Party would subsequently also win big in the 1966 municipal elections of Amsterdam (9,4%), Rotterdam (7,4%), The Hague (6,9%) and Utrecht (9,3%) (NLVerkiezingen, 2021). Its success would, however, end quickly after senate members Hendrik Adams and Evert Jan Roskam, along with other party members, were revealed to have been former members of the NSB or the SS. The right-wing characteristic of the Farmers Party, by van Donselaar (1991), seen as a general right-wing extremist characteristic (p. 126), had supposedly attracted many members with fascist and right-wing extremist sympathies who subsequently were able to rise to positions of leadership (Nooij, 1979; van Donselaar, 1991). When this came to light, however, the party quickly lost a majority of its support and would eventually disintegrate, with only Hendrik Koekoek remaining in parliament until 1981 (Sterkenburg, 2021).

As seen, while initially still small, the SOPD, NSEB and other similar organizations and initiatives signalled a continuance of national socialism and right-wing extremist sympathises in the period shortly following world war two and would ensure its continued existence within the Netherlands. Governmental restrictions and general public rejection, however, ensured that national

socialist ideology and right-wing extremism failed to gain any semblance of a foothold in the Dutch political or social landscape. Additionally, as seen with the Farmers Party, any organization with too great of an association with national socialism or those 'tainted' by the war would quickly lose its support. As Wagenaar (2021) thus put it, rather than growth or development, in terms of right-wing extremism: "this period was in essence characterized by a continuation of people and ideas that had played a considerable role in the collaboration atmosphere of the war" (p. 11). This arguably changed, however, in the 1970s, when for the first time, people with no personal memory of the war and not 'stained' by it entered the picture (Sterkenburg, 2021, p. 53).

2.3 1971-2000 The NVU and Centre Movement

With the emergence of a new group of individuals, not directly influenced by the country's past, right-wing extremism within the Netherlands also slowly seemed to move away from issues related to the collaboration era and more towards an agenda of anti-immigration, addressing the issue of guest workers and keeping the Netherlands 'pure.' In addition, even though the influx of new people into the right-wing extremist sphere grew, the continuation of people and ideas from the collaboration era did still remain relevant within the new organizations during this period. Organizations which best exemplified this during the period were the NVU, *Nederlandse Volks-Unie,* and the political parties arising from the Centre Movement.

Initially, the NVU had been formed in 1971 as a political organization that strove to gain political amnesty for those labelled 'political delinquents.' Not long after, however, under the direction of future leader Joop Glimmerveen and supported by the younger members of the organization, the party started to move away from the past and towards an agenda of anti-immigration, nationalism and political reform, responding more to the existing tensions within society (Sterkenburg, 2021). Before his ascension to party leader in 1974, Glimmerveen had been put in charge of the propaganda efforts of the organization. Under him, calls for the 'biological survival of the Dutch people' and the unification of a Dutch state spanning from the northern province of Groningen to the Belgian area of Flanders began to be put forward (van Donselaar, 1991). In addition, the NVU began to directly attack the parliamentary democracy within the Netherlands, believing more autocratic political reform was needed. The political reform program that the NVU published in 1972 argued firstly for the granting of veto-power to the prime-minister, allowing him to overrule decisions made by parliament, and secondly wished to reform parliament in such a way that a substantial part of parliament would go on to consist of appointed, rather than elected, members from a select group of intellectuals and army officers (Voerman & Lucardie, 1992, p. 38).

When Glimmerveen took over leadership of the NVU in 1974, the organization rapidly became more extreme. Glimmerveen had been elected to partly leadership after he specifically targeted immigrants and guest workers during the municipality elections of 1974. During these

elections, he called for The Hague, the city in which he ran, to remain 'white and safe' and ran on a message focussing on the removal of people originating from the Antilles and Suriname, who 'parasitized' the wealth and jobs of the Dutch people (Sterkenburg, 2021, p. 55). While he would not manage to win a seat in the municipal elections, he gained great popularity within the NVU, allowing him to take charge of the organization the same year. In the following years, the NVU turned more and more towards a glorification of the Nazi leadership and ideology. According to Sterkenburg (2021), despite him not having been a member of either the NSB or SS, Glimmerveen would go on to combine an appreciation for the national socialist past with the modern problems of immigration and guest workers, allowing him to unite both the older and newer right-wing extremist within the organization (p. 55). As Wagenaar (2021) similarly put it, the NVU under Glimmerveen could be considered an "adaptation of themes [immigration] within the existing national socialist ideological framework with a continuance of people [from the collaboration era]" (p. 12).

As the NVU still coupled old ideals with more modern concerns, the organization remained relatively entrenched in the past. Though the younger generation, such as Glimmerveen and other members, had brought the NVU relevancy, the combination with old nationalist socialist ideals and people ensured its continued entrenchment within the past. In part because of this, it would fail to gain any political influence over the course of its existence from 1971 to the present. The real break from the past would start to occur in the 1980s with the emergence of the Centre Movement, a movement focussed on nationalism, preservation of Dutch culture and combatting immigration, but also the preservation of the environment and favourable to governmental interference in the economy (Sterkenburg, 2021; Fennema & van der Burg, 2006). They portrayed themselves to the public as neither left nor right but centre.

Considered first in the Centre Movement, the Centre Party, *Centrumpartij,* was founded in 1980 by Henry Brookman, who, while initially party leader, quickly handed over leadership to Hans Janmaat in 1981. While initially unsuccessful in the 1981 elections, the Centre Party managed to win a single seat in the parliamentary elections of 1982, and despite continued attacks by the media, linking the Centre Party with increasing racist and xenophobic violence, the party quickly grew from a couple of hundred members to around 3.500 members between 1980 to 1983 (Sterkenburg, 2021, p. 62). The party would, however, implode in 1984 through internal conflict with the more militant Nico Knost taking over leadership and, shortly after, expelling Janmaat from the party. Janmaat would go on to keep his seat in parliament and form a new party with much the same message, the Centre Democrats, *Centrumdemocraten,* whereas the Centre Party would lose its seat in the 1986 elections. After its bankruptcy in 1986, the Centre Party ceased to exist but made a restart as the CP'86. While unsuccessful in national elections, CP'86 would be able to win several seats in municipality elections in the late 1980s and 1990s.

Whereas the Centre Movement had initially distanced itself from right-wing extremist organizations and individuals. In the late 1980s and 1990s, both the CP'86 and the Centre Democrats

became increasingly associated with them. Core members of the NJF and the JFN, radical youth divisions of the NVU, among which several militant neo-Nazis, would come to join CP'86. The Centre Movement would similarly associate itself more and more with right-wing extremism with Richard van der Plas of the 'Action front National Socialist' (ANS), another neo-Nazi militant group, becoming a member of the board of the Centre Democrats. As Sterkenburg (2021) notes here, a shift could be seen in the late 1980s and early 1990s, whereas previously organizations would mainly be tainted by members with an NSB or SS past, now it could similarly be affected by radical youths who became more extreme in their right-wing ideology and would not shy away from violence (p. 64).

Due to the Centre Movement's continued racist statements and xenophobic agendas, the Centre Party's victory in the 1982 elections and the rising influence of the Centre Movement were met with significant political and societal outcry. On the 16th of September, 1982, thousands gathered in The Hague to protest against the admittance of Janmaat to parliament (Witte, 1998). Employees were sometimes fired if revealed to be members of the Centre Democrats or CP'86, and at least three workers' unions disallowed members from being active members of either party (Sterkenburg, 2021, 68). New governmental regulation focussed on allowing foreign residents to vote and increasing constituency limits furthermore attempted to limit the Centre Movement's political influence through elections (Fennema & van der Burg, 2006, p. 8) and both politicians as media sources continuously attempted to discredit the Centre Movement by rapidly labelling any anti-immigration stance as right-wing extremist (Wagenaar, 2021, 5). Finally, both left-wing movements and anti-fascist movements attempted to disrupt and repress the emergence of right-wing extremism through ever-escalating threats and violence (Sterkenburg, 2021). Most violent among these was the attack on the Cosmopolite hotel in Kedichem, where on 29th of March, 1986, members of the Centre Party and Centre Democrats, among which Janmaat, had gathered in order to attempt to reconcile the two parties. Around two hundred activists would stoke the hotel with smoke bombs, accidentally causing the hotel to catch fire and heavily injuring several people inside (Sterkenburg, 2021).

As mentioned, it is often challenging to differentiate right-wing radical groups from right-wing extremist groups. While some scholars have argued that the Centre Party and Centre Democrats of Janmaat and the CP'86 should, in fact, be considered right-wing extremist organizations (Fennema & van der Burg, 2006; van Donselaar, 1991; Husbands, 1992), others argue against this terminology, considering the parties to be more 'right-wing radical' (De Vetten, 2016) or right-wing populist (Lucardie, 2010) than 'right-wing extremist'. Due to their willingness to achieve their goals through democratic and parliamentary means, it would be fitting to consider them as right-wing radical groups. On the other hand, all three parties would increasingly be associated with racist and xenophobic violence, and while never directly linked to party leadership, criminal lawsuits against individual members of both the Centre Democrats and the CP'86 and an apparent willingness to accept violence would aid in the criminalization of both parties and association with right-wing extremism (Sterkenburg, 2021). The Centre Movement would also continuously attract those with right-wing

extremist sympathies, both young and old, and provide them with a place to gather and influence each other (Sterkenburg, 2021), exemplifying the still significant role political organizations had in the right-wing extremist movement during this period.

On the other hand, the rise of the Centre Movement also showed a radicalisation in the fight against right-wing extremism in the Netherlands (Wagenaar, 2021). Through public demonstrations, left-wing radical and extremist attacks, governmental restrictions and media attacks, any appearance of right-wing extremism was quickly struck down. As De Vetten (2016), for instance, argued, at the time, it was seen as self-evident that any semblance of right-wing extremism had to be put down as quickly as possible, with a seeming disregard for whether or not the organization had antidemocratic right-wing extremist beliefs, or, were, in fact, populist protest parties (p. 21).

2.4 2000-2015 Shifting Themes and Youth Sub-Cultures

Following the period 1970-2000, the years 2001, 2002 and 2004 became important turning points within right-wing extremism in the Netherlands. Firstly, the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre in New York in 2001 led Islam to become an increasing topic of discussion within the public debate. While Islam had already been subjected to increasing scrutiny by popular politician Pim Fortuyn, the 9/11 attacks and the later murder of Theo van Gogh in 2004 intensified this debate and began to move the exclusionary mentality within right-wing extremist ideology more and more toward Islam and Muslims (Wagenaar, 2021). Secondly, the murder of politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002, who had in recent years gained great public success on a platform of anti-immigration, anti-multiculturalism and anti-Islam, sparked significant debate about the constitutional freedom of speech within the Netherlands and the acceptance of such beliefs within the public debate.

The period directly following the 9/11 attacks saw a significant increase in anti-Islamic sentiment and violent crimes perpetrated out of anti-Islamic motivation. In particular, Mosques throughout the country would face some form of attacks, such as defacement, destruction and bomb threats. However, Islamic schools similarly became the target of militant activists, which led to parents keeping their children home out of fear of being targeted (van Donselaar & Rodrigues, 2004). While Muslims and Islamic places of worship had been the target of violence in the past, it increased significantly after 9/11, with anti-Islamic violence following 9/11 accounting for nearly 60% of all violent crimes in 2001 (van Donselaar & Rodrigues, 2004, p. 18). Whereas politicians such as Pim Fortuyn had previously already pointed towards the dangers of Islam to the Dutch identity and Dutch cultural values, the 9/11 attacks directly showed the danger Islam could pose, providing right-wing extremist groups ample fuel to attack Dutch Muslims on the pretence of keeping the Netherlands 'safe.'

Second of importance in this period had been the popularity and subsequent political assassination of 'populist'[2] politician Pim Fortuyn. Fortuyn had seen great public support in recent years on a platform anti-migration, anti-Islam and protecting the Dutch identity. In particular, his emphasis on the Dutch 'people' and returning power to the common people resonated with a large part of the population. While Fortuyn would explicitly reject nationalism as being part of his political agenda, according to Lucardie (2010), his emphasis on the Dutch cultural identity, as well as his goal of protecting Dutch sovereignty from a "soulless Europe," could be seen as nothing but nationalist sentiment (p. 160). Due to his personal popularity, Fortuyn's political party, the LPF, *Lijst Pim Fortuyn,* was projected to win significant electoral success in the 2002 parliamentary elections. However, nine days prior to the elections, he would be assassinated by left-wing extremist Volkert van der Graaf, the first peacetime political assassination in centuries.

His death would directly be followed by a tremendous amount of hostility, in particular threats of violence. At first, against racial and ethnic individuals or groups, but as more was revealed surrounding his death, against left-wing politicians, environmental activists, left-wing activists and bureaucrats (van Donselaar & Rodrigues, 2004). While van Donselaar and Rodrigues (2004) were unable to gain insight into the degree of right-extremist influence within the large influx of threats on leftist individuals or groups directly following the murder of Fortuyn, his death became a symbol to right-wing extremist groups. Both then and now, his death has been used by right-wing extremists to exemplify the dangers of left-wing activism, as to keep his political ideas of anti-immigration and anti-Islam alive, as seen, for instance, with the annual commemoration of his death by Pegida and the NVU.

Both 9/11 and the death of Pim Fortuyn would come to have significant effects on the thematic development of right-wing extremism within the Netherlands but would not necessarily lead to a greater influx of members or success for right-wing extremist organizations (Wagenaar, 2021). While there were several efforts throughout the country to raise up local organizations, they were largely overshadowed by national political parties such as *Leefbaar Nederland* (LN)*, Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (LPF) and the *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* (PVV) which became political spokespersons for many of the grievances around immigration, multi-culturalism and Islam (Sterkenburg, 2021). As a result of their success, more established political parties would similarly take a more critical stance towards these topics, slowly opening up space within the public debate and gradually normalizing such issues. This drew many away from right-wing extremist groups. Success among right-wing extremist organizations, especially more radical and militant such as the ANS, Blood & Honour and other apolitical right-wing extremist groups, would come from a different direction. Youth sub-cultures, in

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[2] For a more detailed description of Pim Fortuyn's populism see: Mudde, C. (2004). The Populist Zeitgeist. Government and Opposition, 39 (4), 541- 563 or Rydgren, J. & Van Holsteyn, J. (2005). Holl and and Pim Fortuyn: A Deviant Case or the Beginning of Something New? In J. Rydgren (Ed.), Movements of Exclusion: Radical Right-Wing Populism in the Western World (pp. 41 -64). New York: Nova Science.

particular, a popular sub-culture called the '*Lonsdalejongeren,*' named after the brand of clothing commonly worn by them, while brief, would cause an influx in support and members of right-wing extremist groups and activity in the early to late 2000s.

Various youth sub-cultures have, over the years, been continuously associated with right-wing extremist organizations, ideologies or activities. These include football hooliganism, skinhead culture and punk culture, to name but a few. All three of these have frequently been linked to cases of violence perpetrated out of racist or xenophobic motivation. As Hajo Schoppen (1997), however, noted in his study on the relation between youth sub-cultures and right-wing extremism, while xenophobic and racist ideas and violent actions were a visible aspect of these cultures, they were not necessarily deeply rooted within the sub-cultures themselves, and only a select minority of those part of them could, in fact, be linked to right-wing extremist groups (p. 68).

According to Schoppen (1997), this differed, however, in the case of gabber culture, a culture typified by a new style of music, *hardcore*, shaved heads, and particular tracksuits and gym shoes. While it would not develop a coherent, overarching political ideology, those engaged within gabber culture often developed chauvinistic, racist, and right-wing extremist ideas further exacerbated through both in- and out-group radicalization (van Donselaar & Rodriques, 2002; Sterkenburg, 2021). Most pronounced among these were the *'lonsdalejongeren,'* who belonged to a second generation of gabbers, primarily active between 2000 and 2010. *Lonsdalejongeren* distinguished themselves from the larger gabber culture by wearing Lonsdale clothing, a clothing brand often associated with neo-Nazis and other right-wing extremist groups. Even though, again, only a minority of these *lonsdalejongeren* would, in fact, officially join right-wing extremist organizations, this still constituted a large influx of new members to right-extremist organizations and allowed them to rapidly grow by several hundred active members in a very short time (Wagenaar, 2021, p.13). Similarly, assault against those with a migration background and vandalism of asylum centres and mosques would significantly increase among this group (Sterkenburg, 2021).

This success was, however, short-lived. As both Wagenaar (2021) and Sterkenburg (2021) note, this gabber effect on right-wing extremist activity could only be described as temporary, as with the gradual disappearance of the gabber culture, membership and activity among right-wing extremist organizations would similarly decline. Sterkenburg (2021) mainly explained the gabber culture effect on right-wing extremist membership as being not so much motivated by intrinsic right-wing extremist ideology among this group, though there certainly were some, but rather, she argued, right-wing extremist organizations provided an alternative social environment outside of mainstream society. Through social gatherings at bars, concerts and group activities, right-wing extremist groups such as Blood & Honour, ANS, and other close knitted local, sometimes national, extremist groups were able to attract those youths disassociated from general society and who were looking for an alternative social framework (Sterkenburg, 2021; Wagenaar, 2021; Wagenaar & van Donselaar, 2008). Thus, as those engaged in gabber culture in their youth became older, entered the workforce and began exiting

the right-wing extremist circuit, membership among them similarly went down. Simultaneously due to there being a very low influx of new members into right-wing extremist organizations at this time, the amount of observed active right-wing extremists would quickly diminish again around 2010 and would remain relatively stable throughout the rest of this period, with active right-wing extremists only hovering around 120 individuals from 2010 to 2014 (Wagenaar, 2016, p. 43).

2.5 2015-Present: Digitization and Individualization

Whereas the amount of recorded active right-wing extremists remained relatively stable from 2010 to 2014, in 2015, right-wing extremism would once again experience a spike, realizing an increase to 245 observed active right-wing extremists, more than double the number compared to 2014 (Wagenaar, 2016, p. 43). The period of 2015 onwards saw several domestic and global developments which would significantly impact right-wing extremism in the Netherlands as well as gradually normalize certain right-wing extremist beliefs. Important among these were the refugee crisis of 2015, increasing public debate surrounding Black Pete, and the Covid-19 pandemic. Similarly, in addition to a new right-wing extremist movement, accelerationism, gaining significant popularity, this period saw the importance of the internet and social media to right-wing extremist groups increasing compared to previous years, something which has had a significant impact on both how groups operate, as the radicalization process (Wagenaar, 2021). Due to their recency, these developments and how they have impacted the development of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands will be briefly discussed in the following chapter.

2.5.1 Recent Thematic Developments Within Right-Wing Extremism

The European refugee crisis of 2015 has had a significant influence on right-wing extremism within the Netherlands. Following the outbreak of war in Syria, in addition to unrest in Africa and the Middle-East, Europe began to experience a significant increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers starting in 2015. In total, around 1,3 million people would come to Europe that year to request asylum. The European refugee crisis, internationally also known as the Syrian refugee crisis, would spark fierce debate, protests and resistance and stimulated a surge of right-wing sentiments across the EU. Within the Netherlands, many individuals would come to express concerns about the threat Islamic asylum seekers could pose to their personal safety and cultural or national identities. (Van Prooijen et. al., 2018). Right-wing extremist groups were able to capitalize on these uncertainties by amplifying xenophobic thoughts and spreading fear of terrorism and violence by asylum seekers. These fears were further amplified after the Bataclan and Zaventem terrorist attacks in late 2015 and early 2016, respectively. Again, right-wing extremists linked the attacks to the refugee discussion and fears of an Islamification of Europe.

It proved to be effective as in a short time, active right-wing extremists in the Netherlands again almost doubled in the middle of 2016 to 420 and recorded right-wing extremist violence similarly rose sharply (Wagenaar, 2016, p. 43; NCTV, 2018, p. 16). On a regular basis, right-wing extremist organizations would organise and participate in protests and (violent) actions against asylum seekers' centres, local politicians or administrators or simply those favourable to asylum seekers. The refugee crisis and terrorist attacks proved to be a catalyst to already existing, widespread fears of Islam and the supposed Islamification of the Netherlands and Europe. While the effect of the refugee crisis and terrorist attacks on right-wing extremist participation has significantly decreased as the public debate has slowly died out, the potential threat asylum seekers, in particular Muslim asylum seekers, pose to both personal safety as one's national and cultural identity, has remained an important theme within Dutch right-wing extremism.

The fact that right-wing extremism can be strongly related to heated public debates, social unrest and questions about cultural and national identity also appears in the case of *Zwarte Piet*, Black Pete. The national celebration of *Sinterklaas* has caused controversy not just in the Netherlands, but around the world, due to the appearance of his helper, Black Pete, whose body and face are in traditional fashion painted completely black. Many have pointed out the racist aspects behind this tradition, sparking fierce discussion within Dutch society between those who recognize the racist aspect of the holiday and those who feel their national and cultural identity is being threatened. Due to the nationalistic character of Black Pete, as well as the perceived threat that multiculturalism and globalization are posing to one's national and cultural identity, right-wing extremists groups have been able to utilize the public unrest surrounding the discussion effectively and have included Black Pete as an important theme within their narratives and activism.

Already in 2014 and 2015, there were several protests of pro- and anti-Black Pete activists, among which several right-wing extremist activists managed to integrate themselves (Wagenaar, 2021). Since then, the discussion has only further radicalized, with right-wing extremist activism escalating to several degrees. Whereas activism had previously mostly limited itself to the national celebration on the second Saturday of November, right-wing extremist actions have spread throughout the entire period of October to December and across the country (NCTV, 2018). Additionally, both anti-Black Pete activists and local administrators have increasingly been faced with intimidation, threats of violence or, on a few occasions, have been directly attacked. Though public opinion is slowly moving towards changing Black Pete's appearance, with only a slight majority of 56% wanting to keep Black Pete the same in 2021, compared to 89% in 2013 (Klapwijk, 2021), Black Pete will most likely remain an important thematic point within right-wing extremism in the future due to its deep connections to Dutch nationalism and that for some right-wing extremists, it is a perfect example of the supposed threat multiculturalism poses to their perceived 'Dutch identity'.

Thirdly, and most significant for this thesis, has been the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, right-wing extremism has increasingly become seen as a threat to

western societies, with more and more authors warning that groups have been able to successfully use the pandemic to advance their narrative, propaganda and activism or increase support (McNeil, 2020; Campion et al., 2021;). According to McNeil (2020), right-wing extremist groups may do this to aid recruitment, encourage broader engagement or induce violence and radicalisation, or all three (McNeil, 2020). Various analysts have warned that the pandemic exposed the weakness within the current social and political system, allowing right-wing extremist groups to capitalize on the growing dissatisfaction and distrust among the general public (Chapelan, 2021; Campion et al., 2021). The right-wing extremist ideology, often directly at odds with governments, media and science, aligns with wider shared feelings among those dissatisfied with Covid-19 policies and distrustful of politics. Similarly, many of the conspiracy theories surrounding Covid-19 found a connection with various right-wing extremist ideas, thus allowing them to integrate themselves within such circles more easily (Wagenaar, 2021).

In particular, right-wing extremist groups found common ground within the Covid protests in which dissatisfied citizens expressed their grievances and discontent about the Covid policies enacted by the government. This has been relatively common in recent years, with right-wing extremist groups often participating in anti-government protests such as the yellow jackets protest of 2018 or the recent farmer's protests. In the U.S. and Germany, the hijacking of the Covid protests has arguably been most pronounced, with the Proud Boys in the U.S. being the driving force behind many demonstrations in the U.S. and individuals from the extreme right being behind the Reichstag Storming in Germany (Dongen & Leidig, 2021). Due to their marginal numbers and poor cooperation, however, right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands were unable to give meaningful direction to the protests (Wagenaar, 2021).

Their participation would, however, lead to greater exposure to the group and movement as the media would often report on their presence. Additionally, the NCTV (2021) observed small-scale radicalization among a small number of protesters where the primary concern comes from lone wolfs, radicalized by right-wing extremist ideas and with pre-existing personal grievances. The NCTV (2021, p. 4) expressed that this may lead to public disturbances, intimidation, threats or destruction against governmental actors or institutions and though unlikely, the AIVD (2021) expressed concern, based on instances in other countries, for such radicalization to develop into right-wing extremist inspired terrorist attacks.

As seen through the refugee crisis, Black Pete discussion and the recent Covid-19 pandemic, besides thematic changes, there seems to be an increasing change in those who are targeted by right-wing extremist activism. Whereas in previous decades, targets of right-wing extremist activism had in most instances been limited to racial and ethnic targets (Sterkenburg, 2021; Wagenaar, 2021), recently, this seems to be shifting towards those politically opposed to right-wing ideology or goals. This includes local and national politicians, journalists, administrators, left-wing activists, and in some cases, regular citizens in favour of more leftist policies. Similarly, whereas previously confrontational

violence had most often come from left-wing extremist activists attacking right-wing extremist activists, now it is often right-wing extremists who actively set out for confrontational violence against politically opposed individuals or groups (Wagenaar, 2021).

Willem Wagenaar (2021), a researcher on right-wing extremism from the Anne Frank Institute, mainly attributed this shift in target to the increasingly popular '*omvolkings'* theory, also known as the 'Great Replacement' theory. Disseminated initially by the French author and right-wing extremist Renaud Camus, the theory of the Great Replacement revolves around the idea that a global strategy is currently in motion to destroy the 'white' race by allowing and encouraging migration and asylum, thus slowly marginalizing those of the 'white' race and in the end, replacing them altogether. In most cases, this is seen as intentionally being orchestrated by left-wing elites, the media and those acting behind the shadows, such as for instance philanthropist George Soros, Bill Gates or the Jewish race. Because of this, the Great Replacement Theory emphasizes the role that the left-wing elite, the media and the establishment in general play and thus shifts the focus of right-wing extremist activism from racial or social groups, such as migrants and refugees, to those in power or those seemingly supporting their policies. In recent years, the Great Replacement theory has gained a significant amount of traction within right-wing extremist circles, causing the NCTV (2022) to place significant concern about the normalization of such conspiracy theories.

While undoubtedly important, there may possibly be an equally important trend similarly affecting the apparent shift in targets, namely the influence accelerationism has had on traditional right-wing extremist groups. Accelerationism has been a recent rapidly growing movement within right-wing extremism that advocates extreme violence to 'accelerate' the demise of the system (Azani et al., 2020) and has gained great popularity among a new generation of right-wing extremists, mainly between the ages of 13 to 30, a generation which has grown up with the internet (AIVD, 2022, p. 6-7).

As a concept, accelerationism has been around for some time now, with Marxist theory initially proposing that the drastic acceleration of social processes such as capitalism and technological change would aid in radical social change (Becket, 2017). Within right-wing extremism, the term has taken on the meaning as being the desire to accelerate conflict to cause societal collapse, opening up the way towards the building of a homogonous state, be it cultural or ethnic. Rather than through gradual social change or political change, accelerationists believe the only way to gain influence is by causing chaos and conflict, thus destabilizing the system. Those who have acted on this belief, such as the Christchurch shooter or Walmart shooter, are glorified in an attempt to inspire others (Azani et al., 2020).

Murders, assassinations, sabotage, bombings, vandalism and other types of violence would are seen as the optimal way to accelerate the destabilization and possible collapse of the system. As James Mason, often cited as the inspiration for right-wing extremist accelerationism, for instance, wrote in his newsletter *Siege*: "If I were asked by anyone of my opinion on what to look for (or hope for) next, I would tell them a wave of killings, or 'assassinations' of system bureaucrats by roving gun men who

have their strategy well mapped-out in advance and well-nigh impossible to stop" (Mason, 1992, p. 283). From this short citation, it becomes clear that rather than, for instance, Muslims, people of colour, or other traditionally targeted social or cultural groups, James Mason beliefs that those who keep the system in place are those that should be targeted. This, in turn, can be similarly perceived as those consisting of the political elite, the media, law enforcement agencies, or others who supposedly prevent right-wing extremism from gaining influence, thus partly explaining this apparent shift in targets.

What is important to note, however, is that controversially, in most recorded cases of accelerationist-inspired attacks, such as the Christchurch mosque shooting, the Poway synagogue shooting or the El Paso Walmart shooting, the targets were not those who kept the system in place but rather Muslims, Jews and immigrants respectfully. It is also these types of attacks that most often become venerated and shared as examples within accelerationist circles (Azani et al., 2021). The reason why this thesis still considers it as a potential influence on the apparent shift in targets is that the fundamental idea within accelerationism that influence and success of the movement can only be gained through the system's collapse or destabilization could possibly well have had a significant effect on other right-wing extremist movements. While accelerationists believe this should be accelerated violently, this is not necessarily the only way. By inciting discord, polarizing society, and making people distrust governmental institutions, mainstream media and political elites, traditional right-wing extremist groups are similarly able to destabilize democratic systems and the rule of law, thus opening up room for right-wing extremist ideology into general society and the current political systems. The NCTV (2022) similarly sees the threat of traditional right-wing extremist groups, as opposed to accelerationist groups, not as coming from potential terrorist attacks on racial or political targets but rather as manifesting itself, in particular, in the undermining of the democratic legal order and in the attacks on the rule of law and social cohesion in society (p.29).

2.5.2 Increasing Importance of the Internet and Social Media

Besides the thematic changes and apparent changes in targets of right-wing extremist activism, the final significant development within right-wing extremism in this period has been the increasing importance that the internet and social media have played in recent years. The internet and social media have for some time now been a place where right-wing extremist organizations have been easily able to disseminate their message and ideology. Despite this, it was rarely used effectively to recruit, mobilize or organize people (Liang & Cross, 2021; Wagenaar, 2021). Similarly, while the internet was able to serve as a gathering place for many individuals to anonymously share ideas and opinions, some more extreme than others, they rarely became active outside of the digital space. Such individuals were, and still often are, labelled as 'keyboard warriors,' those with radical, sometimes violent, ideas and strategies but only able to voice them anonymously and never able to act on them (Geddes, 2016).

In the last few years, however, the digital and real world has increasingly become more intertwined, with right-wing extremist groups using the internet, and in particular social media, more and more to recruit, mobilize and organise, and right-wing extremist individuals, previously confined behind the screen, becoming more visible and active within the real world. Wagenaar (2021) identified three main consequences of this development, namely the increasing globalization of right-wing extremism, the development of fluid group structures and an intensification of the individual radicalization process (p. 21). All three of these will be discussed below.

As the world has grown ever more globalized since the onset of the internet and social media, so has right-wing extremism. Those with extremist beliefs have been able to exchange ideas quickly and gather online in chatrooms, internet forums or on social media. This has resulted in right-wing extremism in the Netherlands increasingly becoming globalized and influenced by foreign ideological developments. Whereas in the past, Dutch right-wing extremism was ideologically mainly influenced by European influences, this is seemingly shifting towards mainly North-American influences (Wagenaar, 2021). This can be, for instance, seen in the popularity that North-American conspiracy theories have had in Dutch and European right-wing extremist groups in recent years, as well as the popularity of accelerationism and the Alt-right movement around the world. Additionally, the accessibility that the internet can provide, as well as the relatively low language barrier of English, has resulted in various from origin British or American online extremist groups being accessed or participated in by Dutch right-wing extremists. This includes foreign groups being participated in by different people around the world, but also separate local branches of organizations being set up, among which a degree of cooperation can occur. One example of this is, for instance, Pegida, which since its emergence in Germany in 2014, has led to several official branches being erected throughout Western- and Northern Europe, the UK and Canada. A different kind of example is 'The Base,' a North-American right-wing terrorist group which aims to set up terrorist cells throughout the Western world and whose recruitment almost exclusively occurs digitally. In October 2020, two Dutch youths were arrested and later convicted for their participation in The Base (NCTV, 2021), exemplifying the increasing reach such organizations have.

A second important development the increasing importance of the internet and social media has had on right-wing extremism has been the increasing fluidity and individualization of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands. Both individuals and groups seem to have become less bound by traditional organizational structures and group hierarchies in recent years (Wagenaar, 2021). Nowadays, individuals are able to join a group one day and leave the next with ease. Groups can similarly be formed and disbanded equally effortlessly. This can be seen as a clear departure from more traditional right-wing extremist groups and organizations in which members were bound by formal memberships, and organizational hierarchies were deeply imbedded within the operational structure of the group. In particular, this has been observed within the accelerationist movement, where individuals generally form loosely bound online groups, brought together by a shared ideology

or goal (AIVD, 2022). Other movements, however, are seeing similar developments with right-wing extremist participation, groups and initiatives, in general, becoming more fluid (Wagenaar, 2021).

A significant reason for this individualization has been the emergence of a new generation of right-wing extremists, generally those between the ages of 13 and 30 years old. In other words, those who have grown up with the internet and social media (AIVD, 2022, p. 6). Individuals of this generation often do not join what are in their minds old-fashioned, right-wing extremist groups but are easily able to get in contact with right-wing extremist ideology and beliefs through social media channels such as Telegram, Instagram or Discord (NCTV, 2020, p. 53). They are able to easily self-educate themselves through online propaganda and get in contact with groups which can quickly radicalize their views (Liang & Cross, 2021). However, also many of the older generations have seemingly become less bound by traditional group structures, at least within the Netherlands. Sterkenburg (2021), for instance, identified, among those she interviewed, many older right-wing extremists in the Netherlands who deliberately have not joined any organization or group in recent years, as they have already experienced organizations falling apart due to internal strife (p. 87). She identified them as 'freelancers,' activists who fluidly participate in various events without joining any one organization or having any formal memberships. Both young and old thus seem to increasingly move away from traditional, organised, 'offline' right-wing extremist groups towards more dynamic, fluid and digital groups, forcing traditional groups and organizations to adapt to a more fragmented and diffused landscape.

The final consequence of the increasing importance of the internet during this period has been the effect the internet and social media have had on individual radicalization. In an in-depth interview research of various former German right-wing extremists, Daniel Koehler (2014) found that most saw the internet as having been the most important factor in their individual radicalization process. Similar findings were also later confirmed by Sieckelinck et al. (2019) and Gaudette et al. (2020), whose studies both similarly highlighted the importance that the internet and online exposure to right-wing extremist propaganda had had on the radicalization process of their research subjects. The Netherlands similarly has had various cases where individuals, mainly youths, got in contact with right-wing extremist ideology, got involved with small online groups and in a very short time, radicalized in their political orientation and willingness to use violence, something which Wagenaar (2021) has referred to as, *flitsradicalisering,* flash radicalisation (p. 23). A significant factor in this process has been the anonymity the internet, and social media channels such as Telegram have provided to group members. Hidden behind anonymity, groups are often filled with exaggerations, bragging and lies in which violence is a common reoccurring theme (Wagenaar, 2021). Without any opposing opinions, such comments quickly become the norm to which members and newcomers conform to, often quickly escalating several degrees. Through this dynamic, acceptance of violence and willingness to use it quickly becomes normalised, and any risks to such behaviour or expressions are neglected (Wagenaar, 2021).

This, again, can be seen as a clear departure from radicalization in the more traditional right-wing extremist groups. In those, members meet in person and radicalization is often kept in check, both by interpersonal social interaction through which exaggerations and lies are easily detected, as by organizational leadership, which curbs escalating violent fantasies which may harm the organization (Wagenaar, 2021). Those self-radicalizing through the internet also often lack proper oversight. Both friends and family are often unable to notice signs that someone is radicalizing or involved in right-wing extremist circles. Additionally, whereas law enforcement agencies are relatively easily able to identify members of traditional right-wing extremist groups, they are often unable to identify those that are self-radicalizing or engaged within small, unofficial, online groups of individuals (AIVD, 2022). This has, in recent years, further complicated any form of intervention within the radicalization processes.

2.6 Conclusion on the State of Right-Wing Extremism in the Netherlands

This chapter aimed to give a brief overview of the post-war history of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands. From this overview, several conclusions on the current state of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands can be drawn. Firstly, as seen with, for instance, the popularity of right-wing extremism among youth sub-cultures such as the *lonsdalejongeren*, right-wing extremism can have a strong pull factor on young people, mainly those who feel disconnected from general society and are looking for alternative places to belong. Vulnerable youth and adolescents, often without much of a social safety net in the form of family or friends, can easily be pulled into right-wing extremist circles. This has seemingly not changed from the past, with many of the current right-wing extremists having been observed being between the ages of 13 and 30. The Covid-19 lockdowns further forced people inside, separating them from their social networks and pushing people behind their digital screens onto the internet. Simultaneously, common frustrations among youth and adolescents, such as social isolation, disconnection with general society, difficulties in finding a job or income inequalities, were further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic (Tahrin, 2021). With youths and adolescents thus having more time on the internet every day due to governmental restrictions, little social oversight due to real-life social interaction having been limited, increasing frustrations due to the consequences of the pandemic, as well the increasing ease to which individuals can self-educate and self-radicalize around right-wing extremism, radicalization among this group has again been especially prominent.

Secondly, as seen throughout the four periods, right-wing extremism seems to have gradually shifted away from the political scene towards more apolitical and less organised organizations or groups. Whereas in the first two periods following the end of world war two, right-wing extremists seemed to still primarily gather around political organizations such as the Farmers party, the NVU or the parties arising from the Centre Movement, from the 2000s onwards, apolitical organizations, often local, such as ANS and Blood and Honour started to become more prominent. Following the

increasing importance of the internet, as well as the emergence of a new generation of right-wing extremists who have grown up with the internet, this trend seems to have developed even further, with many right-wing extremists currently moving away from more traditional right-wing extremist organizations and instead operating independently or gathering in small online groups of individuals, brought together by a shared ideology—creating a fragmented and individualized landscape.

Thirdly, whereas the social and political climate directly following the end of world war two was still very much resistant to the existence of right-wing extremist ideas and ideology, this seems to have similarly shifted towards a more tolerant climate, with many mainstream political parties adopting more right-wing political stances, and society generally being more open to right-wing extremist ideas. Whereas in the first two periods, any semblance of right-wing extremism was still heavily repressed, as seen, for instance, in the public protests against the election of Janmaat to the Dutch parliament, or the sanctioning of CP'86 members by workers' unions, this seems to have significantly lessened by the end of the 20th century, with right-wing extremists commonly joining various types of protests or being given a voice in public debates. This has similarly developed further into the current period, with many right-wing extremist ideas freely being exchanged both offline and online and right-wing extremist ideas slowly becoming more normalized within society. While there certainly is still a certain stigma against right-wing extremism within Dutch society, this is nowhere near the outright repression right-wing extremism faced during the 20th century.

From the perspective of social movement theory, these trends force us to look at certain aspects of social movement theory in a new light. In particular, a core aspect in social movement theory, that a social movement organization's core task is to recruit new people to maintain its survival and grow its influence and capacity (Borum, 2021), has to be revaluated in the current state of right-wing extremism. The idea of formal membership in an organization or participation in a movement has increasingly become blurred by the anonymity and flexibility that the internet and social media have provided in recent years. Traditional forms of group structures and formal membership are in need of adaptation to a scene where more and more people are able to self-educate themselves through online propaganda, shy away from traditional right-wing extremist groups and instead get in contact with small groups of like-minded people, through which their views can quickly radicalize. Traditional places of radicalization and activism are shifting from offline meetings, protests or conferences towards chat rooms, internet forums and social media channels. This fragmented landscape of individuals, freelancers, and small online groups of individual right-wing extremists forces traditional right-wing extremist groups to adapt to change their tactic, their role, and their means of reaching their goals. This is important to keep in mind as we analyse the data in the following chapter and see what types of frames have been deployed in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. Whether right-wing extremist groups mainly focussed on convincing individuals of their groups' ideology in an attempt to attract people to the social movement or whether they primarily aimed to discredit and attack the

establishment, thus mainly mobilizing people against the system without necessarily promoting right-wing extremist movement-specific frames.

Chapter 3: Right-wing Extremist Framing of the Covid-19 Pandemic

3.1 Introduction

To identify the types of frames used by right-wing extremist groups during the Covid-19 pandemic, the first step of analysis consisted of identifying the right-wing extremist organizations viable for examination. Of the 27 officially recognized by the ESS as right-wing extremist organizations, six were found to have official Telegram channels and adhere to the definition of right-wing extremist groups laid out in the theoretical framework section. Having an official Telegram channel refers to the type of channel which has only one official operator who is able to post messages in the channel and in which general discussion is closed (Walter & McCoy, 2021). These official channels distinguish themselves from discussion channels in which there is no official operator, and all members of the group are able to post messages (Mazzoni, 2019). While there may have possibly been additional groups among the 27 identified by the ESS with a Telegram presence, these will have been closed-off groups, only able to be accessed through invitation. Due to ethical limitations on infiltrating groups on pretences (Marzano, 2021), these groups were exempted from the analysis. In the end, the six organizations with official Telegram channels from which viable data could be gathered were Pegida, Identitair Verzet, Geuzenbond, Erkenbrand, Volksverzet and Voorpost. Voorpost, as both a Flanders and Dutch right-wing extremist group, was included despite many Belgian-specific posts due to its sizeable Dutch audience as well as its emphasis on a shared Dutch cultural identity.

From these six right-wing extremist organizations, when cleaned of duplicates, a total of 146 separate posts were found to be made within the period of 11-03-2020 to 24-02-2022 directly referring to the Covid-19 pandemic or related concepts such as the lockdown, vaccination and night curfew. The period was chosen to cover the initial development of the outbreak, with the WHO officially declaring Covid-19 to be a pandemic on March 11, 2020, to the removal of most of the last remaining Covid-19 regulations on the 24th of February, 2022, signalling the end of the pandemic. These posts consist of statements, pictures, videos, and links to self-published articles or shared links. Pegida was found to have made 32 non-duplicate posts, Erkenbrand 13, Geuzenbond two, Identitair Verzet 68, Volksverzet two and Voorpost 29.

Each post was then individually coded by four separate variables, a problem definition, a causal interpretation, a moral evaluation and a treatment recommendation. Based on the four variables identified in each post together, codes were allocated by the researcher to each post, to qualify the framing prevailing in that post, from hence forth referred to as a sub-frame code. Due to the nature of

the method, during the coding process, for some posts it seemed necessary to apply more than one code. A post could, for instance, contain two problem definitions and two causal interpretations. As an example, a post could contrast the Covid-19 policy of travel restrictions with still ongoing illegal immigration, thus addressing two problems, travel restriction and migration. Such posts were coded more than once to account for the additional sub-frame contained in them. In the end, this led to a total of 171 separate sub-frame codes.

Through systematically comparing these 171 framing codes qualitatively, 18 general sub-frames were able to be identified. After this, the 18 sub-frames were clustered by the researcher to combine similar sub-frames into a single overarching social movement frame. As mentioned before, the usage of sub-frames for a more structured and systematic frame analysis was similarly done by Harlow (2011) in his analysis of the frames employed by the Guatemalan justice movement. While his method of determining frames differs from this thesis, his employment of sub-frames was used to give a more systematic analysis of the various different frames found in this research. An example of the process is represented through a diagram in figure 1, and the exact designation of each variable for each post and the specific sub-frame code can be found in the appendix and additionally archived primary data.
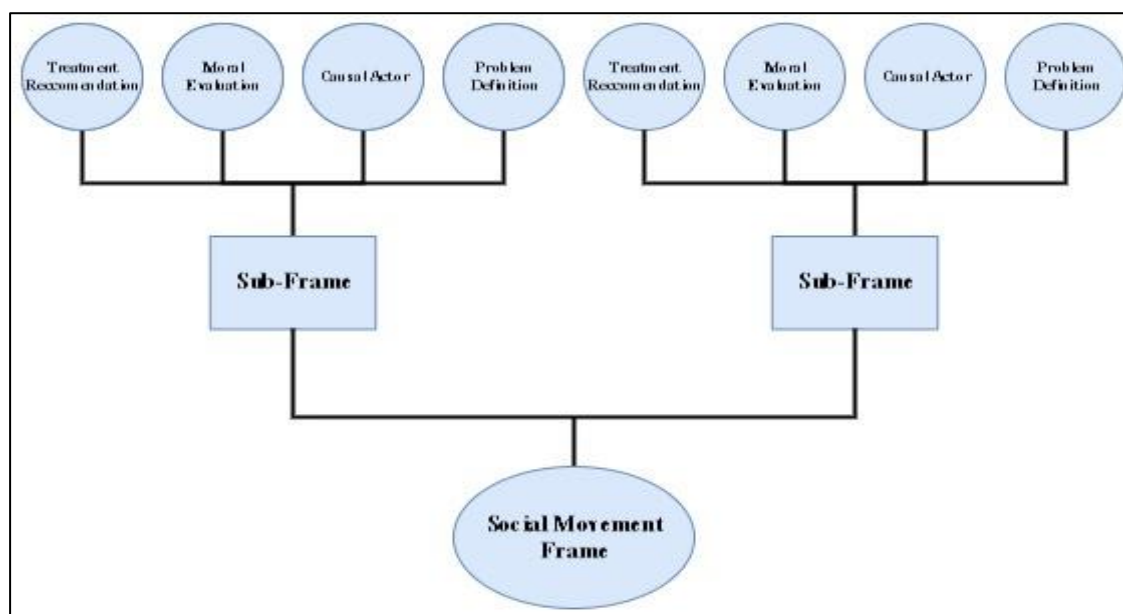
Figure 1: Diagram of the four variable coding methodology.

The process of qualitatively clustering the 18 sub-frames resulted in a total of six social movement frames being found, five frames corresponding with earlier findings on the same topic by Richard McNeil (2020), with one frame diverging from it. The six frames identified are the Globalization frame; the Governance frame; the Migration frame; the Liberty frame; the Resilience frame; and the Distrust frame, the final frame significantly diverging from McNeil's (2020) earlier

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findings. In addition to the diverging identification of the sixth frame, this research found significant differences with McNeil's (2020) findings in the frequency particular frames were deployed. These findings will be discussed in the following section.

3.2 Frames Deployed by Right-wing Extremist Groups

As mentioned, from the initial 171 separate sub-frame codes, six final frames on how to understand the Covid-19 pandemic were found to have been disseminated by right-wing extremist organizations on Telegram:

1. Globalization: Frames that used the Covid-19 pandemic to emphasize globalization and multi-culturalism as being the cause of the Covid-19 pandemic or express other Covid-19-related grievances.
2. Governance: Frames that emphasized bad governance or hypocritical actions by the elite during the Covid-19 pandemic.
3. Liberty: Frames that emphasized the increased repressiveness of the government and the curtailment of civil liberties as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.
4. Migration: Frames that emphasized migration as the cause of the spread of Covid-19 or used the pandemic to make more salient the problems around immigration and asylum.
5. Resilience: Frames that emphasized the need to come together as a community and help others during the pandemic.
6. Distrust: Frames that expressed the need to distrust governments, experts, media or other institutions by emphasizing supposed lies, untruths and manipulation around the Covid-19 pandemic.

The number of times each frame was used and by which organization is shown here below in Table 1:

	Erkenbrand	Geuzenbond	Identitair Verzet	Pegida	Volks Verzet	Voorpost	Total
Globalization frame	1		3	2		6	12
Governance frame	3		24	11		8	46
Liberty frame	8	1	22	10	2	15	58
Migration frame	1		1	6		3	11
Resilience frame		1	1			4	6
Distrust frame	8		22	7	1		38
Total	21	2	73	36	3	36	171

Table 1: Number of times each of the six frames was used and by which right-wing extremist group.

The same data is presented in percentages in Table 2:

	Erkenbrand	Geuzenbond	Identitair Verzet	Pegida	Volks Verzet	Voorpost	Total
Globalization frame	0,58%	0%	1,75%	1,17%	0%	3,51%	7,02%
Governance frame	1,75%	0%	14,04%	6,43%	0%	4,68%	26,90%
Liberty frame	4,68%	0,58%	12,87%	5,85%	1,17%	8,77%	33,92%
Migration frame	0,58%	0%	0,58%	3,51%	0%	1,75%	6,43%
Resilience frame	0%	0,58%	0,58%	0,00%	0%	2,34%	3,51%
Distrust frame	4,68%	0%	12,87%	4,09%	0,58%	0%	22,22%
Total	12,28%	1,17%	42,69%	21,05%	1,75%	21,05%	100,00%

Table 2: Percentage of times each of the six frames was used and by which right-wing extremist group.

In the following sections, each frame will be discussed separately, after which the implications of these empirical findings will be discussed in correlation with the framing perspective on social movement theory.

3.2.1 The Globalization Frame

The first frame, globalization, was found in twelve of the 171 sub-frames, constituting 7,02% of the entire dataset. The ways in which this frame was deployed were diverse, ranging from emphasizing the loss of national sovereignty as a result of handing over more power to international organizations to a loss of national culture and the Dutch language due to the increasing use of the English language in Covid-19 prevention material. Erkenbrand, for example, in response to the various directives given by the WHO to the Dutch government, warned:

"U denkt wellicht nog dat u straks in het stemhokje de regering van een soeverein land gaat kiezen. Als u echter terugkijkt op het regeringsbeleid van het afgelopen jaar, is er dan iets dat duidt op de eigen koers van een soevereine staat?" [You might still think that soon, in the voting booth, you are choosing the government of a sovereign nation. However, if you look back at the government's policies of the past year, is there anything to indicate a sovereign state's own course?] (Erkenbrandt, 20-12-2020).

In the same article, Erkenbrand subsequently similarly warns against the erection of a "globalist technocracy," further emphasizing the dangers that Covid-19, in particular global cooperation in response to the pandemic, poses to Dutch sovereignty. Similar claims were made by Identitair Verzet in a post warning against a global elite from the WEF and their increasing involvement within Dutch politics (Identitair Verzet, 04-01-2022). These beliefs share points of comparison with commonly disseminated conspiracy theories such as the earlier discussed Great Replacement theory, or the Great Reset theory, based on the belief that the Covid-19 pandemic and measures to combat it was implemented by a global elite in an attempt to take over the world. Both of these theories warn against global elites manipulating societies.

Other posts containing the globalization frame framed the Covid-19 pandemic more in a way that emphasized the threat globalization poses to national and cultural identity. Voorpost, for instance, deployed the frame by mainly emphasizing the loss of Dutch culture and, in particular, language as a result of increasing globalization following the Covid-19 pandemic.

"*Corona tast ons Nederlands aan. We zijn we in LOCKDOWN. We moeten SOCIAL DISTANCING toepassen en we zijn verplicht om onze activiteiten ON HOLD te zetten. (….) De taal van ons volk is Nederlands." ["Corona is affecting our Dutch language. We are in LOCKDOWN. We need to apply SOCIAL DISTANCING and we are obligated to put our activities ON HOLD. (….). The language of our people is Dutch".]* (Voorpost, 12-05-2020).

This post by Voorpost is a typical example of a primary concern for Identarian movements, namely the protection of national and cultural identity. Using the Covid-19 pandemic, Voorpost emphasizes the gradual loss of a national language through Anglicisation. Though not used in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, similar concerns were often found in Telegram posts made by Geuzenbond, an exceedingly nationalistic group.

Within the globalization frame, was also clustered the sub-frame multi-culturalism, frames which expressed anger or discontent about minorities, those not part of the dominant cultural or ethnic group. Specifically, this frame was used to criticize Muslims and the apparent double standard between Muslims and the ethnic/cultural Dutch. The reason why multi-culturalism was included as a sub-frame within the globalization frame is that multi-culturalism has often been considered a direct product of globalization (Mikheeva & Petrova, 2018; Hylland-Eriksen, 2015). Globalization has led to the reconfiguration of different cultures, religions and nationalities, creating diverse societies around the world (Hylland-Eriksen, 2015). Looked at differently, globalization and its product, multi-culturalism, can thus also signify a failure of nationalism, the intrusion of different cultural and national identities within one's country. In total, five out of the twelve globalization posts could be identified as containing the multi-culturalism frame. All five of them defined Islam or Muslims as a problem or identified them as a causal actor causing a particular problem. Pegida, an inherently anti-Islam group, for instance, posted:

"*In aanloop en tijdens Pasen, Kerst, Oudjaar en mooi zomerweer werden we bedolven onder onheilspellende #corona waarschuwingen, nu de groep die meermaals voor overvolle IC afdelingen verantwoordelijk was ramadan viert horen we ze niet" ["In the run-up and during Easter, Christmas, New Year's Eve and summer weather, we were bombarded with ominous #corona warnings, now that the group that was responsible several times for overcrowded IC departments celebrates Ramadan, we don't hear them."]* (Pegida, 28-03-2021).

Here, Pegida simultaneously assigns blame to the Muslim community for the pressure on the healthcare sector and points towards the double standard between 'Dutch' celebrations and Muslim celebrations. This is seemingly done in order to make more salient problems associated with Islam and mobilize people against the religion. A similar post was made by Identitair Verzet:

"Nooit hoorde we #aboutaleb over de avondklok. Het maakte hem niets uit. Maar nu het over moslims en de #ramadan gaat maakt hij zich ineens grote zorgen... We moeten af van de islam in NL." ["Never did we hear from #aboutaleb about the night curfew before. He did not care. However, now that it is concerning Muslims and #Ramadan, he suddenly expresses large concerns… We need to get rid of Islam in the Netherlands."] (Identitair Verzet, 22-03-2021).

Again, the perceived unequal treatment between native Dutch and Muslims is emphasized in this post in an attempt to mobilize people against Islam. Here, there is also a clear treatment recommendation in the form of the expression that we need to get rid of Islam in the Netherlands, legitimized by the earlier claim on unequal treatment.

The frequency of use of the globalization frame is somewhat surprising. Given the nationalistic characteristic inherent in many right-wing extremist groups, as well as their usual emphasis on the protection of their national and cultural identity, it is common to assume that this frame would occur more frequently. There is also a significant difference when compared to the findings of McNeil (2020), who detected the globalization frame in 25,8% of his 207 found frames. In particular, it was also expected that more multi-culturalism sub-frames would be deployed by the right-wing extremist group Pegida, which has as its primary goal to protect Dutch cultural identity from Islamification. In the end, however, only 2 of the 36 frames deployed by Pegida could be classified as multi-culturalism sub-frames.

One reason for the low frequency of the globalization frame may be that contrary to a typical frame surrounding Covid-19 within the U.S., U.K. or Australia, for instance (Campion et al., 2021; McNeil, 2020; Bolsen et al., 2020), there were no references made in any of the 141 Dutch posts of Chinese or Asian responsibility in causing or spreading the virus. This is most likely due to the relatively small minority community that Chinese and Asians constitute within the Netherlands, making them less of a significant target for right-wing extremist groups due to their low visibility within Dutch society. As a result, as there was little incentive to frame this minority group negatively or mobilize against them, right-wing extremist groups may have instead focussed on issues that affect a more significant amount of people, thus decreasing the overall frequency of the globalization frame. With the origin of the virus also early on being established as having come from China, it may have become more difficult for outspoken anti-Islam groups, such as Pegida, to attribute blame on other minority communities, such as Muslims.

Secondly, according to McNeil (2020), "critiques of globalisation and globalism, when used by Far Right groups, have often acted as a cover for antisemitism" (p. 15). Similar to the lack of Chinese blame attribution, however, there was a lack of any antisemitic sentiment in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic in Dutch posts, safe for one made by Erkenbrand, which implicated Jews, Dutch mainstream media and scientific experts from controlling our government (Erkenbrand, 01-03-2021). While there were some posts during this period with antisemitic sentiments, these were not framed in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. The low frequency of antisemitic sentiment may have resulted from the ideological character of the right-wing extremist groups under examination. Only Erkenbrand and Volksverzet could be appropriately categorized as 'national socialist' right-wing extremist groups (Wagenaar, 2021). Seeing as both groups only posted on Telegram in a limited fashion, with Volksverzet only posting two non-duplicate posts related to the Covid-19 pandemic, the frequency of antisemitic content will have been skewed compared to the findings of McNeil (2020), who strategically chose three national socialist groups which posted on Telegram in high frequency.

Thirdly, as mentioned before, as argued by Cammaerts (2018), the Dutch identity has often been typified by a form of civic nationalism, which sees itself as inherently anti-nationalist, internationalist, egalitarian and open to difference. This may, in part, similarly account for the low frequency of the globalization frame. As mentioned, frame resonance is often dependent on pre-existing ideational beliefs and cultural values. With a cultural context open to internationalism and with many Dutch people seeing globalization as part of their national identity (Cammaerts, 2018), globalization frames may have been considered by right-wing extremist groups to be less effective in attracting and mobilizing its target audience, the Dutch people, than other frames.

3.2.2 The Governance Frame

The second frame found was the Governance frame, found in 46 cases, constituting 26,90% of all frames found, the second most occurring of the six frames found. Here, frames were mainly deployed to criticize governmental actions, portray the government as incompetent or corrupt, or emphasize the futility or negative consequences of the Covid-19 policies enacted by the government. Many posts used the dissatisfaction around the Covid measures such as the lockdowns, night curfews or vaccination policy to attack the government for their poor management or incompetence surrounding the pandemic. Others still pointed towards the hypocritical actions and decisions of the government and other elite, either towards ordinary people complying with Covid-19 measures or towards right-wing political activists

A significant number of posts containing the governance frame pointed towards the poor decision-making inherent in many of the government's responses to the pandemic, greatly emphasizing the role of the government during the pandemic. In response to the new lockdown at the beginning of 2021, Identitair Verzet, for example, tapped into the increasing discontent felt by many

as a result of the previous lockdown by emphasizing the lack of scientific basis the government is using to justify their Covid-19 policy:

"Wij worden als volk gegijzeld op basis van aannames, niet op basis van gedegen onderzoek of gebleken resultaten." ["We as a people are being held hostage on the basis of assumptions, not based on thorough research or proven results"] (Identitair Verzet, 27-01-2021).

Pegida, in a different post, similarly taps into the dissatisfaction felt by many about the harshness of the measures relative to the impact of the disease by emphasizing the poor governance around the decision for a new lockdown:

"Wat is er mis in een land met 17 miljoen inwoners, dat de overheid bij 315 Corona patiënten op de IC een lockdown besluit." [What is wrong in a country with 17 million inhabitants, that the government decides to implement a lockdown with 315 Corona patients in the ICU?"] (Pegida, 12-11-2021).

Other posts deployed the frame differently, mainly emphasizing the negative consequences the prevention measures and governmental decisions have caused. One such example is a post by Identitair Verzet, which shared a post by ADF, a right-wing political party in Germany, in which the number of children in the hospital in the past 24 months as a result of Covid-19 was contrasted to the number of children in the hospital in the past three months as a result of attempted suicide. The post suggests a 'mere' 124 Covid-19 patients were admitted compared to 500 attempted suicide cases, an apparent 61% increase compared to a 400% increase. Below this Identitair Verzet posted:

"Cijfers zeggen genoeg. De geestelijke langetermijn schade is groter dan een klein aantal kinderen in het ziekenhuis." ["The numbers are clear. The long-term mental health damage is bigger than the small amount of children in the hospital"] (Identitair Verzet, 19-01-2022).

Posts such as these seem to make more salient the governance aspect around the Covid-19 pandemic, constructing a frame through which people come to understand the negative consequences of the pandemic not as a result of the virus itself perse, but rather as a result of poor governance by the ruling elite and current government. This can also be seen in posts which emphasize other forms of negative consequences the Covid policies had had, ranging from the economic consequence that the closing of bars and restaurants had had on business owners (Identitair Verzet, 31-03-2021) to health issues such as the deterioration of fitness as a result of closing gyms (Erkenbrand, 21-05-2021). Again, blame for these problems is not attributed to the pandemic itself but to the bad handling of the pandemic or the harshness of the measures implemented by the government.

Understanding this frame as such, the relatively high frequency of the governance frame may, in part, be understood as resulting from the high potential for frame resonance. As mentioned before, social movement frames 'resonate' when large amounts of people find them convincing, natural or familiar (McCammon, 2013). This is often achieved when pre-existing ideational belief sets or cultural contexts 'align' with the ideational character of the frame (McCammon, 2013). It may, however, also be achieved through "empirical credibility" and "experiential commensurability" (Snow & Benford, 1988). That is, social movement frames are likely to be more convincing when they correlate with the target audience's perceptions of the current state of affairs or their experiences when they have a supposed empirical basis. Put differently, an ongoing pandemic putting great economic, social, medical and mental strain on populaces around the world will have to lend itself well to social movement frames which clearly define the problem and give clear causal actors, in other words, whom to blame.

The attribution of blame has been greatly researched in relation to framing (Hameleers et al., 2018; Busby et al., 2019; Bolsen et al., 2020). Various studies have shown that blame attribution on an identifiable target can elicit more significant feelings of anger and response within the target audience, especially when it can be determined that the target had free will (Bolsen et al., 2020; Levin et al., 2016; Nahmias & Nadelhoffer, 2005; Shariff et al., 2014). The more specific the blame attribution, the more likely it is that people will protest, even when inaccurate (Bolsen et al., 2020). Similarly, according to Javeline (2003): "Narrowly attributed blame is a more powerful motivator than diffuse blame, even if diffuse blame is warranted by the objective fact" (p. 108).

Understood as such, the high frequency of the governance frame may thus be at least in part due to the high potential to both resonate with-, as well elicit a response from right-wing extremist groups, their target audience, as it clearly identifies who is to blame for their misfortunes. While these frames often do not provide strong treatment recommendations (offer solutions) or contain evident right-wing extremist ideological characteristics with which to attract adherents to their organization, they seem to primarily aim to mobilize against the government, the status quo, and the political system.

A particular sub-frame still to note within the governance frame in relation to the high potential for frame resonance of the governance frame is the elite frame. This frame mainly emphasized the hypocritical actions shown by political or societal elites or the double standards between the people and the elite. Most common among these were posts in which instances where important governmental officials, such as Hugo de Jonge, the minister of health, or Ferdinand Grapperhuis, minister of justice and security, were shown to ignore the Covid-19 prevention measures. For instance, in response to successive cases of governmental officials disregarding Covid-19 rules, Pegida posted:

"Hoelang kijken we nog toe, dat men onze vrijheden afpakt en de Elite zelf gewoon doorgaat met leven?" ["How much longer will we watch while our freedoms are taken away while the Elite themselves simply continue their lives?"] (Pegida, 20-02-2021).

Identitair Verzet similarly often pointed out the hypocritical actions of the political and societal elite, also often referring to the royal family as examples of elites being above 'the people.' In response to the birthday celebrations of the royal princess, Identitair Verzet, for instance, posted:

"Iedereen is gelijk voor de wet. Alleen sommige mensen zijn meer gelijk dan anderen." ["Everyone is equal before the law. Only some people are 'more' equal than others."]
(Identitair verzet, 20-12-2021)

The delineation of 'the people' and a political or societal elite is a common theme within right-wing extremist rhetoric (Caiani & della Porta, 2010). Right-wing extremism has often been accompanied by 'populist' or 'elite' framing, which greatly emphasizes the us-versus-them dichotomy between the 'common people' and a political and societal elite (Caiani & della Porta, 2010). Posts such as these may thus enforce this belief and similarly have high potential to resonate well with a target audience which, through successive examples, i.e. empirical credibility, may feel increasingly disillusioned by its current government or political elite, which seemingly fails to uphold the same high standards they are forced to uphold.

3.2.3 The Liberty Frame

Whereas the governance frame mainly criticized the government for its poor governance, incompetence or double standards, the liberty frame mainly emphasized the repressiveness of the government or the restriction of civil liberties as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The liberty frame became the most frequently occurring frame among the seven, with 59 posts containing this frame, constituting 34,50% of the entire dataset.

Most common among the posts clustered within the liberty frame was the repressive governance sub-frame. In various ways, the increasingly repressive behaviour of the government as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic was emphasized in these posts in order to instil the idea that people were gradually losing their civil liberties and rights. This was, for instance, done by posting various instances in which the government was intervening in private matters such as Christmas celebrations, whom to associate with or how to spend their free time and suggesting that this would become the new normal, that the government would slowly curtail certain rights and civil liberties, gradually turning the Netherlands into an autocratic police state.

A common theme within this sub-frame, mainly shared by Identitair Verzet, was the link between night curfews during the German occupation of the Netherlands and the night curfews implemented to combat Covid-19. This was mainly done in order to portray governmental actions as being as bad or worse than the repressive Nazi regime. An example of this can be seen in figure 2.
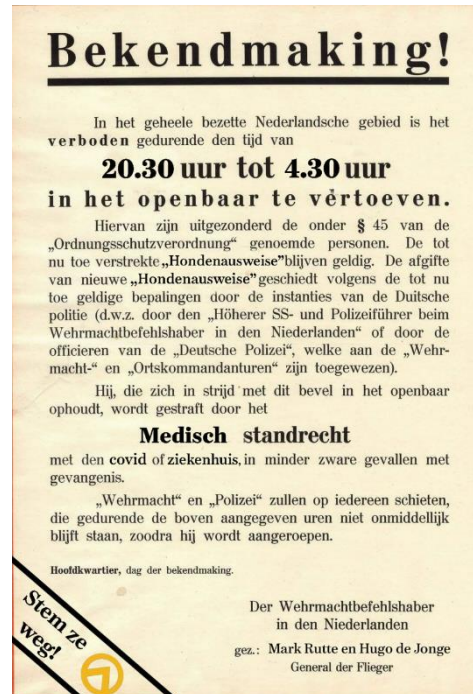
Figure 2: Image posted by Identitair Verzet (Identitair Verzet, 20-01-2021)

In figure 2, a proclamation from the German Occupation implementing a night curfew can be seen, which was posted by Identitair Verzet. However, Identitair Verzet changed various phrases or names, seemingly to suggest a direct link between the repressive policies of the Nazi regime and the measures implemented by the government to combat Covid-19. Other posts too used words such as "tyranny" or "dictatorship" to refer to the current government or pointed to the increasing use of the police to "repress" citizens, suggesting a gradual move towards a police state. Others still regularly posted warnings of the government aiming to restrict certain constitutional rights, such as the right of demonstration, further emphasizing the supposed increasing repressiveness of the government in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

While most of the posts containing a liberty frame had strong negative moral evaluations, either of the government or the Covid-19 measures, a few also contained positive moral evaluation, as was the case in a post made by Pegida in which they positively evaluated the decision of German courts to restrict certain Covid measures, thus protecting civil liberties:

"Boom. Volgende rechtbank in Duitsland die een corona maatregel voorlopig van tafel veegt!
Een rechtbank in Beieren zet 15km maatregel buiten werking, hiertegen is geen beroep mogelijk."

["Boom. Next court in Germany to sweep a corona measure off the table for the time being! A court in Bavaria has suspended a 15 km measure, which cannot be appealed "] (Pegida, 26-01-2021)

The above post by Pegida is a good example of a reoccurring theme within the collected data, namely posts which emphasized liberties, in particular, the protection or loss of civil liberties. Such posts were given the sub-frame code 'civil liberties.'. While the causal actor was still often the government, as the ones who caused the loss of civil liberties, the salience in the problem definition was placed on the rights one has as a Dutch citizen rather than the direct actions of the government. Similar to the repressive governance sub-frame, frames such as these seem to aim to create an understanding of the pandemic, that rather than, or besides being a health crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic also forms a crisis to one's liberty. Included in this sub-frame were thus also often posts that warned against the creation of second-class citizens as a result of vaccination mandates. Frames such as these similarly amplify fears that someone without a vaccination would have fewer rights or civil liberties than those with a vaccination.

A third common sub-frame clustered within the liberty frame was the resistance sub-frame. These were posts that had strong treatment recommendations in the direction of resistance against the government or the Covid-19 measures, such as calls to join national protests, or were posts which positively evaluated successful cases of resistance. Again, this sub-frame emphasized the protection of one's freedom/liberty and the need to prevent the Netherlands from gradually turning into an autocratic police state. For example, in response to a successful case of resistance against Covid-19 prevention measures, Identitair Verzet posted:

"Jonge man wint het van politie inzake de avondklok: Verandering komt uit jezelf, wacht er niet op dat anderen het voor je doen!" ["Young man beats police over curfew: Change comes from within, don't wait for others to do it for you!"] (Identitair Verzet 04-03-2021).

Similar to the governance frame, the high frequency of use of the liberty frame can arguably be seen as a result of the drastic measures that had to be implemented in response to the pandemic, causing many to develop grievances or fear over their loss of certain liberties and rights. Frames such as these can again achieve great frame resonance with a large target audience, increasingly dissatisfied with the current state of affairs. Again, however, there seems to be an apparent lack of ideological character within the frame compared to, for instance, the globalization frame, in which case the ideological characteristics, nationalism and xenophobic sentiment are often clearly visible. While frames such as the governance and liberty frame may thus achieve resonance with a large number of people, mobilizing them for change, the direction of change seems to lack ideological clarity.

Also similar to the globalization frame, there proves to be a significant difference in the frequency of the liberty frame within this study, compared to McNeil's (2020), who identified the

liberty frame in only 10,5% of all cases. The main reason for this may have to do with the difference in time periods between each study. Whereas McNeil (2020) delineated his study to the first two months following the outbreak of the pandemic, this thesis collected data for almost the entirety of the pandemic, from March 13th, 2020, to February 24th, 2022. Arguably, the collective grievances as a result of drastic Covid-19 prevention measures such as successive lockdowns, night curfews and travel restrictions will have slowly accumulated over time. Thus, whereas grievances surrounding the increasing repressiveness of the government, curtailment of civil liberties and feelings of resistance may have been minimal within the first two months of the pandemic, these will have become more and more relevant as the pandemic went on. This is thus also likely the leading cause for the significant frequential difference in regards to the liberty frame between McNeil's (2020) study and this one.

3.2.4 The Migration Frame

The fourth frame, the migration frame, was found in eleven of the 171 deployed sub-frames, constituting 6,43 % of the dataset. Through this frame, migration, either through illegal immigration or asylum seeking, was made more salient in Covid-19 related posts, either portraying migration as a cause for various problems surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, negatively highlighting the free movement of migrants to the restrictions on travel for Dutch citizens, or emphasize cases of violence among this group in response to Covid-19 prevention measures.

The migration frame proved to share some similarities with the globalization frame, such as the designation of the blame on a specific social group for the problems affecting the whole of the Netherlands. Similar to what was observed in the globalization frame, for instance, Pegida again pointed to a specific group as one of the causes for the increased strain on the healthcare sector, in this case, asylum seekers rather than Muslims. In response to the news that Covid-19 had broken out within the walls of the main asylum centre in the Netherlands, Ter Apel, Pegida posted:

"Hadden we minder asielzoekers, was de druk op de zorg minder groot"! ["If we had fewer asylum seekers, the pressure on our health care sector would have been less"] (Pegida, 17-12-2020).

While the number of affected people within Ter Apel will have been only a small number of people, it frames the problems ensuing from the Covid-19 pandemic in a way to suggest that the problems of overcapacity and long waiting periods in hospitals are partly the result of migration, thus mobilizing people against migration.

Also similar to the globalization frame, in terms of frequency, the migration frame was used relatively little within the collected data. This is especially striking when considering its usual ideological importance within right-wing extremist groups and their narrative (Jaramillo et al., 2022). When it was employed, it was most often used in relation to the decision to restrict travel by Dutch

citizens in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This can be, for instance, seen in a post by Erkenbrand, which simultaneously warned against the creation of a group of second-class citizens as a result of the introduction of vaccination passports, as well as contrasting it to continued migration from the Third World:

".... het invoeren van een vaccinatiepaspoort tweederangsburgers creëert. Let wel, die tweederangsburgers zullen selectief vrijgelaten, ofwel opgesloten Europeanen zijn terwijl massaimmigratie door zal gaan en de Derde Wereld vrijelijk bewegen zal op ons continent." ["…. introducing a vaccination passport creates second-class citizens. Mind you, those second class citizens will be selectively released or incarcerated Europeans, while mass immigration will continue and the Third World will be allowed to move freely on our continent"] (Erkenbrandt, 27-02-2021).

Somewhat surprisingly, while this was a reoccurring theme within the data of McNeil's (2020) study, the framing of either illegal immigrants or asylum seekers as causes for the spread of the virus was only mentioned once within the collected data of this study. Even in this case, it was again contrasted with the decision to restrict the travel of Dutch citizens:

"En hoeveel van de wekelijks meer dan 1000 #asielzoekers die in Nederland (Ter Apel) aankomen, worden positief getest op het #coronavirus. Toeristen mogen keer op keer wel misbruikt worden om bepaalde corona maatregelen te rechtvaardigen, bij asielzoekers verzwijgen we deze voortdurend." ["And how many of the more than 1000 #asylum seekers who arrive in the Netherlands (Ter Apel) each week are tested positive for the #coronavirus. Tourists are abused time and time again to justify certain corona measures, but we are constantly ignoring them when it comes to asylum seekers"] (Pegida, 27-11-2021).

Again, this may suggest a preference for frames that can more easily resonate with large groups of individuals. Even in frames where migration was emphasized as a causal actor for various problems arising, this was contrasted with governmental actions and decisions to, for instance, introduce vaccination passports or temporarily restrict travel. McNeil (2020) seems to come to a similar conclusion in regard to the low frequency of the migration frame, as he argues that this perhaps shows a pragmatic use of political events by right-wing extremist groups (p. 14). As national news agendas reported on migration and asylum-seeking less and less, the use of migration framing similarly became less strategically important (McNeil, 2020). Instead, more resonant frames, such as those attacking governmental actions and decisions, could prove to be more effective in reaching its target audiences.

3.2.5 The Resilience Frame

The fifth frame, the resilience frame, was found in six posts, constituting 3,51% of all collected data. In his own study, McNeil (2020) defined 'resilience' as: "the ability of people to face and respond to adversity, and the capacity to draw on various sources of strength (individual or social) to adapt and cope with challenges and situations of strain, stress or trauma" (p. 19). Rather than the antagonistic stances shared in the vast majority of posts, either towards the government, scientific experts, media or other institutions, posts containing the resilience frame mainly emphasized the need for community aid and generally seemed to be in favour of compliance to prevention measures. These posts mainly had variables that defined the Covid-19 pandemic itself as the problem, gave positive moral evaluations and had treatment recommendations in the direction of community aid or compliance with prevention measures.

In terms of the time when these posts mainly occurred, all posts, safe for one made by Voorpost in December, were posted in the first two months following the official recognition by the WHO of Covid-19 as a pandemic. These included calls to aid the community and those most affected by the pandemic, tributes to instances where members of the group had successfully helped members of the community through, for instance, food donations and food delivery, or posts in which health care workers were lauded for their efforts in combatting the virus.

Geuzenbond, for instance, posted in March 2020:

"*Met betrekking tot de uitbraak van het coronavirus roepen wij zowel onze leden als sympathisanten op om zich op welke manier dan ook op verstandige wijze in te zetten voor de gemeenschap." ["With regard to the coronavirus outbreak, we call on both our members and sympathizers to engage in sensible community service in any way."]* (Geuzenbond, 18-03-2020).

Others still seemed to agree early on with the various prevention measures implemented to combat the pandemic, such as facemasks. In response to the decision for the nationwide obligation to wear facemasks, Voorpost, for instance, posted in March 2020:

"*Het Covid-19 virus dwingt iedereen tot maatregelen ter bescherming van het volk." ["The Covid-19 virus forces everyone to take measures to protect the people"]* (Voorpost, 21-03-2020).

Somewhat interestingly, the resilience frame was also found to be combined with attempts at marketing, as was the case of Identitair Verzet, which acknowledged the need for face masks in public and simultaneously used it to promote their own brand of facemasks with their logo printed on it. See figure 3.

Figure 3: example of the facemask sold by Identitair Verzet (Identitair Verzet, 13-05-2022)

Especially in light of McNeil's (2020) findings which found the resilience frame to be the most significant finding among his six frames and found the resilience frame in 39,7% of his collected data, the relatively low frequency of employment of the resilience frame by Dutch right-wing extremist organizations is striking.

One explanation for this difference may again be the time frame in which McNeil (2020) conducted his study, namely, the first two months following the outbreak of the pandemic. The posts containing the resilience frame in this study were all safe for one within the first two months following the 11th of March, with only a single resilience frame being found in December 2020. This is understandable as, especially at the beginning of the pandemic, much less was known about the severity of the virus, whom it may affect, what its consequences would be and what types of measures would be implemented in response to them. As the pandemic dragged on, dissatisfaction about the handling of the pandemic, with many governments having poor initial responses, naturally increased. Similarly, as it became clear that the pandemic mainly affected vulnerable people in society, with most people only suffering from it mildly, the harshness of the prevention measures relative to the severity of the disease most likely came to be questioned.

A second reason for this difference in frequency may be the specific focus on the Netherlands, As argued before, the current state of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands can be seen as an increasingly fragmented, individualized landscape which is gradually moving away from traditional organizational structures. Due to this, as well as generally poor cooperation between different Dutch right-wing extremist groups and ineffective leadership (Wagenaar, 2021), there may exist a potential inability for Dutch right-wing extremist groups to effectively play a role in resilience-building efforts. Whereas some of the groups observed by McNeil (2020) organized large-scale community aid projects, these failed to manifest within the Dutch context properly. Low membership and poor organizational power may thus too account for the low frequency of the resilience frame within this study.

3.2.6 The Distrust Frame

The last frame found was the distrust frame, found 39 times, constituting 22,81% of the entire dataset. The distrust frame became one of the main findings which diverged from McNeil's (2020) findings. While it to some extent resembles McNeil's (2020) sixth frame, 'Conspiracy,' which he defined as a frame which uses or refers to conspiracy theories or misinformation (p. 6), this fails to capture the identified sub-frames within this cluster completely. Though most posts containing the distrust frame contained conspiracy theories or misinformation, this was not the case for all of them. Instead, the distrust frame, as identified within this study, seemed to be employed by right-wing extremist groups to construe a framework through which all future information received by a specific actor became distrusted. This may be the mainstream media, the government scientific experts or other institutions not belonging to the target audience or right-wing extremist groups. In this frame, supposed lies, biases or manipulations around Covid-19 were often made more salient, seemingly in order to create this general sense of distrust. Of course, this was most often done through the spread of misinformation or conspiracy theories. However, limiting the frame to these specific discursive practices was judged to be insufficient to describe the far-reaching effects of this frame adequately. The essence of the frame was instead judged to be the sowing of seeds of distrust. This does not need intricate, well-explained or convincing conspiracy theories but could also be done by asking questions, emphasizing supposed lies or suggesting bias.

Posts determined to contain the distrust frame were diverse, focussing on various issues surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, especially prominent within the distrust frame was the political distrust sub-frame. These posts mainly emphasized supposed lies by the government and contained phrases such as "*Weerrr betrapt op een leugen, ["again, caught in a lie"*] (Identitair Verzet, 23-09-2021), or "*Hugo {de Jonge} liegt best veel," ["Hugo lies quite a lot*"] (Identitair Verzet, 20-11-2021). Here, there is not necessarily a need to employ conspiracy theories to create a sense of distrust, simply the emphasis on possible lies. In addition to the government, this could also be directed at non-governmental political elite. For example, in a post containing a video in which left-wing politician Jesse Klaver seemingly provides a lie to support his claim about the severity of Covid-19 (only later to be proven true), Identitair Verzet writes:

"Het zou lachen zijn mits deze volksverlakkerij niet namens 10% van de bevolking zou spreken." ["It would be laughable if this swindle did not speak on behalf of 10% of the population."] (Identitair Verzet, 05-03-2021).

While some posts were thus clearly pronounced in their distrust framing of the Covid-19 pandemic, others were more subtle, simply putting forward information and suggesting people to draw their own conclusions from them. In response to a news report on the rapidly falling Covid-19 cases

within Urk, a religious municipality within the Netherlands, despite low vaccination rates, Identitair Verzet, for example, only posted: "*Trek jouw eigen conclusie." [Draw your own conclusions"*] (Identitair Verzet, 13-09-2021).

Of course, many posts did use conspiracy theories or misinformation to create a framework of distrust. For instance, in response to the increased use of the term 'pandemic' by the media, Erkenbrand, in an extensive article, warned against the 'fear spreading' media and suggested:

"De conclusie is dat de definitie van pandemie dusdanig is opgerekt dat er heden ten dage veel meer tamelijk milde infectieziekten onder kunnen vallen. De deskundigen weten ervan, de politici weten ervan en de media weten ervan. Wanneer wordt de bevolking wakker?"
["In conclusion, the definition of a pandemic has been stretched to include many more fairly mild infectious diseases today. The experts know about it, the politicians know about it, and the media knows about it. When will the population wake up?"] (Erkenbrand, 30-07-2021).

Within this post, not only the media but experts and politicians were equally pointed towards as participants in a conspiracy to manipulate people into wrongfully conceptualizing the Covid-19 pandemic as a serious disease. Arguably, this is not merely done to spread conspiracies about Covid-19 but rather to spread distrust against the media, experts and politicians, as well as simultaneously cast doubt on the severity of the pandemic.

Other posts similarly pointed towards the supposed manipulating practices deployed by governments to control their populaces. In response to news reports on the German government their supposed attempts to persuade civilians to adhere to Covid-19 regulations through the exaggeration of the number of Covid-19 cases, Erkenbrand warned:

De conclusie is dat de Nederlandse overheid dezelfde manipulatietechnieken inzet tegen de eigen bevolking als in Duitsland en deze instrumenten krijgt aangereikt door willige wetenschappers. Zo kunt u als burger vrijwillig, gemanipuleerd of gedwongen, meedoen aan het corona toneelstukje."
["The conclusion is that the Dutch government uses the same manipulation techniques against its own population as in Germany, and is provided with these instruments by willing scientists. As a citizen you can thus voluntarily, be manipulated or be forced to participate in the corona theather"]

Again, Erkenbrand seems to aim to create a framework of distrust through which every governmental action or decision taken is considered as potential manipulation of its populace. To have their target audience keep asking the question of whether or not to trust governmental actions and decisions.

While these posts may, thus, in many cases, provide conspiracy theories or misinformation to emphasize their desired goal, the goal here is arguably not the spread of conspiracy or misinformation itself, as McNeil (2020) seems to argue, but rather the creation of a framework or culture of distrust. This can be political distrust but also distrust of mainstream media, scientific experts or the Covid-19 pandemic itself. This can certainly be done through conspiracy theories or misinformation, however, as seen, it can also be done by emphasizing lies or biases. Others still only raised questions about specific news stories, asking their target audience to draw their own conclusions.

The frequency difference between McNeil's (2020) study and this one can thus, at least in part, be understood as a result of this difference in how the frame was identified. Whereas McNeil (2020) found the 'conspiracy' frame only in 9,6% of all posts, the distrust frame constitutes 22,81% of all frames found within this study, the third highest occurring frame. The implications of the Distrust frame will be further expounded on in the following section.

3.3 Conclusion on the Framing Analysis of Telegram Posts

The preceding chapter aimed to give an answer to both sub-question two and sub-question three of this thesis. Firstly, in regards to the question, "*What frames did right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands employ in online social network discourse on the Covid-19 pandemic?*" this thesis has found that right-wing extremist groups within the Netherlands deployed 18 different sub-frames in Covid-19 related posts on Telegram. Clustered into overarching frames, six social movement frames were found to be used by right-wing extremist groups within their online discourse, those being Globalization, Governance, Liberty, Migration, Resilience and Distrust. Whereas globalization frames were mainly frames that used the Covid-19 pandemic to emphasize globalization and multi-culturalism as being the cause of the Covid-19 pandemic or to express other Covid-19 related grievances, governance frames mainly emphasized bad governance or hypocritical actions by the elite during the Covid-19 pandemic. Liberty frames were frames that similarly often emphasized actions of the government but, rather than bad or incompetent governance, emphasized the increased repressiveness of the government and the curtailment of civil liberties as a result of the covid-19 pandemic. Migration frames, on the other hand, were frames that emphasized migration as the cause of the spread of Covid-19 or used the pandemic to make more salient the problems around immigration and asylum more. The fifth frame, resilience, were frames that emphasized the need to comply with Covid-19 rules, come together as a community and help others during the pandemic. Finally, distrust frames expressed the need to distrust governments, experts, media and authorities by emphasizing lies, untruths and manipulation around the Covid-19 pandemic. This could be done through conspiracy theories or the spread of misinformation, but it could also be done without them. The primary goal of the frame here seemingly lies in sowing seeds of distrust within society.

In regards to the third sub-question, "*What may account for the use and frequency of use of particular frames employed by right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands?*" it was found that, in particular, the potential for frame resonance seemed to play a significant role in the choice of framing and frequency of frame use. While ideologically based frames within right-wing extremism were deployed in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, such as the globalization frame and migration frame, these were only deployed in low frequency, while anti-governmental frames, such as the governance, liberty and distrust frames were deployed in high frequency. With the Covid-19 pandemic as a particular crisis that put tremendous strain on the populace due to the drastic prevention measures, as well as exposed many of the shortcomings and problems inherent within the government, the pandemic created a large target audience with various grievances against the actions and decisions of the government. Seeing as they would most likely resonate better with their target audience and would arguably be more likely to succeed in mobilizing them against the current system, such anti-governmental frames were most likely preferred over ideological frames such as globalization and migration frames.

It was argued that the specific focus on right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands compared to groups from other European nations may have influenced the frequency of both the globalization frame and the resilience frame. Whereas in the case of the globalization frame, a lack of motivation to negatively frame the Asian minority community within the Netherlands, as well as a supposed internationalism inherent within the Dutch national identity, may have impacted the low frequency of the globalization frame, poor cooperation between right-wing extremist groups and the inability for Dutch right-wing extremist groups to enact and enforce community projects due to low membership and poor leadership, could similarly have led to the low frequency of the resilience frame being deployed.

Lastly, the time frame in which the data was collected will have likely affected the percentual frequency of each frame. It can be expected that grievances over the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic will have accumulated over time, with supposedly still a general sense of acceptance and compliance at the early stages of the pandemic. As the pandemic continued on, however, and the negative consequences and strain built up, the support base for this acceptance and compliance will have decreased significantly. As this thesis gathered data from the entire duration of the pandemic, without distinguishing between stages in the pandemic, the data will have most likely been skewed towards frames that attacked or criticized the Covid-19 measures and handling of the pandemic.

From these findings, two important conclusions can be drawn. First is the apparent incongruency of the employed frames with the main ideological characteristics associated with right-wing extremism, these being nationalism, racism, xenophobic sentiment, anti-democratic values and the call for a strong state. And second, the high frequency of the distrust frame and its implications for the stability of democratic institutions.

The first important finding of this analysis has been the apparent incongruency of the employed frames with the ideological characteristics that are commonly associated with right-wing extremism in the academic literature, those being nationalism, racism, xenophobic sentiments, anti-democratic values and calls for a strong state. Only a slight minority of the frames seemed to be associated with these ideological characteristics. Most instead either criticized the state for its handling of the pandemic, expressed concerns about the curtailment of civil liberties and the increasing repression of the state, or framed the pandemic in a way to discredit or undermine the government and current establishment. Combined, these frames made up 83,04% of all frames deployed. As mentioned, at least in part, this difference will have most likely resulted from a high potential for frame resonance with a large target audience. However, besides the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic as a crisis lent itself well to anti-governmental framing, as it created a large aggrieved target audience, it similarly shows a particular framing goal of right-wing extremist groups. Rather than push an agenda of anti-immigration, anti-globalism or anti-Islam, right-wing extremist groups within this study seemed to consider the potential of the Covid-19 pandemic to attack the government, undermine trust and potentially polarize and destabilize society. While these frames may achieve high amounts of resonance with the target audience for mobilization, they fail to frame it with a particular ideological character. Rather than framing the pandemic in a way to attract people to their particular ideology, be it Identitarianism or national socialism, they mobilized people against the system without necessarily offering a suitable alternative.

If we understand right-wing extremist groups as social movement organizations in the right-wing extremist movement, the lack of effort to attract or recruit people towards this movement and the lack of suggested change towards an envisioned society is a clear departure from the usual role that social movement organizations supposedly play within social movements. According to writers such as Rucht and Neidhardt (2002) and Kevin Gillian (2007), social movement organizations need to attract new members constantly, and without the promotion of convincing movement-specific frames, social movements cannot exist in the long term (p. 11; p. 3). Similarly, according to Borum (2011), a core aspect of present-day social movement research is the belief that the main task of any organization, group or movement is to maintain its own survival (Borum, 2011, p. 17). To do this, already active members need to be maintained, and new members need to be added in case of losses through attrition (Borum, 2011, p. 17). What we have seen in the framing of the Covid-19 pandemic seemingly contradicts, at least in part, this belief. Rather than attracting and recruiting individuals from the target audience with movement-specific frames, e.g. anti-Islam, anti-migration, or nationalism, the most frequently occurring frames only seem to aim to destabilize the system.

The second important finding was the high frequency of deployment of the distrust frame. As mentioned, the distrust frame, as identified within this study, seemed to be employed by right-wing extremist groups to mainly construe a framework through which future information received by a specific actor became distrusted. Using the Covid-19 pandemic as a catalyst, important institutions

within society, such as the government, medical experts and the media, were increasingly portrayed as actors who were in need of our distrust. This erosion of trust within these actors, however, is directly linked to the stability of the current democratic system.

Trust has long been investigated by sociologists as an essential prerequisite for the effective operations of societal functions (Miller, 1974; Dalton, 2004; Hetherington, 2005). According to Bertsou (2019), "we know that political trust represents "a reservoir of good-will" that helps maintain support for overall democratic achievements in times of crises and that widespread political distrust can pose a fundamental challenge for the effective operation of government" (p. 72). Similarly, individuals who have trust in their political institutions are more likely to act in a cooperative manner, following policy decisions and allowing the political institutions to function properly (Hetherington & Rudolph, 2015; Marien & Hooge, 2011). This line of reasoning is, however, not only limited to political trust. Trust in medical experts, established science, or mainstream media similarly helps uphold the effective operations of important institutions within society, such as medical institutions, academia or news mediums, to name but a few. Understood this way, the deliberate attempts of right-wing extremist groups to create a framework of distrust within society can arguably be seen as part of a strategy to undermine the stability of democratic institutions, as well as the effective operations of the current system.

Based on his own findings, McNeil (2020) suggested that "'crisis frames' are largely not about creating chaos (as with ideas linked to accelerationism or misinformation), but rather about building support through filling in the gaps left by the state during times of crisis" (p. 25). This conclusion was, however, based on the high frequency of the resilience frame and low frequency of the, by him defined, 'conspiracy' frame. Similarly, it was made on the basis of data collected within the first two months following the outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis, its early stages. It would, however, be incorrect to limit a crisis to only its early stages. What the collection of data over the entire period of the Covid-19 pandemic has shown is a clear preference for 'destabilizing' frames, either through emphasizing the bad and repressive governance surrounding the pandemic or creating a culture of both political and societal distrust. What this may suggest is both a specific strategy for Dutch right-wing extremist groups within the right-wing extremist movement, as well as, generally, an adaptation of the role social movement organizations fill within modern-day social movements. Both of these will be discussed in correlation with the findings of sub-question one within the conclusion of this thesis.

Chapter 4: Conclusion and Discussion

This thesis has aimed to respond to the increased concerns surrounding right-wing extremism following the Covid-19 pandemic. Through an analysis of the current state of right-wing extremism within the Netherlands, a frame identification of the various types of posts posted on Telegram during the Covid-19 pandemic, and a frame analysis of the type and frequency of frames deployed during the pandemic, this thesis aimed to provide an answer to the question on "*how to understand the employment of particular frames in the framing of the Covid-19 pandemic by right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands?*"

To do this, three sub-questions were first posed: (1) "*What has been the historical and current state of right-wing extremism within the Netherlands?*"; (2) "*What frames did right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands employ in online social network discourse on the Covid-19 pandemic?*"; and (3) "*What may account for the use and frequency of use of particular frames employed by right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands?.*" Based on the findings of these sub-questions, several conclusions on right-wing extremism within the Netherlands and social movement organizations, in general, can be drawn. These conclusions, as well as their implications and suggestions for further research, will be presented in the following paragraphs. Lastly, the limitations of this study will be noted, similarly accompanied by suggestions for future research.

While answering sub-question one, "*What has been the historical and current state of right-wing extremism within the Netherlands,*" three main findings stood out. Firstly, it was found that radicalization into right-wing extremism in the Netherlands has especially been prominent among a younger generation of right-wing extremists, a generation that has grown up with the internet and social media. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, which forced individuals inside, increasing internet access and lowering social oversight, this trend seems to have increased further. Secondly, it was found that in increasing fashion, right-wing extremists, especially those from the just described new generation, have been seen moving away from more traditional, formally organized right-wing extremist groups towards small, fluid, often digital, groups of individuals, brought together through a shared ideology and shared goal. This has created a fragmented and individualized right-wing extremist landscape within the Netherlands, to which traditional right-wing extremist groups seemingly have to adapt. Thirdly, it was found that there has been an increasing normalization of right-wing extremist ideas and beliefs within Dutch society. This has allowed right-wing extremists to more easily integrate themselves within popular protest movements such as the Covid-19 protests, yellow jackets or the farmers' protests, creating large target audiences for their discourse. While there still exists a certain stigma against right-wing extremism, right-wing extremist groups and individuals are increasingly being given a voice within both the public and political debates within society.

While answering both sub-questions two and three, *"What frames did right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands employ in online social network discourse on the Covid-19 pandemic,"* and *"What may account for the use and frequency of use of particular frames employed by right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands,"* it was mainly found that in the framing of the Covid-19 pandemic, Dutch right-wing extremist groups seemed to primarily employ frames with little to no ideological character, preferring instead to employ frames that focussed on criticizing, attacking and undermining the government and important political and societal institutions. This suggests a move away from movement-specific frames with which social movement organizations usually attract and recruit individuals towards frames that mainly seem to mobilize against the current system without necessarily offering up a suitable alternative. This seems to be in line with the high frequency of employment of the distrust frame, which can arguably be seen as part of an intentional strategy to create a culture of distrust, thus destabilizing and hindering the effective operations of important political and societal institutions within the current system.

Taken together, the findings from sub-question two and three seem to correspond to some degree with the findings on the current state of right-wing extremism within the Netherlands, sub-question one. The fragmented, fluid and individualized landscape in which the lack of membership to a particular organization or ideology seems to have become the norm rather than the exception forces traditional right-wing extremist groups to adapt and reconsider their role within the right-wing extremist social movement. Rather than putting significant effort into the attracting and recruitment of a target audience which seems to generally disassociate with traditional forms of organizational structures and formal memberships, it may be more effective to, in high frequency, employ highly resonant frames without a clear ideological character, to a large, due to Covid-19, aggrieved target audience. These highly resonant frames are then able to mobilize large groups of individuals against a system which still, in large parts, stigmatizes right-wing extremist beliefs and ideology.

If then answering the question of how to understand the framing of the Covid-19 pandemic by right-wing extremist groups within the Netherlands, it can be argued that within the fragmented and individualized landscape right-wing extremist groups currently have to operate, the destabilization of the current system and the creation of a general sense of distrust may be seen as a more effective way for right-wing extremist groups to gain significant cultural, political and societal influence within Dutch society. The Covid-19 crisis, in particular, provided an excellent opportunity as it created a great number of grievances within the general populace, leading to a large target audience with a high potential for mobilization.

What this means in practice is that the primary danger of traditional right-wing extremist groups may, thus, in the future, not come from the attracting of new individuals to the right-wing extremist ideology/movement or engaging in violent public showings but rather the destabilization of trust within the current system and their participation in the mobilization of anti-governmental groups. It must, however, still be seen through further research, of course, whether or not the Covid-19

pandemic was particularly unique in its potential for distrust framing and anti-governmental/anti-establishment mobilization. More studies on the framing of future crises by right-wing extremist groups could help to validate or add to the findings of this study.

Regarding policy implications, these findings seem to suggest a need for policy that reflects the primary danger traditional right-wing extremist groups pose to Dutch society, as well as a focus on the increasing individualized character of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands. Firstly, using Covid-19 as a catalyst, right-wing extremist groups seem to have made a significant effort to destabilize, undermine and discredit the current government and democratic institutions. Combatting this may require a strengthening of its defences to these discursive practices. Governments must recognize that, in part, the high resonance of anti-governmental frames and distrust frames stems from their own deficiencies, shortcomings and mistakes. Building in measures to ensure transparency, fairness, inclusiveness, integrity and responsiveness in future policymaking and adequately responding to the various grievances caused by the pandemic could help mitigate much of the effect anti-governmental framing and distrust framing has on their target audience.

Secondly, besides strengthening society's defences to these discursive practices on a macro-level, it may prove to be effective to strengthen its defences on a micro-level. With right-wing extremism becoming more and more individual and radicalization into right-wing extremism happening more easily through self-education through the internet and social media, policy targeting radicalization has to reflect this. This may take the form of decentralized incentives that improve social oversight by friends and family to more easily and more quickly identify those that are self-radicalizing through the internet, and simultaneously provide them with a stronger social safety net. Additionally, these could be policies which promote the development of personal critical thinking abilities, allowing individuals to more easily see through the deliberate framing of events for political or social purposes, to see through misinformation and conspiracy theories.

In addition to the findings on right-wing extremism within the Netherlands, the findings of this study also seem to suggest a possible adaptation of the role social movement organizations fill within modern-day social movements. The increasingly digitalized and fragmented landscape in which right-wing extremist groups need to operate in has not simply been limited to the right-wing extremist movement. What the findings of this thesis seem to suggest is a seeming recognition of this changing landscape by social movement organizations and a pragmatic adaptation to it. Rather than aiming to achieve social and political change through the mobilization and accumulation of support, the social movement organizations in this study arguably seemed to prioritize mobilizing large groups of individuals against the current system, without necessarily offering a suitable alternative. This requires a careful re-evaluation of the role social movement organizations fill within modern-day social movement theory. Whether or not this proves to be unique to the right-wing extremist movement or if

this will become more and more the case in other social movements will, however, similarly require further research on other modern-day social movement organizations.

Building on this, social movement theory, in general, and the framing perspective on social movement theory, in particular, may benefit from more research on the development of frames and other aspects of social movements during external crises unrelated to the movement's original goal. Whether or not social movements adapt their framing activities during times of crises, if there are differences between types of social movements on how they respond, and what impact it may have on the success or failure of a movement. Further research on these types of questions may significantly advance the development of social movement theory in the future.

Of final note are the limitations this study was presented with. Though this thesis has aimed to respond to the main research question of this thesis appropriately, several significant limitations of the thesis need to be noted.

First is the limited amount of data that could be collected within the scope of research. While the time frame in which data could be collected was extended as far as possible, the study was limited by its reliance on right-wing extremist groups having an online Telegram presence. Though the initial selection of right-wing extremist groups consisted of 27 different groups, only six were found to have an official Telegram presence, of which two only posted two non-duplicate Covid-19 related posts. This naturally limited the amount of data that could be collected. Further research on this topic could resolve this limitation by extending the scope outwards towards other social media platforms on including groups from other countries, thus increasing the amount of data that could be collected. This could similarly improve the representativeness of the study as it could more easily make more general claims on the basis of a more extensive set of examined right-wing extremist groups.

A second significant limitation that must be noted regards the methodology used in the study. Namely, the still present self-interpretation bias. While this thesis attempted to resolve this common issue within frame identification as much as possible by using the methodology set out by Matthes and Kohring (2008), this issue could not be resolved entirely. In particular, one claim by Matthes and Kohring (2008) that by individually coding the separate variables making up a frame, identification of the frame becomes more empirically sound, as coders do not know which frame they are currently coding has to be nuanced. While this claim may be theoretically possible, human coders are still heavily influenced by the posts they previously coded, as coding cannot happen in isolation. Even if unintentional, the coding of a particular post within the dataset is easily influenced by the coding of a previous post. In part, this problem could be resolved in further research by adding more coders to the study or having the dataset be checked by other researchers, both specialized in this topic as unrelated to it. While this thesis aimed to provide the maximal possible amount of objectivity and neutrality, the addition of more coders with different perspectives could help validate or add to the findings.

A third limitation of the research is the time frame chosen to collect the data. While this time frame suits the main research question of this thesis, as found during the frame analysis, the lack of delineation between stages within the crisis may have skewed the results towards a more negative framing of the pandemic. Further research could thus also benefit from the separation of stages within the crisis to gain a better temporal understanding of the developing process of framing during crises.

The fourth and final limitation of the study is the singular focus on the Netherlands. While this singular focus has aided the study in allowing for a more detailed analysis of the current context of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands, it similarly limits the study as it can only provide conclusions for the Netherlands specifically. A cross-country or cross-cultural study could help to reveal many things this study failed to observe due to its singular focus on the Netherlands.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Coding Manual

Variable	Definition
Social_Media_Post	The specific code given to a Telegram post, connected to its https link. Each Social_Media_Post and its corresponding https link can be found within the archived 'List of Telegram Posts.'
Organization	Describes the right-wing extremist organization which posted the specific Telegram post.
Problem_Definition	Describes the problem as defined within the Telegram post by the Telegram poster.
Causal_Interpretation	Describes the casual actor of the problem as defined within the Telegram post.
Moral_Evaluation	Describes the positive or negative evaluation by the Telegram poster of the decisions or actions of the causal actor.
Treatment_Recommendation	Describes the offered solution by the Telegram poster or the action the Telegram post reader is suggested to take.
Sub_Frame	Describes the framing prevailing in the Telegram post based on the identified problem_definition, causal_interpretation, moral_evaluation & treatment_recommendation variables taken together.
Social_Movement_Frame	Describes the social movement frame identified after qualitatively clustering all similar sub-frames into overarching social movement frames.

Appendix B

Overview of the Four Variable Coding Process

Table 1 (left)

Social_Media	Organisation	Problem_Definition	Causal_Interpretation	Moral_Evaluation	Treatment_Recommendation	Sub-frame	Social_Movement_Fram
EB0001	Ekenbrand	Mainstream media downplaying Covid protests in Germany	Actor: Media	Negative about "lying" media	Distrust mainstream media	Media frame	Distrust frame
EB0002	Ekenbrand	Governmental policy leading to downfall of Germany	Actor: Government	Positive about resistance against government	Resist government	Resistance frame	Liberty frame
EB0002	Ekenbrand	Mainstream media downplaying Covid protests in Germany	Actor: Media	Negative about "lying" media	Distrust mainstream media	Media frame	Distrust frame
EB0003	Ekenbrand	Dutch politician's ability to deal with protest	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Resist government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
EB0003	Ekenbrand	Netherlands losing sovereignty due to globalization	Actor: Globalization	Negative about Globalization	Resist globalization	Globalization frame	Globalization frame
EB0004	Ekenbrand	Government's reckless medical policy	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
EB0004	Ekenbrand	Media spreading fear about mutated Covid-19 virus	Actor: Media	Negative about "fearspreading" media	Distrust mainstream media	Media frame	Distrust frame
EB0005	Ekenbrand	Government's repression of free speech	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
EB0005	Ekenbrand	Non-consensus ideas increasingly being labled as conspiracy theories	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Distrust government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
EB0006	Ekenbrand	Governments manipulating society into accepting hard Covid measures	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Distrust government	Political distrust frame	Distrust frame
EB0007	Ekenbrand	Dutch citizens' freedom of movement being limited while migration continues	Actor: Migration	Negative about migration	Stop migration	Illigal immigration frame	Migration frame
EB0007	Ekenbrand	Covid passports causing the creation of second class citizens	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Civil liberties frame	Liberty frame
EB0007	Ekenbrand	Dutch citizens' freedom of movement being limited while migration continues	Actor: Government	Negative about Covid policy	Critique covid measures	Civil liberties frame	Liberty frame
EB0008	Ekenbrand	Jan Pols' character being assassinated by the government	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
EB0008	Ekenbrand	Bar and café owners getting repressed from earning a living	Actor: Government	Positive about resistance against government	Resist Covid measures	Resistance frame	Liberty frame
EB0009	Ekenbrand	Secret elite, consisting of Jews, mainstream media, capitalists, experts and Big Tech, controlling the current government	Actor: Secret Elite	Negative about government	Critique government	Political distrust frame	Distrust frame
EB0010	Ekenbrand	Decreasing trust in vaccination	Actor: Vaccinations	Positive about decreasing trust in vaccination	Resist vaccination	Science frame	Distrust frame
EB0011	Ekenbrand	Covid measures limiting ability to workout	Actor: Government	Negative about Covid measures	Critique government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
EB0012	Ekenbrand	Government ministers and politicians unable to answer simple Covid related questions, either due to naivity or malignity	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Incompetent governance frame	Governance frame
EB0013	Ekenbrand	Media manipulating society through the use of the word 'pandemic'	Actor: Media	Negative about 'manipulating' media	Distrust mainstream media	Media frame	Distrust frame
EB0013	Ekenbrand	Authorities and elites manipulating society through the use of the word 'pandemic'	Actor: Elite	Negative about manipulating elite	Distrust elite	Political distrust frame	Distrust frame
GB0001	Geuzenbond	Covid-19 pandemic as a threat to the community	Actor: RWE group	Positive about community service by members	Aid community	Community frame	Resilience frame
GB0002	Geuzenbond	Government's 'tyranical' Covid measures	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
IV0001	Identitair Verzet	Covid-19 pandemic as a threat to the community	Actor: RWE group	Positive about wearing face masks	Wear facemask	Community frame	Resilience frame
IV0002	Identitair Verzet	Covid curfews being used to combat migration problems	Actor: Migration	Negative about migration	Stop migration	Illigal immigration frame	Migration frame
IV0002	Identitair Verzet	Government ignoring judicial ruling to extend Covid curfew	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
IV0003	Identitair Verzet	Covid curfews being used to limit freedom of citizens	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
IV0003	Identitair Verzet	Drones being used to surveil citizens	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
IV0004	Identitair Verzet	Covid being used to repress basic freedoms	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
IV0005	Identitair Verzet	Covid curfew linked to German occupation curfew	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
IV0006	Identitair Verzet	Covid curfew linked to German occupation curfew	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
IV0007	Identitair Verzet	Government interfering in private matters due to Covid	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Civil liberties frame	Liberty frame
IV0008	Identitair Verzet	Covid Lockdown unnecccessarily affecting everyone	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Resistance frame	Liberty frame
IV0009	Identitair Verzet	Government aiming to alter constitution on account of Covid	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
IV0010	Identitair Verzet	Police arresting men 'protecting' their property from Covid rioters	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
IV0011	Identitair Verzet	Heetei.nl pressured to stop by government	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
IV0012	Identitair Verzet	Government using the Covid rioters to justify repressive Covid measures	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
IV0013	Identitair Verzet	Government extending hard lockdown on the basis of assumptions	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
IV0013	Identitair Verzet	Government's vaccination policy being a national disgrace	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
IV0014	Identitair Verzet	Government passing legislation to 'lock up' violaters of the Covid measures	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
IV0015	Identitair Verzet	Government limiting freedom	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame

Table 2 (right)

(ID)	(Organisation)	Problem_Definition	Causal_Interpretation	Moral_Evaluation	Treatment_Recommendation	Sub-frame	Social_Movement_Fram
IV0013	Identitair Verzet	Government's vaccination policy being a national disgrace	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
IV0014	Identitair Verzet	Government passing legislation to 'lock up' violaters of the Covid measures	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
IV0015	Identitair Verzet	Government limiting freedom	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
IV0016	Identitair Verzet	Inconsistent Covid Policy	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
IV0017	Identitair Verzet	Depression and suicides among youth and young adults due to strict Covid measures	Actor: Government	Negative about Covid measures	Critique covid measures	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
IV0018	Identitair Verzet	Governments manipulating society into accepting hard Covid measures	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Distrust government	Political distrust frame	Distrust frame
IV0019	Identitair Verzet	Governments manipulating society into accepting hard Covid measures	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Distrust government	Political distrust frame	Distrust frame
IV0020	Identitair Verzet	Media spreading fear about Covid consequences	Actor: Media	Negative about 'fearspreading' media	Distrust mainstream media	Media frame	Distrust frame
IV0021	Identitair Verzet	Elite disregarding Covid measures	Actor: Elite	Negative about hypocritical actions elite	Critique elite	Elite frame	Governance frame
IV0022	Identitair Verzet	Elite disregarding Covid measures	Actor: Elite	Negative about hypocritical actions elite	Critique elite	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
IV0023	Identitair Verzet	Elite disregarding Covid measures	Actor: Elite	Negative about hypocritical actions elite	Critique elite	Elite frame	Governance frame
IV0024	Identitair Verzet	Covid being used to repress basic freedoms	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
IV0025	Identitair Verzet	Heetei.nl pressured to stop by government	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
IV0026	Identitair Verzet	Incorrect Covid information being posted on RIVM website	Actor: Experts	Negative about Covid experts	Distrust experts	Incompetent governance frame	Governance frame
IV0027	Identitair Verzet	Dutch citizen resisting Covid curfew	Actor: Dutch society	Positive about resistance against government	Resist government	Resistance frame	Liberty frame
IV0028	Identitair Verzet	Covid measures being extended	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
IV0029	Identitair Verzet	Jesse Klaver lying during a debate to push Covid position	Actor: Political elite	Negative about 'lying' political elite	Distrust political elite	Political distrust frame	Distrust frame
IV0030	Identitair Verzet	During the flu season no official cases of the flu being recorded	Actor: Experts	Negative about Covid experts	Distrust experts	Science frame	Distrust frame
IV0031	Identitair Verzet	Covid vaccines being extended despite elite 'actual' danger	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Distrust government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
IV0032	Identitair Verzet	Vaccination in Austria being investigated due to death and sickness	Actor: Vaccinations	Negative about vaccination	Distrust vaccination	Science frame	Distrust frame
IV0033	Identitair Verzet	Police unjustly repressing café owners	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
IV0034	Identitair Verzet	Elite disregarding Covid measures	Actor: Elite	Negative about hypocritical actions elite	Critique elite	Elite frame	Governance frame
IV0035	Identitair Verzet	Double standard in Covid measures for Muslims	Actor: Muslims	Negative about Muslims	Critique Muslims	Multi-culturalism frame	Globalization frame
IV0036	Identitair Verzet	Government's incoherent covid policy	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Distrust government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
IV0037	Identitair Verzet	Political elite taking tax payer's money while causing numerous business owners to go bankrupt	Actor: Government	Negative about corrupt government	Critique government	Corrupt governance frame	Governance frame
IV0038	Identitair Verzet	Business owners resisting Covid measures in response to political scandal	Actor: Business owners	Positive about resistance against government	Resist government	Resistance frame	Liberty frame
IV0039	Identitair Verzet	Elite disregarding Covid measures	Actor: Elite	Negative about hypocritical actions elite	Critique elite	Elite frame	Governance frame
IV0040	Identitair Verzet	Fall in Covid cases according to De Jonge supposedly being due to vaccination	Actor: Experts	Negative about the need for vaccination	Resist vaccination	Science frame	Distrust frame
IV0041	Identitair Verzet	Virologist van Rast condemning Covid denyers as violence lovers and racists	Actor: Experts	Negative about Covid experts	Critique experts	Science frame	Distrust frame
IV0042	Identitair Verzet	Billions of euro's of government spending for Covid missing	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Distrust government	Political distrust frame	Distrust frame
IV0043	Identitair Verzet	Dutch children being used as tool to combat Covid	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
IV0044	Identitair Verzet	Government allowing Dutch citizens in 'red' countries due to Covid but repatriates Muslim women who went to fight with ISIS	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
IV0044	Identitair Verzet	Double standard in Covid measures for Muslims	Actor: Muslims	Negative about Muslims	Critique Muslims	Multi-culturalism frame	Globalization frame
IV0045	Identitair Verzet	German government lying about fraud within Covid hospitals	Actor: Elite	Negative about hypocritical actions elite	Distrust government	Political distrust frame	Distrust frame
IV0046	Identitair Verzet	Obedience among Dutch citizens on Covid	Actor: Dutch society	Negative about obediency within Dutch society	Distrust government	Sheep' frame	Distrust frame
IV0047	Identitair Verzet	Vaccination causing social exclusion and discrimination within society with current vaccination policy	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Civil liberties frame	Liberty frame
IV0048	Identitair Verzet	Double standard in Covid measures for Grand Prix Zandvoort	Actor: Elite	Negative about hypocritical actions elite	Critique elite	Elite frame	Governance frame
IV0049	Identitair Verzet	Double standard in Covid measures for Grand Prix Zandvoort	Actor: Elite	Negative about hypocritical actions elite	Critique elite	Elite frame	Governance frame

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	ID	Group	Description	Actor	Frame E	Frame F	Frame G	Frame H
75	IV0049	Identitair Verzet	Double standard in Covid measures for Grand Prix Zandvoort	Actor: Elite	Negative about hypocritical actions elite	Critique elite	Elite frame	Governance frame
76	IV0050	Identitair Verzet	De Jonge disregarding Covid measures	Actor: Elite	Negative about hypocritical actions elite	Critique elite	Elite frame	Governance frame
77	IV0051	Identitair Verzet	Urk having almost no Covid cases despite having the lowest percentage of vaccine	Actor: Vaccinations	Negative about the need for vaccination	Resist vaccination	Science frame	Distrust frame
78	IV0052	Identitair Verzet	Increasing resistance within society against Covid restrictions	Actor: Dutch society	Positive about resistance against government	Resist government	Resistance frame	Liberty frame
79	IV0053	Identitair Verzet	Government lying about policy after first vaccination	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Distrust government	Political distrust frame	Distrust frame
80	IV0054	Identitair Verzet	QR code policy not being lifted despite failing Covid cases	Actor: Government	Negative about Covid policy	Stop QR	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
81	IV0055	Identitair Verzet	Vaccinations being labeled as safe	Actor: Vaccinations	Negative about trustworthiness vaccin	Distrust vaccination	Science frame	Distrust frame
82	IV0056	Identitair Verzet	False information by hospitals and lung doctors	Actor: Experts	Negative about lying experts	Distrust experts	Science frame	Distrust frame
83	IV0057	Identitair Verzet	Hugo de Jonge and Rutte lying about severity Covid-19	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Distrust government	Political distrust frame	Distrust frame
84	IV0058	Identitair Verzet	2G policy being ineffective	Actor: Government	Negative about Covid policy	Critique Covid measures	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
85	IV0059	Identitair Verzet	Vaccinations not necessarily leading to less IC cases	Actor: Vaccinations	Negative about the need for vaccination	Distrust vaccination	Science frame	Distrust frame
86	IV0059	Identitair Verzet	Unvaccinated people being labeled as the problem	Actor: Media	Negative about media	Critique media	Media frame	Distrust frame
87	IV0060	Identitair Verzet	Government not adressing IC capacity sooner	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
88	IV0061	Identitair Verzet	Vaccination companies being protected from liability	Actor: Vaccinations	Negative about trustworthiness vaccin	Distrust vaccination	Science frame	Distrust frame
89	IV0062	Identitair Verzet	Repression by government	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
90	IV0062	Identitair Verzet	Double standard in Covid restrictions between elite and common people	Actor: Elite	Negative about hypocritical actions elite	Critique elite	Elite frame	Governance frame
91	IV0063	Identitair Verzet	OMT member considering lockdown excessive	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Science frame	Distrust frame
92	IV0063	Identitair Verzet	OMT member considering lockdown excessive	Actor: Experts	Positive about expert	Trust expert	Science frame	Distrust frame
93	IV0064	Identitair Verzet	Global elite manipulating societies around the world	Actor: Elite	Negative about global elite	Distrust elite	Globalization frame	Globalization frame
94	IV0065	Identitair Verzet	Spain considering Covid-19 a flu	Actor: Spanish government	Positive about Spanish government	Debunk Covid	Science frame	Distrust frame
95	IV0066	Identitair Verzet	More children die from Covid measures than actual Covid	Actor: Government	Negative about Covid policy	Critique Covid measures	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
96	IV0067	Identitair Verzet	False information by hospitals on amount of Covid cases	Actor: Experts	Negative about lying experts	Distrust experts	Science frame	Distrust frame
97	IV0068	Identitair Verzet	Government interfering in OMT advices	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
98	PG001	Pegida	The bias in media	Actor: Media	Negative about bias in media	Distrust mainstream media	Media frame	Distrust frame
99	PG001	Pegida	Asylum Seekers coming to the Netherlands and spreading Covid-19	Actor: Asylum Seekers	Negative about asylum seekers coming to the Netherland	Stop asylum seekers	Asylum frame	Migration frame
100	PG002	Pegida	Hypocritical Covid policy	Actor: Government	Negative about Covid measures	Critique/question covid measures	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
101	PG003	Pegida	Asylum Seekers coming to the Netherlands	Actor: Asylum Seekers	Negative about asylum seekers coming to the Netherland	Stop asylum seekers	Asylum frame	Migration frame
102	PG004	Pegida	Continuation of illegal immigration	Actor: Illegal Immigrants	Negative about illegal immigrants	Stop migration	Illegal immigration frame	Migration frame
103	PG004	Pegida	Protesters being blocked from gathering	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique/question covid measures	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
104	PG005	Pegida	Inconsistent Covid Policy	Actor: Government	Negative about Covid Measures	Critique government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
105	PG006	Pegida	Government suddenly finding funds for Covid-19	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Political distrust frame	Distrust frame
106	PG007	Pegida	Government invading privacy on account of Covid	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique/question covid measures	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
107	PG008	Pegida	Netherlands and Belgium keeping bars and restaurants closed	Actor: Government	Negative about Covid measures	Critique/question covid measures	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
108	PG009	Pegida	Government possibly sharing private data with other countries	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Civil liberties frame	Liberty frame
109	PG010	Pegida	Disproportionally strict Covid policy	Actor: Government	Negative about Covid measures	Critique/question covid measures	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
110	PG011	Pegida	Governments mandating vaccination	Actor: Government	Negative about mandating vaccination	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
111	PG012	Pegida	Black Pete protests restricted under the guise of Covid restrictions	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
112	PG013	Pegida	Unreliability of Covid tests	Actor: Tests	Distrustful of Covid testing	Distrust Covid testing	Science frame	Distrust frame
113	PG014	Pegida	Disproportionally strict Covid policy	Actor: Government	Negative about Covid measures	Critique/question covid measures	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
114	PG015	Pegida	Unfair treatment of Asylum seekers versus own citizens	Actor: Asylum Seekers	Negative about asylum seekers coming to the Netherland	Stop asylum seekers	Asylum frame	Migration frame
115	PG015	Pegida	Unfair treatment of Asylum seekers versus own citizens	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
116	PG016	Pegida	Asylum Seekers putting more strain on the healthcare sector	Actor: Asylum Seekers	Negative about asylum seekers in the Netherlands	Stop asylum seekers	Asylum frame	Migration frame

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	ID	Group	Description	Actor	Frame E	Frame F	Frame G	Frame H
116	PG016	Pegida	Asylum Seekers putting more strain on the healthcare sector	Actor: Asylum Seekers	Negative about asylum seekers in the Netherlands	Stop asylum seekers	Asylum frame	Migration frame
117	PG017	Pegida	Vaccination being unnecessary for healthy adults	Actor: Vaccinations	Negative about the need for vaccination	Distrust vaccination	Science frame	Distrust frame
118	PG018	Pegida	Vaccination mandate in the living sector	Actor: Vaccinations	Negative about vaccination mandate	Critique vaccination mandate	Civil liberties frame	Liberty frame
119	PG019	Pegida	Covid Measures being restricted	Actor: German court	Positive about less covid restrictions	Support restricting covid measures	Civil liberties frame	Liberty frame
120	PG020	Pegida	Double standards between left-wing protesters and right-wing protesters	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Victim frame	Governance frame
121	PG021	Pegida	Political elite disregarding Covid measures	Actor: Elite	Negative about hypocritical actions elite	Critique elite	Elite frame	Governance frame
122	PG022	Pegida	Government remaining the same	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Don't vote Rutte	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
123	PG023	Pegida	Double standard in Covid measures for Muslims	Actor: Muslims	Negative about Muslims	Critique Muslims	Multi-culturalism frame	Globalization frame
124	PG024	Pegida	Unreliability of Covid tests	Actor: Tests	Distrustful of Covid testing	Distrust Covid testing	Science frame	Distrust frame
125	PG025	Pegida	Double standard in Covid measures for Muslims	Actor: Muslims	Negative about Muslims	Critique Muslims	Multi-culturalism frame	Globalization frame
126	PG026	Pegida	Vaccination being unnecessary for healthy people	Actor: Vaccinations	Distrustful of vaccination	Distrust vaccination	Science frame	Distrust frame
127	PG027	Pegida	Border patrol against Covid passport but not migration	Actor: Migration	Negative about migration	Stop migration	Border control frame	Migration frame
128	PG027	Pegida	Border patrol against Covid passport but not migration	Actor: Government	Negative about government policy	Critique government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
129	PG028	Pegida	Illegal immigrants getting violent during Covid period	Actor: Migrants	Negative about illegal immigrants	Stop migration	Sheep' frame	Distrust frame
130	PG029	Pegida	Supposed 'guilability' among Dutch citizens about Covid	Actor: Dutch society	Negative about guilability within Dutch society	Critique government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
131	PG030	Pegida	National Covid lockdown after 'just' 515 IC cases	Actor: Government	Negative about Covid measures	Critique government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
132	PG031	Pegida	Disproportionally strict Covid policy	Actor: Government	Negative about illegal immigrants	Critique government	Political distrust frame	Distrust frame
133	PG032	Pegida	Covid restrictions leading to protests	Actor: Government	Positive about Covid protests	Resist Covid measures	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
134	PG033	Pegida	Unclear Vaccination policy by government	Actor: Government	Negative about Covid policy	Critique government	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
135	VP0001	Voorpost	Call to members and sympethizers to comply with Covid measures	Actor: RWE group	Positive about compliance with Covid measures	Comply with Covid measures	Community frame	Resilience frame
136	VP0002	Voorpost	Tribute to members and sympethizers aiding their community during Covid-19	Actor: RWE group	Positive about community service by members	Aid community	Community frame	Resilience frame
137	VP0003	Voorpost	Illegal immigrants aiding Covid period	Actor: Migrants	Negative about illegal immigrants	Stop migration	Illegal immigration frame	Migration frame
138	VP0004	Voorpost	Border patrol against Covid passport but not migration	Actor: Migrants	Negative about migration	Stop migration	Victim frame	Governance frame
139	VP0004	Voorpost	Illegal immigrants getting violent during Covid period	Actor: Migrants	Negative about illegal immigrants	Stop migration	Illegal immigration frame	Migration frame
140	VP0005	Voorpost	Double standard between Right-wing activists and other social and political grou	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Victim frame	Governance frame
141	VP0006	Voorpost	Tribute to members and sympethizers aiding their community during Covid-19	Actor: RWE group	Positive about community service by members	Aid community	Community frame	Resilience frame
142	VP0006	Voorpost	Illegal immigrants getting violent during Covid period	Actor: Migrants	Negative about illegal immigrants	Stop migration	Illegal immigration frame	Migration frame
143	VP0007	Voorpost	Double standard between Right-wing activists and other social and political grou	Actor: Globalization	Negative about loss of own culture	Negative about loss of own culture	Globalization frame	Governance frame
144	VP0008	Voorpost	Dutch language being used less and less	Actor: Globalization	Negative about loss of own culture	Critique government	Globalization frame	Governance frame
145	VP0008	Voorpost	Double standard between Right-wing activists and other social and political grou	Actor: Muslims	Negative about Muslims	Critique Muslims	Multi-culturalism frame	Globalization frame
146	VP0009	Voorpost	Muslims gathering despite Covid measures	Actor: Muslims	Negative about Muslims	Critique Muslims	Victim frame	Governance frame
147	VP0009	Voorpost	Voorpost members being silenced by the government	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
148	VP0010	Voorpost	Double standard between Right-wing activists and other social and political grou	Actor: RWE group	Positive about community service by members	Aid community	Community frame	Resilience frame
149	VP0011	Voorpost	Tribute to members and sympethizers aiding their community during Covid-19	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Victim frame	Governance frame
150	VP0011	Voorpost	Voorpost members being silenced by the government	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
151	VP0012	Voorpost	Double standard between Right-wing activists and other social and political grou	Actor: Globalization	Resist loss of national culture	Critique government	Globalization frame	Globalization frame
152	VP0013	Voorpost	French influence within Dutch speaking territory	Actor: Globalization	Negative about loss of own culture	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
153	VP0013	Voorpost	Voorpost members being silenced by the government	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Victim frame	Governance frame
154	VP0014	Voorpost	Double standard between Right-wing activists and other social and political grou	Actor: Government	Positive about resistance against government	Resist government	Resistance frame	Liberty frame
155	VP0015	Voorpost	Protest against Covid lockdown	Actor: Government	Positive about resistance against government	Resist government	Resistance frame	Liberty frame
156	VP0016	Voorpost	Protest against Covid measures	Actor: Government	Positive about resistance against government	Resist government	Resistance frame	Liberty frame
157	VP0017	Voorpost	Dutch language being used less and less	Actor: Globalization	Negative about loss of own culture	Negative about loss of own culture	Globalization frame	Globalization frame

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
56	VP0016	Voorpost	Protest against Covid measures	Actor: Government	Positive about resistance against government	Resist government	Resistance frame	Liberty frame
57	VP0017	Voorpost	Dutch language being used less and less	Actor: Globalization	Negative about loss of own culture	Negative about loss of own culture	Globalization frame	Globalization frame
58	VP0018	Voorpost	QR codes and Vaccination being made mandatory	Actor: Government	Negative about mandates	Critique covid measures	Civil liberties frame	Liberty frame
59	VP0019	Voorpost	Protest against Covid measures	Actor: Government	Negative about Covid measures	Resist Covid measures	Resistance frame	Liberty frame
60	VP0020	Voorpost	Protest against Covid measures	Actor: Government	Positive about resistance against government	Resist government	Resistance frame	Liberty frame
61	VP0021	Voorpost	Protest against Covid measures	Actor: Government	Positive about resistance against government	Resist government	Resistance frame	Liberty frame
62	VP0022	Voorpost	Protest against Globalizing Covid QR code	Actor: Globalization	Negative about globalization	Resist globalization	Globalization frame	Globalization frame
63	VP0023	Voorpost	Protest against Covid measures	Actor: Government	Negative about Covid measures	Resist Covid measures	Resistance frame	Liberty frame
64	VP0024	Voorpost	Protest against Covid measures	Actor: Government	Positive about resistance against government	Resist government	Resistance frame	Liberty frame
65	VP0025	Voorpost	Protest against globalized covid measures	Actor: Globalization	Negative about globalization	Resist globalization	Globalization frame	Globalization frame
66	VP0026	Voorpost	New Covid-19 lockdown	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
67	VP0027	Voorpost	Past year having been a year of repression	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
68	VP0028	Voorpost	Covid measures enduring	Actor: Government	Negative about Covid measures	Critique Covid measures	Bad governance frame	Governance frame
69	VP0029	Voorpost	Protest against Covid measures	Actor: Government	Positive about resistance against government	Resist government	Resistance frame	Liberty frame
70	VV0001	Volks Verzet	Government being the real disease	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
71	VV0002	Volks Verzet	Government being the real disease	Actor: Government	Negative about government	Critique government	Repressive governance frame	Liberty frame
72	VV0002	Volks Verzet	Vaccinations being labeled as safe	Actor: Vaccinations	Negative about trustworthiness vaccin	Distrust vaccination	Science frame	Distrust frame