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**What did you just call me? A study on the demonization of political parties in the Netherlands between 1995 and 2011**

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## Chapter 4

# The Electoral Consequences of Demonization

## Introduction

For almost a decade now, Dutch anti-immigration party PVV has been a prominent and controversial force in the Dutch political landscape. Between 2004 and 2011 the party became increasingly successful. At the same time, it was heavily contested, as shown by the degree of demonization (see Chapter 2). The analyses in Chapter 3 did not unequivocally answer the question whether demonization is morally or politically motivated, but the desired effect of demonization seems unambiguous: to reduce, restrict or rule out support for the targeted party. For example, a Dutch political commentator argued that party support for the PVV might decrease when the party is portrayed as too radical, because this has also reduced electoral support for the American *Tea Party*.<sup>37</sup>

Downs (2001; also see Husbands, 2002; Widfeldt, 2004) argues that established parties might pursue strategies of disengagement to decrease party support for anti-immigration parties. Such strategies concern legal repression, political repression and/or political isolation. Arguably demonization is also a strategy of disengagement, since it suggests that the targeted party is not 'normal' and is illegitimate. The effects of strategies of disengagement are largely underexplored, and initial conclusions appear contradictory. For example, Fennema (2000), Fennema and Van der Brug (2006) and Van Donselaar (1995) maintain that strategies of disengagement have been effective at rolling back the success of anti-immigration parties, while Downs et al. (2009), Heinisch (2003) and Husbands (2002) conclude that strategies of disengagement have proven surprisingly ineffective, or even counterproductive (for example see Van Spanje and De Vreese, *forthcoming*). Dutch political commentator Bas Heijne is sceptical. In December 2013 anti-immigration party PVV distributed political propaganda stickers displaying provocative messages such as 'Mohammed is a crook' and 'The Koran is a lie'. According to Heijne, this served as bait for the political establishment. The PVV hoped that one of the established parties would react with a referral to Nazism/fascism. More specifically, the PVV wants to be demonized because

<sup>37</sup> See *Buitenhof* broadcasted on January 19<sup>th</sup> 2014.

this might benefit the party. Demonization allows the PVV to play the victim and win the sympathy vote.<sup>38</sup>

This chapter seeks to contribute to the existing literature by providing an empirical analysis of the effect demonization has on the electoral support for the targeted party. The party analyzed is the Dutch anti-immigration party the PVV. During its years of existence, the PVV has been considerably demonized, although to varying degrees. Furthermore, its electoral size and political role has also changed substantially over time. Ever since the party was formed, the demonization of the PVV has been publicly contested. Some Dutch political commentators have speculated that there will be a decrease in party support, while others have predicted an increase.<sup>39</sup> As will be discussed in the theoretical section below, sound theoretical arguments have been put forward for both views.

## Theory

There are two main strategic responses to electorally weaken anti-immigration parties that established parties can choose from: engage or disengage (Downs, 2001; also see Husbands, 2002; Widfeldt, 2004). When established parties opt for strategies of engagement, they seek to 'tame' anti-immigration parties by drawing them into the political system and granting them legislative or governing responsibilities (Downs et al., 2009; also see Bale, 2003, 2008; Bale et al., 2010; De Lange, 2012). When established parties opt for strategies of disengagement, they seek to decrease electoral support for anti-immigration parties by keeping them at bay. One way to disengage from the anti-immigration party is by ignoring it, thus depriving it of legitimacy. The anti-immigration party is then treated as nothing more than a nuisance, unworthy of the establishment's time, in the hope that, due to this 'silent treatment' the anti-immigration party will gradually grow faint and disappear. A second strategy of disengagement is to repress or isolate the

<sup>38</sup> See 'Schandaal' *NRC Handelsblad*, 21-12-013.

<sup>39</sup> Also see 'Elite knuffelt Wilders nu graag dood: Geert Wilders Extreem-rechts of nationaal conservatief?' *De Volkskrant*, 26-02-2009; 'Nederland lijdt aan borderline; vier auteurs proberen grip te krijgen op politiek verschijnsel Wilders' *Trouw*, 08-05-2010; 'Niet de beste spreker wint de verkiezingen, maar hij die goed zijn woorden kiest; Framing, een heel andere vorm van welsprekendheid' *NRC Handelsblad*, 15-05-2010.

anti-immigration party by legal or political means such as raising the electoral threshold, outlawing the party completely, or by forming blocking coalitions to exclude the anti-immigration party from any executive authority. Practical examples of disengagement strategies are the systemic boycott of the CD in the Netherlands (Van Donselaar, 1995) as well as the *cordon sanitaire* around the *Vlaams Blok* (VB) in Belgium (Damen, 2001).

Taking Downs' (2001) typology into account, demonization is also a strategy of disengagement because, like political isolation and legal repression, demonization involves the de-legitimation of an opponent. Demonization is also a way to indicate that the party in question must not be regarded as 'normal' but as a dangerous political outcast that threatens democracy. Other parties distance themselves from the anti-immigration party by attacking it fundamentally, stressing a division between the 'good democrats' and the 'malignant outsider'. Focusing on the 'disengaging' nature of demonization, the remainder of this theoretical section will consider the electoral consequences of strategies of disengagement.

#### *Strategies of disengagement: intended effects*

Besides other matters, support for anti-immigration parties depends on voters' perceptions of the party's perceived legitimacy and effectiveness (Bos and Van der Brug, 2010). Legitimacy entails that the party is democratic, and effectiveness entails that the party is able to affect policies. Voters are only willing to support anti-immigration parties if they consider the party 'normal'. Once anti-immigration parties are considered legitimate and effective, voters evaluate it by the same standards they use to judge other parties. In other words, voters are prepared to vote for an anti-immigration party when they agree with their policies on immigration and integration, provided that they perceive this party as democratic and able to affect policies (Bos and Van der Brug, 2010; Van der Brug et al., 2005; also see Eatwell, 2003).

Based on the importance of perceived legitimacy and effectiveness, Van Spanje and De Vreese (*forthcoming*) formulate two reasons that predict a drop in party support for anti-immigration parties once these parties face legal prosecution. First, if a politician is charged with a criminal offence, this

can considerably reduce the party's legitimacy, especially when the defendant is the party leader. The party is then associated with unlawful behavior and -justifiably or unjustifiably- its record is no longer irreproachable. Clearly, when the party or politician is found guilty, this is expected to further decrease the party's legitimacy. Second, the party's effectiveness can suffer as a result of prosecution. This can be either a real, or a perceived loss in effectiveness. Real loss in effectiveness, for example, can result from the party leader's absence, the loss of financial resources spent on trial, or from a reduced willingness by other political actors to cooperate with the defendant's party because the leader has been discredited as a criminal. Although a loss in effectiveness is not inevitable, voters might still see it that way, leading to a perceived loss in effectiveness.

The predictions made by Van Spanje and De Vreese (*forthcoming*) are supported by the assumption that one of the main reasons that the Dutch anti-immigration party CD failed to establish itself was that its message was widely and consistently de-legitimized by relevant political actors and the media (Fennema and Van der Brug, 2007). Throughout its existence, legal prosecution and political isolation dogged the CD. Party leader Janmaat suggested that his party was only able to recruit politicians with a criminal record (Van Donselaar, 1995). It was also extremely difficult for the party to hold general meetings. Several municipalities refused to rent out their accommodations unwilling to facilitate undemocratic organizations (Van Donselaar, 1995). Public marches and protests were legally prohibited on the grounds of public order and safety. Janmaat was charged several times with incitement to hatred and discrimination of foreigners several times. He was often acquitted, but in 1994 and 1997 he was convicted for inciting racial hatred, resulting in financial penalties (Fennema, 2000). Besides legal prosecution, Dutch political parties excluded the CD from all political collaboration. Whenever Janmaat spoke in Parliament, members of other parties would either leave, or would ignore him. The media also boycotted the CD, some refused to discuss the party, while others discussed it mostly in dismissive terms. Chapter 2 shows that the CD was been demonized more frequently in the media than latter-day anti-immigration parties like the LPP

and PVV.<sup>40</sup> The loss of its 3 parliamentary seats in 1998 marked the end of the CD, although the party was not officially abolished until 2002.

Germany provides another example of a case where a strategy of disengagement had its intended effect. After the Second World War, the German political establishment adopted a clear strategy of de-legitimation against any form of Nazi resurgence. A critical examination of the Nazi past had led to a ‘culture of contrition’ among the political establishment and other elite actors (Art, 2007). When the anti-immigration party *Die Republikaner* managed to enter the Berlin Parliament and the European Parliament in the 1980s, the question of explicit or tacit cooperation was never raised. Instead, the established Christian-democratic party *Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands* (CDU) repeatedly opted for unpopular coalitions in order to bypass *Die Republikaner*. All German parties followed a policy of *Ausgrenzung*. In regional legislatures, for example, politicians were instructed to vote against any proposal of *Die Republikaner*. Whenever politicians violated the policies of the *Ausgrenzung*, they were expelled from their parties. The media and other social actors also played a crucial role. Germany’s largest tabloid newspaper *Bild* campaigned relentlessly against *Die Republikaner*, for example, by portraying the party and its members as neo-Nazis. German citizens also actively protested against the party by drawing comparisons between *Die Republikaner* and Nazism. Eventually, the combined reactions of the political parties, the media and civil society, led to the collapse of *Die Republikaner* (Art, 2007).

To sum up, demonization is a strategy of disengagement that intends to reduce the legitimacy of anti-immigration parties. By portraying an anti-immigration party as the embodiment of (neo-)Nazism/fascism, the party’s legitimacy is publicly called into question. When this strategy is effective, electoral support for the targeted party is expected to decrease.

#### *Strategies of disengagement: unintended effects*

While there are reasons to expect strategies of disengagement to impair

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<sup>40</sup> When taking into account how often the party was mentioned in the media in general. Also see (Schafraad et al., 2009).

the electoral success of anti-immigration parties, Downs et al. (2009) argue that “the evidence from select countries suggests that strategies of isolation, ostracism and demonisation prove surprisingly ineffective at rolling back or even containing threats to the democratic order [...]” (p. 152). These authors further conclude that strategies of disengagement often yield unintended or undesired consequences, actually increasing support for anti-immigration parties, instead of decreasing it.

For example, Van Spanje and De Vreese (*forthcoming*) studied the electoral effects of hate speech prosecution, taking the decision to prosecute PVV party leader Wilders as a case in point. Contrary to the predictions formulated in the previous section, their analysis suggests that the decision to prosecute Wilders for hate speech actually increased electoral support for the PVV.<sup>41</sup> The authors provide four explanations for an increase in anti-immigration party support when pursuing legal action. First, the defendant’s party probably gains a lot of media attention from being prosecuted, and most research confirms that media attention has an overall positive effect on the electoral performance of political parties (see Koopmans and Muis, 2009; Van Aelst et al., 2008; Vliegthart et al., 2012). In addition, an increase in media exposure is expected to increase a party’s perceived effectiveness, which subsequently increases party support (Bos and Van der Brug, 2010). Second, prosecution can lead to a stronger association between the defendant’s party and the political issue at stake. A further strengthening of the association between a party and a political issue amplifies the party’s ‘issue ownership’. Basically, ‘issue ownership’ relates to the idea that voters associate certain issues with certain parties, and is considered an important political strength because parties win votes most easily on the issues they ‘own’ (Petrocik, 1996; Van der Brug, 2004). Third, the electorate perceives an issue as more important when it gets more media attention (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Thus, in this particular case, prosecution would lead voters to add weight to the issues of immigration and integration, provided that prosecution

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<sup>41</sup> Despite the fact that dozens of reports were filed against Wilders, the Dutch Public Prosecution Service decided against prosecution in June 2008. However, in January 2009 the Amsterdam Court of Appeal, proceeding from a formal complaint made by several individuals and organizations, repealed this decision. Attracting massive media attention, the trial started in October 2010, resulting in Wilders’ acquittal in June 2011 (Van Spanje and De Vreese, *forthcoming*).

indeed brings more media attention, and voters were exposed to this. Such an increase in perceived importance would again benefit party support for anti-immigration parties, since they 'own' these issues (Boomgaarden and Vliegthart, 2007; Walgrave and Deswert, 2004). For example, in 1991, Frits Bolkestein, leader of the liberal party the VVD, made a speech in Luzern in which he warned against the threat of Islam and the dangers of failed integration. The speech sparked a heated public debate and Bolkestein came under serious attack from his political opponents, most notably by the CDA. However, along the way, it became clear that electoral support for the VVD actually increased. After Bolkestein's speech, more than 50 per cent of the electorate considered immigration as the most important political issue, compared to less than 10 per cent in 1989 (Van Donselaar, 1995: 56-57). So without serious competition from anti-immigration parties at that point, Bolkestein not only put the issue of immigration high on the agenda, but he also made the VVD the owner of that issue. Fourth, politicians can benefit from prosecution by portraying themselves as martyrs for freedom of speech. Political martyrdom is considered a successful populist strategy to attract voters who are suspicious of the political establishment (Abedi, 2001). Voters who already lack confidence in the political establishment, may be increasingly deterred by this repression, and become further alienated (Capoccia, 2001). In fact, after being cleared of all charges, Wilders publicly stated that his acquittal was primarily a victory for the freedom of speech.<sup>42</sup>

The first three explanations for an increase in electoral support for the targeted party seem also applicable to demonization. However, when a party is demonized, this does not hinder the party's/politician's freedom of speech. Still, when anti-immigration parties successfully maintain that their linkage to Nazism is nothing more than a knee-jerk attack, demonization may also provide an opportunity to exploit the role of the victim. If voters get the impression that a party is being unfairly attacked, the party becomes the underdog and wins the voters' sympathy. Seen as a dishonest attack, demonization can also attract protest voters, especially those who are already

<sup>42</sup> See 'Wilders: vrijpraak overwinning voor vrijheid van meningsuiting', *NRC Handelsblad*, 23-05-2011 <http://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2011/06/23/wilders-vrijpraak-is-overwinning-voor-vrijheid-van-meningsuiting/> (visited December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013)

dissatisfied with the establishment. When demonization is considered merely 'political' this may benefit the demonized party. In this context, Downs (2002) argues that an overeager penchant for political correctness only seems to fuel support for anti-immigration parties.

Strategies of isolation can also have unintended effects. Turning a blind eye, for example, can allow the anti-immigration party free rein to advertise its propaganda and win votes (Downs, 2002). The Belgian political establishment adopted a strategy of political isolation towards the anti-immigration party VB. Besides, the VB was regularly described as fascist in the Belgian media. However, the systematic boycott and de-legitimation of the VB did not seem to harm the party's electoral success. *The Economist* writes: "Despite—or perhaps because of—its ostracism by all the mainstream Belgian parties, its share of the vote continues to go up relentlessly. [...] The Blok's roots do indeed lie in the resentments of families of former Nazi collaborators who faced penalties and discrimination long after the war of 1939-45. But by dismissing the Blok as little more than a bunch of Nazis the Belgian political establishment has talked itself into a corner" (2001:48).<sup>43</sup> After labeling the VB as a Nazi force, cooperation between the establishment and the VB became inconceivable, while the ostracism of the VB also hindered the political process in general. This situation played into the hands of the VB, confirming the party's criticism of the political establishment as an ineffective, self-serving monopoly (Downs et al., 2009).

### *Timing*

The above indicates that the predicted effect of demonization on electoral support for anti-immigration parties can go two ways. So far the effect of timing has been ignored, but Art (2007) argues that timing is of crucial importance when it comes to the effect of strategies of de-legitimation (also see Husbands, 2002). According to Art (2007) strategies of de-legitimation are more likely to have a negative effect on anti-immigration parties' electoral success when these parties are not yet fully established. In the early stages of their establishment, then, political newcomers are more vulnerable to elite

<sup>43</sup> *The Economist* (print edition), 'Belgium A worrying European paradox, July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2001.



accusations that the party is illegitimate. However, once party organizations have become stronger, supporters more loyal, and party officials have become entrenched in local, state or national legislative bodies, efforts to delegitimize anti-immigration parties are likely to become less productive or even counterproductive. It becomes harder for the political establishment to dismiss the party. The effect of attacks against anti-immigration parties is thus dependent on decisions taken in the past. If the political establishment has already cooperated with the anti-immigration party, demonization is likely to become less credible, and thus less effective, or ineffective. Conversely, demonization is more likely to have a positive effect on the electoral success of anti-immigration parties, after the party is established. Once the establishment has granted them some legitimacy, anti-immigration parties are more likely to credibly discard demonization as a knee-jerk attack.

The political career of the PVV can be divided in three distinct periods: the early years when the party had just been founded, up until the first elections in which it participated (September 2004 - November 2006); the period in which the party held 9 seats in opposition (November 2006 - June 2010); and the period after the 2010 elections, when the party had 24 seats in the Dutch House of Representatives and was officially a supporting partner of the Dutch minority government coalition (June 2010 - December 2011).<sup>44</sup>

Taking into account the conditional effect of timing, demonization is expected to decrease the electoral success of the PVV during the first of these periods. In this period, the party was largely a political outsider. Wilders had originally gained a parliamentary seat as a member of the VVD but, after breaking away from this party, he decided to keep his seat to pursue his own political objectives. Despite the fact that his newly established party sometimes skyrocketed in the opinion polls (to 29 out of 150), the party was still in its infancy, and thus very vulnerable to attacks. During the second period, the PVV had 9 seats, which strongly increased the party's democratic legitimacy. However, in line with the general behavior of anti-immigration parties, its behavior was still characterized by fierce anti-establishment rhetoric. The PVV

also showed its ambivalence towards democratic institutions by proposing to abolish the Senate. Despite the fact that the party became increasingly established, voters most likely still considered the PVV a political outsider (also see Bos and Van der Brug, 2010). During the third period, the PVV held an overwhelming 24 seats. More importantly, it became the official support partner of the minority government coalition, of the two established parties VVD and CDA. In the meantime, Wilders had also become one of the longest serving members of Parliament, adding to his party's established status.

Clearly, the PVV fulfilled different political roles in every single period, transforming from a political outsider to a fully established party. In order to take the possible effect of timing into account, each period is analyzed separately. The degree of demonization varies considerably within and between the different periods, and the polling results of the PVV also vary considerably.

## Method and data

The main objective of this study is to estimate the effect demonization has on the electoral support for anti-immigration parties. *Party support* is the dependent variable, and *demonization* is the independent variable. Data for both variables were collected on a weekly basis over three extensive periods of time. The analysis in this chapter assumes a one-directional relationship, i.e. demonization precedes a change in party support. To estimate the effect, time series analysis is employed, which enables us to make strong claims about causal relationships (Hollanders and Vliegthart, 2008; Vliegthart, 2007: 18).

### *ARIMA-Modeling: step by step*

A suitable method for analyzing an one-directional relationship over time is Auto Regressive Integrated Moving Average (ARIMA) modeling, also known as Box-Jenkins transfer modeling (Box and Jenkins, 1970; Boef and Keele, 2008; Vasileiadou and Vliegthart, 2013). This assumes that a variable's own past can explain its current value. Thus, before adding any

<sup>44</sup> The minority government fell in April 2012 after the PVV withdrew their support.

explanatory variables, the series' endogenous dynamics need to be captured by way of modeling its own past (Vasileiadou and Vliegthart, 2013). The steps necessary in these types of analyses are: 1) testing for stationarity; 2) correctly accounting for the series own past; 3) adding independent variables (Vliegthart, 2007: 23-27).

ARIMA first requires a time series variable to be stationary. A variable is stationary "if its probability distribution does not change over time" (Stock and Watson 2012: 579). Stationary series are so-called mean reverting, implying that even after large shocks, the series reverts to its mean (Hollanders and Vliegthart, 2008). The stationarity of a series is generally tested using the Augmented Dickey-Fuller test. A series might be non-stationary, for example, when it has a clear downward or upward trend. Usually, a series is made stationary (the trend is removed) by taking differences. When a series is differenced, not the absolute values are used in the analysis, but the difference between the current and previous value is used (Vliegthart, 2007).

The second step is to make sure that the series' own past is correctly taken into account.<sup>45</sup> It is important to correct for a series own past, in order to avoid finding effects of other variables on the series that are in fact spurious (and thus are actually explained by the predictive power of the series own past). Adding autoregressive (AR) and moving average (MA) terms to the model can adequately correct for a series past. AR terms resemble the effects of previous values of the series on the current value, while MA terms represent the influence of the residuals from these previous values on the current value (Vliegthart 2007).<sup>46</sup>

In the end, the residuals of the model should resemble 'white noise', meaning that the residuals do not contain any autocorrelation. At this point, all time related structure in the time series variable is accounted for by the ARIMA model coefficients. Ideally, the squared residuals of the series also resemble white noise.<sup>47</sup> If the squared residuals of a series contain time-related structure, it indicates a problem of heteroscedasticity and the logged

<sup>45</sup> The underlying idea is that values in a series do not arise out of the blue, but that they are largely dependent on previous values (Vliegthart, 2007: 20). For example, the PVV may have more than 20 electoral seats in the polls this week, partly because it had more than 20 electoral seats in the polls the previous week.

<sup>46</sup> Determining how many AR/MA terms are added to the model is strictly an empirical process and not theoretically driven (Vliegthart, 2007: 26).

<sup>47</sup> The Ljung-Box Q test is used to test whether residuals and/or squared residuals resemble white noise.

values of a series can be used to correct for this.<sup>48</sup>

Since more than one model specification may fulfill the ARIMA model requirements, the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) is used to select the most parsimonious model. Generally, the model with the smallest AIC, has the best fit (Enders, 1995; Vasileiadou and Vliegthart, 2013). The model fit indicates how well the complexity of the model and the data under investigation are attuned to each other, whilst passing the diagnostic tests. The aim is to specify a model that is as efficient (small) as possible.

Once the ARIMA model is properly specified, the third and last step is to add the independent variables. At this point, how many lags are added to the explanatory variable is also determined. This is mainly a theoretical consideration of after how many lags (time units) an effect on the dependent variable is expected. Note that the independent variables also have to be stationary, and that once the dependent variable is differenced, all independent variables have to be differenced. Finally, it is required that the residual of the new model should also resemble white noise, i.e. contains no time related structure (Vliegthart, 2007).

#### *Dependent variable*

The dependent variable *party support* is measured using polling data for Dutch political parties collected on a weekly basis between September 2004 and December 2011. These data show how many parliamentary seats the PVV would win if elections were held at time of the polling. Dutch polling institute *Peil.nl* collected these data from at least 3000 respondents each week. Other market research institutes, such as *TNS-NIPO* and *Ipsos* carry out polls less frequently and less structurally over time, making their data less suitable for this particular time series analysis. The analysis benefits greatly from weekly

<sup>48</sup> Log transformation can also correct for series that are not normally distributed. Above all else ARIMA modeling assumes that the included variables are distributed symmetrically. Statistical tests for normality are often considered too strict, since even the slightest departments from normality can reject the assumption of a symmetrical distribution. One alternative is to interpret the skewness (a measure of symmetry) and kurtosis (a measure of the degree to which a distribution is 'peaked') values of a series. As a rule of thumb, a skewness value of  $> 3.0$  indicates that a series is problematically skewed. Furthermore, a kurtosis value of  $> 10.0$  suggest a problem and a kurtosis of  $> 20.0$  is considered seriously problematic (Kline, 2011: 63). Thus, at this point corrective action is required because it is unsound to analyze severely non-normal data with a normal theory method (Kline, 2011: 63). For all series in the models presented in this chapter, variables have been logged when the skewness of the series was higher than 3.0 and /or the kurtosis was higher than 20.



polling data, since demonization is expected to take effect shortly after it is expressed.

*Peil.nl* uses a self-registered online panel to collect its data, thereby restricting its respondents to users of the Internet, and, more importantly, to people who have registered themselves to *Peil.nl*. Although *Peil.nl* controls for these particular attributes, concerns have been raised that some parties are still structurally over- or underrepresented based on the characteristics of their potential voters. A structural over- or under representation of PVV voters, however, poses no problem, as long as the gain/loss estimates from week to week are valid, because in the ARIMA models it is these weekly changes that are analyzed, not the levels. To verify the data, the *Peil.nl* polling data for the PVV were compared to the *TNS-NIPO* polling data for the PVV, and although the *TNS-NIPO* data show substantial gaps over time, there is a very strong correlation (.93) between the two series. In general, the polling data are collected very systemically. There are, however, some missing data particularly during the summer and Christmas holidays. Since ARIMA modeling requires uninterrupted time series, these gaps were filled using data interpolation.<sup>49</sup> According to Yanovitzky and VanLear (2008), ARIMA modeling is especially suitable for a time series that includes at least 50 observations. Several time series are analyzed in this chapter, all of which have a time unit of one week. The shortest series includes 63 weeks (third period), and the longest series includes 183 weeks (second period). For every different time period, the dependent series has been uniquely specified.

#### *Independent variables*

The variable *demonization* reflects how often the PVV was demonized during each week under analysis. To this end, five Dutch national newspapers and

<sup>49</sup> The entire period under analysis for the PVV has 10 missing values (out of 381 observations). There are never more than two time units missing in a row, while most of the time there is just one missing value. Data interpolation was used to estimate new values for the missing data. Based on the range of known values, new values were constructed. Although estimation errors cannot be ruled out, the advantages of this practice are of greater value than the possible loss in accuracy. Normally, one steers clear of data interpolation when it comes to time-series analysis because of the risks of artificially inflating the autocorrelation of the series. However, since the missing values are very limited, and the autocorrelation of the series is not the focus of investigation, data interpolation was used. Moreover, treating missing as missing in the analysis does not alter the results. In addition, since Dutch parliamentary recesses largely coincide with these public holidays, relative stable political attitudes can be expected during these periods, thus relative stable polling results. The fact that most before and after data points do not vary much from each other supports this idea, and choice of data estimation.

three national opinion weeklies, published between 2004 and 2011, were searched for articles that contained demonization of the PVV. Articles were selected based on the following requirement: the name of the PVV and/or Wilders was used in combination with a term strongly associated with Nazism/fascism (see Chapter 2 for a detailed description of how data are collected). Between 2004 and 2011, 967 instances of political demonization of the PVV were found.<sup>50</sup>

Data for the *demonization* were obtained solely through printed national news media, clearly limiting the scope of the analysis and introducing a possible bias (see Chapter 2). However, this is not considered a serious problem for two reasons. First, newspapers alone reach about one-third of the Dutch public (Nommedia, 2013), while they still represent mainstream politics in the Netherlands (Van der Eijk, 2000). The public is therefore largely expected to experience demonization as covered by the written media. Second, the focus is on the increase and decrease in demonization from week to week, so while levels of demonization may be structurally higher in written media, they still reflect valid estimates of the fluctuations in demonization from week to week.

Furthermore, the control variable *media attention* is added. This variable shows how often the relevant party is mentioned in the five national newspapers and opinion weeklies during each week under analysis. The same newspapers and opinion weeklies searched to obtain data for demonization were used. In general, increased media attention is expected to benefit a party's electoral success. Although conflicting research outcomes have led to different ideas about the size of the effect (ranging from minimal to very powerful), most research confirms that the degree of media attention at least contributes to electoral successes (see Koopmans and Muis, 2009; Van Aelst

<sup>50</sup> Every single count of demonization is not expected to affect the electoral standing of the PVV to the same degree. In other words, the difference between 0 and 1 count of demonization is expected to be of greater influence than the difference between 20 and 21 counts of demonization. The logged values of a series deals with this issue, so that peaks in data are flattened and the series becomes more compact (Vliegenthart, 2007: 82). In other words, the differences between the scores in the upper values are more compressed than the differences in the lower values (Kline, 2011: 63). Since this is more suitable to estimating the effect of demonization, the variable *demonization* was logged in all models. Nonetheless, for each model, it has also been indicated, whether or not log-transformation was also required based on technical requirements such as stationarity or acceptable skewness and kurtosis values. Please note that because the demonization series include scores of 0.00, 1.00 was added to all scores before log-transformation was applied (the logged value of 1.00 is 0.00).

et al., 2008; Vliegthart et al., 2012). The degree of demonization is also expected to influence electoral standing, negatively or positively. Therefore, it is important to control for media attention. Because, when a party benefits from a relative large degree of media attention, but is demonized at the same time, the effect of demonization is possibly cancelled out or enlarged by the media attention.

Finally, since effects of portrayal in the media are generally strongest in the short term (Van der Pas et al., 2011) a decrease/increase in party support for the PVV is expected shortly after demonization took place. In this respect, it should be noted that it is unclear at what point in the week *Peil.nl* executes its survey, as well as in what time span the 3000 respondents fill it out. This will probably influence the estimation of the effect of demonization. For example, when demonization occurs at the end of the week, its expected effect may not be captured by the first following polling results, because data have been obtained before demonization took place. In order to cover at least one full week after demonization took place, the effects are estimated both with a lag of one week and a lag of two weeks in all models.<sup>51</sup>

## Results

Before the results of the ARIMA models are presented, descriptive information about the data is provided. Note that figures 4.1 to 4.3 describe the data before the series were logged and/or differenced.

Figure 4.1 shows party support for the PVV between 2004 and 2011. Polling outcomes are shown from September 2004 onwards, when Wilders left the VVD because he disagreed with the party's lenient position towards the accession of Turkey to the EU. Still a Member of Parliament, Wilders established his own party *Groep Wilders*, a name he later changed to the

<sup>51</sup> Besides, the statistical software package *Stata* divides the year in 52 weeks where the first week always begins on the first of January, regardless of what day of the week it may be. Consequently, the last week (week 52) may have more than 7 days. The variables *demonization* and *media attention* are collected according to the intervals of the polling data. Polling data are made public once a week and sometimes this day falls in the middle of a *Stata*-week while other times this day falls at the end of a *Stata*-week, depending on the time period under investigation, and the day *Peil.nl* makes his polling data public. Due to this particular function, the time unit 'week' could not be fully adjusted to how weekly polling data has been collected. As a result, the effects of demonization and subsequently media attention are not always estimated with even intervals. Also for this reason, it is most appropriate to estimate the effects of demonization or polling results with a lag of one and two weeks.

PVV. Figure 4.1 shows that *Groep Wilders* quickly gained electoral support. In late November 2004, the party was polling an impressive 29 seats in the Dutch House of Representatives. Estimated support then declined quickly, but gradually increased again from late 2006 onward. At the general elections held in November 2006, the PVV won 9 seats.



Figure 4.1 Party support for PVV per week between 2004 and 2011.

After those elections, the party never polled below an estimated 10 seats. The PVV did experience a big drop in seats in early/mid 2010, when it fell relatively quickly from more than 25 seats, to a low point of 16 seats. Dutch political commentators have speculated that the PVV lost many votes to the VVD at that time. The financial crisis was one of the most important issues during this election, and the VVD managed to project itself successfully as the most competent party on this issue. As it was, at the same time, relatively tough on immigration and integration, it is likely, that many voters from the PVV, switched to the VVD. Still, the PVV recovered and won 24 seats in the elections. Although the VVD was declared the overall winner of the elections, the PVV suddenly became a major player in Parliament. The PVV became the official support partner of the minority government coalition, formed by the VVD and CDA.

Figure 4.2 shows how often the PVV was demonized in Dutch national

newspapers and opinion weeklies between 2004 and 2011. In general, the pattern appears fairly similar to party support for the PVV during this period (see figure 4.1). While the PVV was not often demonized in its early years the party was demonized almost immediately after it was founded.<sup>52</sup> Peaks in demonization appear in late 2009, late 2010, and early 2011, when the PVV was demonized around 30 times a week. Note that these data include repetition. Different media and different authors repeat a single instance of demonization, adding to the overall volume of demonization. For example, the first peak in late 2009 contains many articles that address the same instance of demonization. This demonization of the PVV was originally expressed on television, but many written news sources picked it up. Following Koopmans and Muis (2009), the degree to which a statement is picked up by other actors is called ‘resonance’. Resonance does not pose a problem, since the more a voter is exposed to demonization, the larger the effect is expected to be. It would therefore be a mistake to remove resonance from the data.

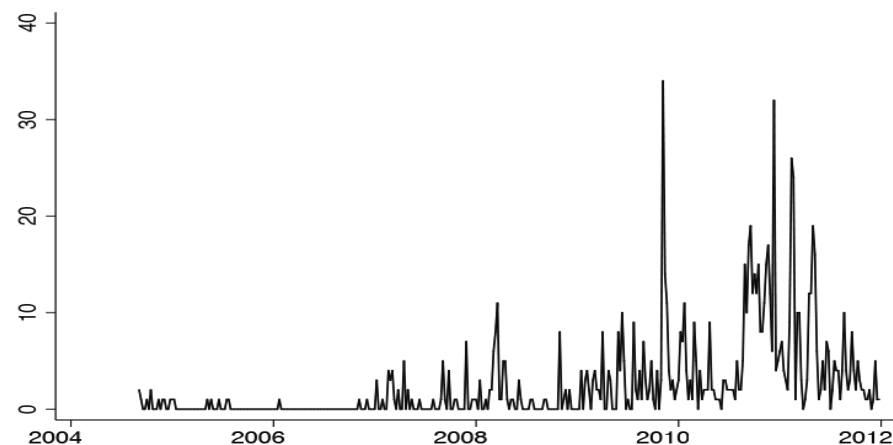


Figure 4.2 Demonization of the PVV per week between 2004 and 2011.

Figure 4.3 shows how much media attention the PVV received between September 2004 and December 2011. Again, the general pattern appears fairly similar to that of party support and the degree of demonization (see figure 4.1 and 4.2). The PVV receives the least media attention in its first

<sup>52</sup> Since data in the figure have been compressed, Figure 4.2 may slightly distort the degree of demonization especially during the first period. While the PVV was sparsely demonized during this time, it was demonized in about 15 per cent of the weeks.

years of existence. Until early 2007 the party is never mentioned in more than 100 articles per week, then media attention gradually increases until it peaks in late 2010, when the PVV is mentioned in more than 400 articles per week, after which the volume slowly decreases again to an average of roughly 150 articles per week.

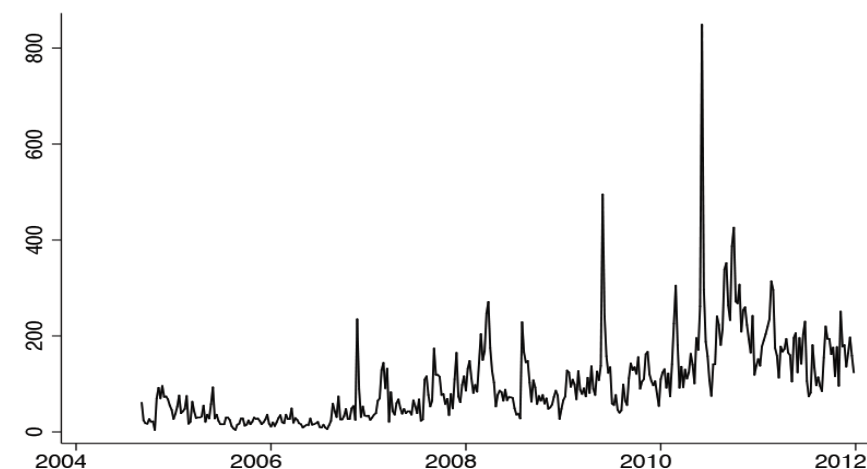


Figure 4.3 Media attention for the PVV per week between 2004 and 2011.

Table 4.1 shows the estimated effect of *demonization* on *party support* during the first period.<sup>53</sup> Model 1a is an univariate ARIMA model, where the dependent series is modeled so that it correctly takes into account its own past. More specifically, all time related structure in the dependent series *party support* is accounted for by adding an AR term. Model 1a shows that the ARIMA model coefficient is indeed significant. Model 1b shows that *demonization* has a significant negative effect (-1.10, significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ) on *party support* in both the first and the second week after demonization took place in the written media.<sup>54</sup> Thus, high levels of *demonization* have a negative effect on *party support*. Compared to model 1a, the model fit (AIC) of model 1b improved (from 437.13 to 409.87 for model 1b). Model 1c includes the control variable *media attention*. Results show that the negative effect of

<sup>53</sup> All series in this model have been differenced once. The Augmented Dickey-Fuller test indicates for each included series that they are stationary, and the Ljung-Box Q test indicates that the residuals are white noise.

<sup>54</sup> Note that the effects of logged variables are more difficult to interpret. In this case the independent variable is logged while the dependent variable is not, suggesting the following interpretation of the coefficient: a 1% increase in X would lead to a ‘coefficient/100’ decrease in Y. This entails that a 1% increase in demonization would result in a 0.011 decrease in party support.

*demonization* on *party support* remains significant, although it becomes a little smaller (from -1.10 to -1.00 in week one, and from -0.89 to -0.69 in week two). Furthermore, in line with the theoretical expectations, model 1c shows that *media attention* has a significant positive effect on *party support*, however, only with a lag of one week. In other words, attention to the PVV in the news positively influences the electoral support for this party. Again, the model fit improves compared to the previous models.

Table 4.1 Influence of demonization, media attention on party support for the PVV between September 2004 and November 2006.

Period I	Model 1a	T	Model 1b	T	Model 1c	T
Autocorrelation (t-12)	-0.42***	-5.00	-0.38***	-5.21	-0.28***	-3.60
Party is demonized (t-1)	-	-	-1.10**	-2.84	-1.00**	-2.28
Party is demonized (t-2)	-	-	-0.89**	-3.16	-0.69**	-2.02
Media Attention (t-1)	-	-	-	-	0.02**	-3.19
Media Attention (t-2)	-	-	-	-	0.01	-1.36
AIC	437.13		409.87		404.53	
N (obs)	114.00		112.00		112.00	

Note: \*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$  (two-tailed); - variable is not included in the model.

Additional models that included multiple dummy variables marking events expected to have heavily influenced the polling results for the PVV were analyzed. Results, however, remained very similar. In other words, as with the inclusion of several event variables, the effect of *demonization* on *party support* remains significant, while the significant positive effect of *media attention* on *party support* persists. These effects are therefore considered robust.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> An additional model including two event variables expected to heavily influence the polling results for the PVV during this period was analyzed. The first event is the political murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh that took place on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2004. This murder marked a crucial low point in the immigration and integration debate in the Netherlands. An Islamic fundamentalist, provoked by the filmmaker's fierce stance against the Islam, murdered him in broad daylight on a busy Amsterdam street. The murder caused great social unrest, and severely affected the debate about the multicultural society and freedom of speech. The second event is the announcement of a new political party, the *Partij voor Rechtvaardigheid, Daadkracht en Vooruitgang* (PRVD) in 2005. The party was founded by Peter R. de Vries, a popular Dutch crime fighter and television personality. De Vries introduced the party as a strong advocate of a righteous society and hands-on politics. As a prerequisite to enter Parliament, a self-imposed threshold of 41 per cent of the vote was set. Though in the end, this goal was not met, his announcement did temporarily stir up political competition. Results show that demonization continued to have significant negative effect (significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ) in week one, although the effect in week two disappears. The positive effect (significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ) of media attention in week one also remains. The model also shows that the murder of Van Gogh had a nearly significant positive effect (1.45 (T= 1.92)  $p = 0.053$ ) but the effect of the PRVD was insignificant.

Table 4.2 shows the effects of *demonization* on *party support* in the second period under investigation.<sup>56</sup> Adding extra AR or MA terms to account for the dependent series own past was unnecessary, so model 1a presents the univariate ARIMA model constant coefficient.

Table 4.2 Influence of demonization and media attention on party support for the PVV between November 2006 and June 2010.

	Model 2a	T	Model 2b	T	Model 2c	T
Constant	0.03	-0.25	0.04	-0.34	0.03	-0.25
Party is demonized (t-1)	-	-	0.10	-0.76	0.03	-0.18
Party is demonized (t-2)	-	-	0.07	-0.57	0.04	-0.32
Media attention (t-1)	-	-	-	-	0.01*	-1.99
Media attention (t-2)	-	-	-	-	0.00	-0.24
AIC		614.31		610.17		604.27
N (obs)		183		181		181

Note: \*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$  (two-tailed); - variable is not included in the model.

Model 2b shows that *demonization* had no significant effect on *party support* for the PVV when the party was in opposition. However, model 2c shows that, as in the first period, *media attention* did have a significant positive effect (0.01, significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ) on *party support* in week one. This suggests that the more attention the PVV receives in the media, the more votes it wins in the polls. Again, additional models including multiple dummy variables marking events expected to have heavily influenced the polling results for the PVV were analyzed. Results, however, remained very similar. In other words, together with inclusion of several event variables, the effect of *demonization* on *party support* remains insignificant, while the significant positive effect of

Additional models have been analyzed without log-transformation because for this particular times series, it is theoretically less urgent to take the logged values of demonization because the weekly values of demonization are structurally low and there were no indications that log-transformation was needed to obtain stationarity or acceptable skewness or kurtosis values. For the results without log-transformation, see Appendix III. These additional models indicate that the significant negative effect of demonization, and the significant positive effect of media attention on party support for the PVV persists.

<sup>56</sup> The dependent variable is differenced in order to accomplish stationarity. Subsequently, all independent variables in the models presented in table 4.2 are differenced. In order to reach acceptable skewness and kurtosis values, it was also necessary to take the logged values of demonization in. The variable demonization had a skewness of 4.6 and a kurtosis of 36.0 before log-transformation; after logging the skewness of demonization is 0.8 and the kurtosis 2.8. The residuals and squared residuals of all models in table 4.2 resemble white noise.



media attention on party support persists.<sup>57</sup>

Table 4.3 shows the effects of *demonization* on *party support* for the third period under investigation. Since it was unnecessary to add AR or MA terms, model 3a shows the univariate ARIMA model constant.<sup>58</sup> The analysis starts in September when the PVV agreed to formally support the minority government VVD-CDA.

Table 4.3 Influence of demonization and media attention on party support for the PVV between September 2010 and December 2011.

	Model 3a	T	Model 3b	T	Model 3c	T
Constant	-0.08	-0.53	-0.12	-0.75	-0.13	-0.76
Party is demonized (t-1)	-	-	-0.12	-0.69	-0.17	-0.96
Party is demonized (t-2)	-	-	-0.15	-0.66	-0.12	-0.50
Media attention (t-1)	-	-	-	-	0.00	-0.09
Media attention (t-2)	-	-	-	-	0.00	-1.02
AIC		204.27		199.85		201.76
N (obs)		63		61		61

Note: \*p ≤ 0.05; \*\*p ≤ 0.01; \*\*\*p ≤ 0.001 (two-tailed); - variable is not included in the model.

Model 3b shows that *demonization* had no significant effect on *party support* for the PVV once the party was a support partner of the government coalition. In other words, as in the second period under analysis, high levels of demonization did not influence party support for the PVV. *Media attention* also had no significant effect on *party support* (see Model 3c). In contrast to the first two periods, more attention for the PVV in the media did not lead to higher levels of party support. Again, additional analyzes were performed, taking into account several dummy variables that marked events expected to have heavily influenced the polling results for the PVV during this period.

<sup>57</sup> Several event variables marked controversial statements made by Wilders: in 2007 Wilders stated that the *Koran* is equal to *Mein Kampf*; in 2008 Wilders presented his short film *Fitna* which declared that the Koran encourages terrorism, violence against women, Jews and infidels; and in 2009 Wilders proposed a tax on headscarves, which he pejoratively called a 'head rag tax' (*kopvoddentaks*). None of the variables had a significant effect. Another event variable marks the appearance of the anti-immigration party TON in 2007, and the model shows that this had a significant (p ≤ 0.001) negative effect on party support for the PVV. Finally, an event variable was included for the decision to prosecute Wilders; the effect was, however, insignificant. This result is remarkable since it contrasts with Van Spanje and De Vreese (*forthcoming*) who concluded that the decision to prosecute Wilders caused an across-the-board increase in probabilities of voting for the PVV. However, their findings cannot be readily dismissed because they performed a more refined analysis in order to test the effect of prosecution on party support. Finally, an event variable was added that marked the fall of the government officially supported by the PVV.

<sup>58</sup> All variables have acceptable skewness and kurtosis values. However, in order to obtain stationarity all variables were differenced once. Furthermore, the residuals and squared residuals of all models in table 4.3 resemble white noise.

The results, however, do not vary significantly.<sup>59</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter set out to examine the effect of demonization on electoral support for Dutch anti-immigration party PVV. For almost a decade now, the PVV has been a prominent and controversial force in the Dutch political landscape. Between 2004 and 2011 the party became increasingly successful, winning 24 seats in the general election of 2010 and subsequently becoming support partner of the Dutch minority government. At the same time, the PVV was heavily contested, as shown by the degree of demonization (see figure 2.1). PVV officials and party adherents have criticized the demonization of their party, fuelling public debate about how anti-immigration parties are, or should be handled. This debate has prompted speculation about the effects of demonization. Results indicate that demonization has a negative effect on electoral support, but *only* during the early years of the party's existence. After the PVV obtained 9 seats in Parliament the negative effect of demonization diminished. Thus, to be fair, these results also largely support the claim by Downs et al., (2009) "that strategies of isolation, ostracism and demonisation prove surprisingly ineffective at rolling back or even containing threats to the democratic order [...]". In the second and third period the PVV was demonized substantially, however, to no effect.

These findings add to existing literature in two ways. First, they provide evidence that strategies of disengagement can have their intended effect. Second, it confirms that timing is extremely important. Art (2007) stresses that strategies of disengagement might well prove ineffective or even have unintended effects, once anti-immigration parties have a loyal group of supporters, their party organization has become strong, and when their politicians became entrenched in the local, state, or national governments. Results suggest that demonization indeed becomes ineffective when the anti-immigration party becomes entrenched in the democratic system. These analyses thus contradict the claim that party support for the PVV probably

<sup>59</sup> An additional model included two event variables that marked the departure of PVV parliamentarians (Eric Lucassen and James Sharpe) as a result of personal scandals. The model further included an event variable that marked the acquittal of Wilders in June 2011. None of the variables indicated a significant effect.



decreases when it gets portrayed as too radical. In short, the argument proposed is that the impact of demonization on party support is conditional on the extent of party establishment. However, an alternative conclusion is that the degree of demonization determines its effectiveness. Note that during the first period the PVV was demonized relatively little compared to the second and third period under investigation. Thus, only when demonization was used sparsely, did it have a significant effect. If the PVV had been demonized less during the second and third period, demonization might conceivably have still generated a negative effect.

Although *media attention* is included in the models as a control variable, its independent results are remarkable. The analyses show that as long as the party is in opposition, media attention positively affects anti-immigration party support. The variable does not take into account the content of the messages; it merely indicates how often a party is mentioned in the written media. The results largely confirm the dictum ‘any publicity is good publicity’, as well as the notion that media attention for the party contributes to party success (also see Koopmans and Muis, 2009; Van Aelst et al., 2008; Vliegthart et al., 2012). Surprisingly however, once the PVV became a supporting partner of the minority government, the effect of media attention becomes insignificant. Perhaps because of their status government parties receive more media attention than opposition parties (also see Chapter 3; Walter, 2012; Walter et al., 2014). Government parties do not have to ‘fight’ their way into the spotlight in order to remind the electorate of their existence. Since the electorate already expects to read about these parties in the newspapers, this diminishes the effect of increased media attention. Another explanation is that the effect of media attention is stronger for political newcomers than for parties that have been around longer. In the case of the PVV, this is especially hard to determine, since the party arguably lost its newcomer status around the same time that it agreed to support the minority government.

Another issue is the extent to which these findings can be generalized. In that respect, significant particularities of this case need to be taken into account. A first relevant factor is how national actors dealt with anti-

immigration parties and demonization in the past. In the Netherlands, for example, demonization became heavily charged after the political murder of Fortuyn (LPF) in 2002. Many voters had found it disproportionate that Fortuyn had been portrayed as a Nazi, and not long before his death Fortuyn had expressed the concern that demonization had placed him in physical jeopardy. After Fortuyn’s murder, LPF chair Peter Langendam concluded that ‘the bullet had come from the left’ and accused several political actors of causing hatred towards Fortuyn. This led to a heated public debate, which may have caused a strengthened aversion to the use of demonization, hindering the likelihood of demonization having its intended effect.

A second factor that needs to be taken into consideration is the extent to which demonization is used in combination with other strategies. Van Donselaar (1995) proposes the use of educational campaigns to draw voters away from anti-immigration parties. Campaigns that cultivate tolerance should make the electorate (more) aware of the atrocities that took place during the Second World War and more vigilant against any resurgence<sup>60</sup> (also see Art, 2007; Downs et al., 2009; Husbands, 2002). Clearly, although such measures take time to materialize, when they coincide with the use of demonization, they may strengthen a negative effect of demonization on anti-immigration party support. Besides, demonization can also be combined with other strategies of disengagement, such as legal repression and/or political isolation. It is not unlikely that when different strategies are used together, they influence each other’s effect by reinforcing, diminishing, or even reversing it.

Finally, although this research considers the implicit assumption that all respondents have been exposed equally to demonization, this is not very likely. The question of selective exposure is, however, central in almost all observational media studies, suggesting further research that takes into account the actual media content individuals have been exposed to.

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<sup>60</sup> In Germany for example, in 2001 the Minister covering Youth Affairs initiated a program called *Jugend für Toleranz und Demokratie -gegen Rechtsextremismus, Fremdfeindlichkeit und Antisemitismus* (Husbands, 2002).