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## **Parties under pressure : explaining choices made by parties in the wake of heavy electoral defeat**

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# 5 The Christian Democratic Appeal, 1994-2002

## 5.1 Introduction

In 1994, the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) suffered an unprecedented defeat for a major party in the Netherlands. Amidst an election in which more seats changed hands than at any previous post-war Dutch election, the party lost 20 of its 54 seats. Having led the government without interruption since its foundation in 1980 as a merger of three Christian parties, one of which was perpetually in government since World War II, the party now faced a “trek through the desert” of opposition. The use of this Biblical image is no overstatement of the difficulties faced: for a party which had a strong tradition of government going back to its predecessors, opposition was a particularly challenging prospect. In addition, speculation about the demise of Christian politics in the Netherlands resurfaced. The party was driven to reconsider its essentials and its place in the party system.

Considering the CDA’s office-seeking character, Duncan has hypothesised using the Harmel and Janda model that the party would follow what we call an extension strategy.<sup>1</sup> He was, however, surprised that the CDA did not conform to this expectation. In fact, the CDA’s desert years bring to mind other characteristics of the party. The party is relatively more ideological compared to others in its international party family.<sup>2</sup> The Dutch literature also finds this.<sup>3</sup> It also boasted the largest membership of all parties by far and had strong roots in the pillarized Christian mass parties that merged into it. Based on this picture of ideological and membership strength, one would expect the party’s traditions to push it towards a reinforcement strategy. However, the party also faced the realities of partisan dealignment and the accompanying decline of its core support base, which should increase pressure towards the extension strategy. Overall, however, since the Proportional Representation system does not share the strong effect of a majoritarian electoral system towards the extension strategy and makes defection by core voters easier,

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1. R. Harmel and K. Janda, “An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 6, no. 3 (1994): 74; F. Duncan, “‘Lately, Things Just Don’t Seem the Same’: External Shocks, Party Change and the Adaptation of the Dutch Christian Democrats During ‘Purple Hague’, 1994-8,” *Party Politics* 13, no. 1 (2007): 69–87.

2. J.-E. Lane and S. O. Ersson, *Politics and Society in Western Europe* (London: Sage, 1994), 149; D. Hanley, “Introduction: Christian Democracy as a Political Phenomenon,” in *Christian Democracy in Europe: A Comparative Perspective*, ed. D. Hanley (London and New York: Pinter, 1994), 5.

3. M. Ten Hooven, “Een machtspartij met idealen: Een geschiedenis van het CDA, 1980-2010,” in *De Conjunctuur van de Macht: het Christen-Democratisch Appèl 1980-2010*, ed. G. Voerman (Amsterdam: Boom, 2011), 170; G. Voerman, “Inleiding,” in *De Conjunctuur van de Macht: het Christen-Democratisch Appèl 1980-2010*, ed. G. Voerman (Amsterdam: Boom, 2011), 9-11.

one would expect a reinforcement strategy rather than an extension strategy.

This chapter is structured as follows. Section 5.2 sets the stage before outlining how the CDA scores on our independent variables: electoral base attachment, ideological attachment and the external environment, particularly the electoral system. The aim of this section is to translate the propositions generated in chapter three into specific testable expectations for this case. In section 5.3, a brief discussion of the defeat of 1994 follows. The bulk of the analysis in section 5.4 discusses how the variables measured up in section 5.2. led to the recovery strategy as it materialised, tracing it from its causes in the internal and external factors through the recommendations of the Gardeniers report towards the actions taken by the party. Finally, the conclusion brings it all together and highlights the most remarkable aspects of this individual case.

## 5.2 The CDA in 1994: setting the stage

In the model outlined in chapter 3, electoral base attachment and ideological attachment constitute major internal characteristics influencing the choice of recovery strategy. These characteristics, founded in the party's history, will recur prominently in this case. As Duncan argued after reviewing the varying scope of change in various areas of the CDA's recovery project, understanding its history is vital to understanding the route taken to recovery after the 1994 defeat.<sup>4</sup> Before moving on to the specific values of variables, some general points about the party's history have to be considered.

To understand the roots of the CDA, it is important first and foremost to understand what is known as the 'pillarization' of Dutch society. From the beginning of the 20th century through to the 1960s, Dutch society was split up between four distinct subcultures: Protestants, Catholics, socialists and liberals. Each of these four 'pillars' had their own associated political party, schools, trade unions, choirs, sports clubs, et cetera. Although it has to be noted that on the basis of criteria formulated by Lijphart not every pillar was as pillarised, he nevertheless saw it as an essential characteristic of Dutch democracy and postulated that Dutch democracy could be stable despite pillarisation because of the behaviour of the elites of each pillar.<sup>5</sup> The concept of pillarisation has been much-debated, with some scholars doubting whether it has not been overestimated.<sup>6</sup> Politically speaking, the pillars were so stable that one could at one point predict with a high degree of certainty the vote of a citizen based solely on his class and religious affiliation.<sup>7</sup>

It is outside the scope of this chapter to consider all the different theories proposed to explain the existence of these pillars. However, it is a highly important fact that the CDA's predecessors – the Catholic People's Party (*Katholieke Volkspartij*, KVP) and the Protestant Anti-Revolutionary Party (*Anti-Revolutionaire Partij*, ARP) and Christian Historical Union (*Christelijk-Historische Unie*, CHU) – were the political arms of the most

4. Duncan, "‘Lately, Things Just Don't Seem the Same’," 84.

5. A. Lijphart, *Verzuiling, Pacificatie en Kentering in de Nederlandse Politiek* (1971; Haarlem: Becht, 1990 [1971]), 204.

6. For a discussion, see P. De Rooy, "Farewell to pillarization," *Netherlands Journal of Social Sciences* 33, no. 1 (1997): 27–41.

7. A. Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 25.

highly organised of the pillars. It perhaps explains the distance at which the CDA has remained the largest political party in the country based on membership numbers, as it inherited the membership of multiple highly organised mass parties like the KVP and ARP.<sup>8</sup>

Another salient point to make is that the disappearance of the pillars was particularly disruptive to the fortunes of the party's predecessors (despite small gains for the ARP), which between them had held at least half of the seats in Parliament at every election up until 1967. The formation of the CDA itself can therefore be seen as a process of dealing with several electoral shocks which represent the process of depillarisation and secularization of Dutch society that started in the 1960s. Ten Napel highlights the importance of several electoral shocks, starting in 1967, in bringing the three parties together.<sup>9</sup> At the 1967 parliamentary elections the three parties had no majority between them for the first time ever, leading to the first official discussions about cooperation between the parties a month later in March.<sup>10</sup> Further defeats in 1971 and 1972 provided impulses leading up to the formation of a federation in 1973, a joint list of candidates for the 1977 parliamentary elections and the formal merger in 1980.

By electoral performance and office-seeking standards, the merger was a success. Although beaten to plurality by the Dutch Labour Party (*Partij van de Arbeid*, PvdA) in its first election as a united force in 1977, the CDA leader Dries van Agt managed to secure the premiership, renewing it with a plurality of votes in 1981. The central position of the CDA in the Dutch political spectrum and the mutual exclusion of the PvdA and its centre-right VVD opponents gave the party an advantage that led to continuous dominance of the premiership by Christian Democrats, first by Van Agt and from 1982 by the longest-serving Dutch PM to date, Ruud Lubbers. This success can be seen as a contributing factor to the fact that the CDA has a strong orientation towards office, though this can also be seen to be due to its ideological focus on responsibility.<sup>11</sup> This dominance left an important governmental imprint on the CDA that, as we shall see, resurfaced in crisis.

Finally, let us consider the way the party organisation functioned and who the key actors were. In many ways, the CDA party organisation was typical for a Dutch party. Like most Dutch parties, its structure largely follows the electoral makeup of the Netherlands, with branches at each corresponding sub-national level. At each level, organs are constituted to take care of candidate selection and programme formation for elections. Unusually, its highest sub-national level of organisation was the influential regional branch (*Kamerkring*) based on the administrative electoral districts for national elections; it did not have provincial branches. At the national level, these powers were split between a

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8. According to statistics gathered by the Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties at Groningen University, the CDA had approximately 30,000 more members than its closest competitor, the PvdA, in 1994. Even in the middle of the electoral crisis, 1998, the party still had 20,000 members more than the PvdA. Even if this is far less than its predecessors (and parties in general) in the 1950s and 1960s, the party seems to have taken pride in this despite the general decline in party membership across the board. Statistics found at <http://dnpp.nl/dnpp/node/352> (Visited on 25th October 2017)

9. H.-M. Th. D. Ten Napel, "Een Eigen Weg: De Totstandkoming van het CDA (1952-1980)" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 1992), 334.

10. *Ibid.*, 94-99.

11. Duncan, "'Latently, Things Just Don't Seem the Same,'" 72.

national congress and a party council.<sup>12</sup> Typically for Dutch political parties at that time, each level sent delegates to several higher-level bodies.

Given what we know about the office-oriented imprint of the party, it would stand to reason that its parliamentary party, the much-diminished party in office, would play an important role. Indeed, Dutch constitutional provisions on the free mandate of parliamentarians gave parliamentary parties in general a great deal of autonomy that allowed them to play a dominant role in their parties.<sup>13</sup> Since the party's supreme bodies, the national congress and party council, could only pass non-binding resolutions, the CDA parliamentary party would probably be able, at least on the programmatic or tactical dimension, to impose a certain direction.<sup>14</sup> However, several factors weakened the parliamentary party as an actor in 1994. As a result of a lack of formal term limits<sup>15</sup> and the poor electoral performance of 1994, the parliamentary party was relatively old and socialised into a governmental context which hampered their effectiveness in opposition.<sup>16</sup> The departure of the top candidate on the list, who is normally considered the party's political leader by virtue of his selection to lead the list, also deprived his successors in the leadership of the authority inherent in this direct mandate from the national congress until 1998.<sup>17</sup>

Instead, the central role was assumed by the organs of the party organisation, particularly its executive, consisting of the 7-member national executive (*Dagelijks Bestuur*, DB) and the larger national committee (*Partijbestuur*, PB).<sup>18</sup> The national committee, charged with directing the administrative and political work of the party, consisted of the chairmen of the regional branches and a number of freely elected members elected by the party council, including the national executive.<sup>19</sup> It thus figures as a central meeting point between the central leadership and the interests of the branches. In the deliberations of the national committee, a strong weight is accorded to balance both among regions and

12. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, "Statuten en Reglementen CDA," 1985, art. 67 and 69, accessed August 22, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/9483>, Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties, Groningen University.

13. *Constitution of the Netherlands*, Official translation, art. 57.3.

14. R. A. Koole, *De Opkomst van de Moderne Kaderpartij: Veranderende Partijorganisatie in Nederland 1960-1990* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1992), 251.

15. "Reglement voor de voorbereiding van kandidaatstelling voor de verkiezingen der leden van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal", art. 2g. Found in Christen-Democratisch Appèl, "Statuten en Kandidaatstellingen," 1980, accessed August 22, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/9482>, Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties, Groningen University; Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Gardeniers Commission, "Rapport Evaluatiecommissie" (1994), inventory nr. 1678, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, p. 31.

16. The CDA parliamentary party elected in 1994 had served an average 8.1 years in Cabinet or Parliament before and was therefore old compared to the PvdA (6.5) and the VVD (7.4). Calculation by the author based on biographical data obtained from Parlement.com.

17. This assumption that the top candidate is also the leader is also evident in the report of the Gardeniers Commission (CDA, Gardeniers Commission, "Rapport Evaluatiecommissie," 30), when it notes that the early designation by Lubbers of Brinkman as top candidate and his successor is described as having been intended to avert a succession crisis (*kroonprinsensrijd*).

18. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, "Statuten en Reglementen CDA," 1985, accessed August 22, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/9483>, Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties, Groningen University; R. S. Katz and P. Mair, eds., *How Parties Organize: Change and Adaptation in Party Organizations in Western Democracies* (London: SAGE, 1994).

19. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, "Statuten en Reglementen CDA," 1985, art. 73, accessed August 22, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/9483>, Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties, Groningen University.

among the “blood groups” of the party, the former members of the three predecessors and direct members of the CDA.<sup>20</sup> Although the formal fusion protocol<sup>21</sup> which governed this balance after the merger was terminated prematurely, there is still a strong imprint of accommodation. This is especially true when it comes to the candidate lists and the party officers such as the chairmanship.<sup>22</sup>

Notably, the unifying role of the national committee is exemplified by its chairman. It should be kept in mind that in contrast to parties in other countries, the chairmen of Dutch political parties do not lead the party politically but act as head of its extra-parliamentary organisation. As a young organisation, the CDA chose to appoint relatively heavy-weight party chairmen like former minister Piet Bukman, who were able to keep the party’s house in order.<sup>23</sup> This leading role of the party chairman, as we shall see, was carried through during the crisis. Especially as regards the executive, it is worthwhile to note that it was also a forum for regional and “blood group” interests.

The two highest representative bodies in the party organisation were the national congress (*Partijcongres*), composed of municipal delegates, and party council (*Partijraad*), composed largely of district delegates.<sup>24</sup> While the national congress figures mostly as a *toogdag*, a membership outing mostly intended to reinforce party cohesion, the party council was regarded as an influential body whose most important powers were to give political directions and adopt candidate lists and manifestoes.<sup>25</sup> However, there were serious concerns about the functioning of not only the congress but also the council by 1994, levelling the charge of being an “applause machine”<sup>26</sup>.<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps because of the need for unity in the young merged party, there was a large degree of concentration of powers in the party organisation. One body prepared the meetings of another. The national executive, by preparing the decision-making of the larger national committee, acted as a crucial influence on its decisions.<sup>28</sup> Likewise, the national committee’s membership of both the committee and the council, resulted in a

20. See R. A. Koole and J. J. M. van Holsteyn, “Religie of regio? Over de bloedgroepen van het CDA,” in *De Conjunctuur van de Macht: het Christen-Democratisch Appèl 1980-2010*, ed. G. Voerman (Amsterdam: Boom, 2011), 131–154; Also noted in CDA, Gardeniers Commission, “Rapport Evaluatiecommissie.”

21. CDA, “Statuten en Kandidaatstellingen,” 3-13.

22. Ten Hooven, “Een machtspartij met idealen,” 68

The Catholic inaugural leader, Van Agt, was balanced by an ARP party chairman, Bukman. When Bukman left, the impulse was to appoint a former CHU member, but none could be found, leading to the election of direct member Van Velzen. Similarly, 1994 saw the election of the Catholic Hans Helgers to work opposite Protestant parliamentary leaders Brinkman and Heerma.

23. Ibid.

24. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, “Statuten en Reglementen CDA,” 1985, art. 67 and 69, accessed August 22, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/9483>, Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties, Groningen University.

25. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Boll Commission, *Appèl en Weerklank* (The Hague: CDA, 1983), 115-116; Koole, *De Opkomst van de Moderne Kaderpartij*, 9.

26. In the Dutch jargon, the qualification “applause machine” describes a body which, while formally empowered to make decisions, is mostly concerned with projecting unity and following the directions of the leadership.

27. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Gardeniers Commission, “Rapport Evaluatiecommissie” (1994), inventory nr. 1678, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 37.

28. Koole, *De Opkomst van de Moderne Kaderpartij*, 114.

large degree of control over the party council.<sup>29</sup> This was a source of discontent in the party, which struggled with the lack of effectiveness arising from these problems and a lack of preparation on behalf of the delegates. In the opinion of the Gardeniers evaluation commission, this impaired the direction-setting abilities of the council.<sup>30</sup> In a similar way, which also provoked much discussion, nominations were usually prepared well in advance, with the national committee often proposing a single name which was elected without a formal counter-candidate.<sup>31</sup> Hillebrand remarks in the context of a study of selection for the 1986 elections that the national committee and in particular the chairman, secretary and parliamentary leader dominated the procedure.<sup>32</sup> The central decision-makers in all these fields, in this way, can be easily located in the form of the national committee and executive. Having considered all this, let us now turn to how the CDA's character as a party and the environment in which it operated translate into the independent variables used in our model.

### 5.2.1 Electoral base attachment

The CDA was selected as a party with high electoral base attachment. Though the merged party committed from the start to “appealing to the whole of the Dutch population” in its statutes<sup>33</sup>, signifying its catch-all nature, it maintained many of the historical and institutional links showing the mass party roots of its predecessors. The CDA has always prided itself on its strong presence in civil society, with the overwhelming percentage of the membership being a member of a church and a majority actively volunteering in that context, though it maintained no formal links to any group.<sup>34</sup> The party thus inherited strong ties to its base constituency, whose loyalty was also expressed in a membership total that was even by 1994 by far the largest of all Dutch parties (see section 5.2). This was complemented by strong informal and personal ties with organisations in civil society which shared the party's ideological orientation, who often also supplied it with candidates for public office.<sup>35</sup> Koole notes that even after the foundation of the CDA,

29. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, “Beknopt memo discussie in Partijbestuur over rapport Herkenbaar en Slagvaardig, 23 september 1994,” Memo on the debate in the National Committee on the Klaassen report (1994), SC/9403089/cb.lvb, inventory nr. 1679, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague.

30. CDA, Gardeniers Commission, “Rapport Evaluatiecommissie,” 37.

31. This singular nomination practice continued for the Party Chairmanship until 2002, when Marja van Bijsterveldt was elected by the members in a direct election between two candidates. For the top candidate, it continued with only a single exception in the form of the 2012 leadership election, although the intention to hold such an election was also expressed in 2017. In all these cases, there was the formal opportunity to nominate a counter-candidate, which was, however, seldom used.

32. R. Hillebrand, *De Antichambre van het Parlement: Kandidaatstelling in Nederlandse Politieke Partijen* (Leiden: DSWO, 1992), 54.

33. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, “Statuten en Reglementen CDA,” 1985, art. 3, accessed August 22, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/9483>, Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties, Groningen University

34. J. J. M. Van Holsteyn, R. A. Koole, and J. Elkink, “Marginaal of midden in de maatschappij? Leden van CDA, D66, PvdA en VVD en hun activiteiten in de samenleving,” *Beleid en Maatschappij* 29, no. 2 (2002): 72.

35. K. Van Kersbergen, “De christendemocratische feniks en de moderne, niet-seculiere politiek,” chap. 197-216 in *De Conjunctuur van de Macht: het Christen-Democratisch Appèl 1980-2010*, ed. G. Voerman (Amsterdam: Boom, 2011), 203.

the organisations of the KVP in particular maintained a considerable amount of influence within the parliamentary party.<sup>36</sup> The main expression of electoral base attachment in the case of the CDA is through these personal ties.

These personal ties are complemented by informal norms and conventions underscoring the importance of its loyal supporters to the party. This is in part expressed by pride and confidence in the strength of its large membership organisation in official documents.<sup>37</sup> More specifically concerning the Christian character of the base, the informal conventions surrounding the party's electoral base attachment also found expression in a touchiness in parts of the party which surfaced whenever somebody proposed concrete measures to involve those of non-Christian faiths to a greater extent. This is in part ideological, as revealed by the fact that it usually included a suspicion that the 'C' in the party's name, a symbol for its Christian inspiration, would be terminally downplayed.<sup>38</sup>

On balance, therefore, the CDA of 1994 can be considered to be strongly attached to its base. This is further reinforced by the confidence in the base of the Gardeniers report, which appears to have resonated strongly within the party. This belief in the base of the party is referred to as the "people's party character" (*volkspartijkarakter*) in the CDA lingo and recurs often in archival documents discussing base and membership.<sup>39</sup> Electoral studies showed that the CDA's base vote had not stopped declining, a fact also echoed in the party's own evaluations of the 1994 elections.<sup>40</sup> The party, for this reason, was very much dependent on the floating vote to maintain its high level of electoral performance throughout its merged existence. Nevertheless, on balance the CDA shows itself rooted in and attached to its inherited base in the remnants of the three confessional pillars to a large extent.

It is important to consider what this means in terms of our model. In the model described in chapter three, a higher degree of electoral base attachment entails a stronger resistance to broadening the base beyond the original base the party is attached to. Therefore, despite the demographic decline of its base, the high degree of electoral base attachment leads to the expectation of a reinforcement strategy. If the effect is not uniform as in the simplest form of proposition 3, then at least there should be an impact leading to the party narrowing its appeal on the tactical dimension and introducing measures to empower the membership.

36. Koole, *De Opkomst van de Moderne Kaderpartij*, 266.

37. CDA, Gardeniers Commission, "Rapport Evaluatiecommissie," 11-12.

38. For example: Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, "Besluitenlijst van het Partijbestuur van het CDA d.d. 17 november 2000", Conclusions of the National Committee Meeting, 17th of November 2000 (2000), Anonymous Personal Archive consisting of National Committee Minutes, CDA Central Office, the Hague, p. 4.

39. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Klaassen Commission, "Beknopte versie," Condensed version of the Klaassen report *Herkenbaar en Slagvaardig*. (1994), inventory nr. 1679, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 1; Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Klaassen Commission, "Herkenbaar en Slagvaardig: Voorstellen ter Versterking van de Organisatie van het CDA," Final report of the Klaassen Commission (1994), WPEA/9491721.04/MG, inventory nr. 1679, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 8-9; 29.

40. Van Kersbergen, "De christendemocratische feniks en de moderne, niet-seculiere politiek," 201-202; CDA, Gardeniers Commission, "Rapport Evaluatiecommissie," 16.

## 5.2.2 Ideological Attachment

Although its office-seeking bend is undeniable and well-founded in its history, theorists such as Lane and Errson and Hanley have registered that compared to its sister parties in other nations, the CDA is more principled and scores highest on a programmatic focus.<sup>41</sup> This is a theme also found in the Dutch literature, where the strong programmatic and ideological basis was identified as particularly important when the party went through a crisis.<sup>42</sup>

Throughout the process leading up to the merger, we find what can be argued to be one of the most important antecedents of its principled nature: the heated discussions on the Biblical foundations of the new party. The question here was whether the Bible should be an inspiration for a party with an open basis (as some in the KVP advocated) or the actual cornerstone of the new party (as the ARP wanted).<sup>43</sup> The party's founding father, Steenkamp, resolved this by formulating the "response philosophy" in his influential paper *Towards a Responsible Society (Op weg naar een verantwoordelijke maatschappij)*. This concept that not the gospel itself but a political response to it should bind the party together, proved to be "the formula that superseded all three party cultures".<sup>44</sup> It still forms article 2 of the CDA's programme of principles: "The political convictions of the CDA are shaped *in response to* the appeal of the Bible. (...) This Programme of Principles gives expression to those convictions".<sup>45</sup> The response philosophy and its four accompanying principles of differentiated responsibility, stewardship, solidarity and public justice form a strong foundation for the party, and have proven to be enduringly strong, although as Duncan suggests that this may also be due to the fractious discussions this compromise resolved.<sup>46</sup>

The importance attributed to the 'C', to the concept of a 'responsible society' and to the programme of principles in general is, therefore, a surprising qualifier on what is otherwise an office-seeking party. This surprise must be qualified, however: in such a young party as the merged CDA, a unifying factor such as the response philosophy, must be jealously guarded, even becoming to some extent a founding myth of some sort. In the discussion on the party's informal electoral base attachment above, this was already briefly touched upon with reference to the defensiveness that surfaced whenever accommodating those of non-Christian faiths was proposed. This demonstrates that across the party, active members were very keen to preserve their party's Christian heritage. Moreover, the evaluation report authored in 1994 by the Gardeniers Commission casts the party's ideology as a strength rather than a weakness, with reference to the "responsible society".<sup>47</sup>

41. Lane and Errson, *Politics and Society in Western Europe*, 149; Hanley, "Introduction," 5.

42. Ten Hooven, "Een machtspartij met idealen," 70.

43. Ten Napel, "Een Eigen Weg," 177.

44. Hoogendijk in *ibid.*, 177, translation by the author of this dissertation.

45. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, "Program van Uitgangspunten CDA," 1993, italics added. Original text: "In antwoord op de oproep van de Bijbel krijgt de politieke overtuiging van het CDA gestalte. (...) Dit Program van Uitgangspunten geeft uitdrukking aan deze politieke overtuiging.", accessed August 22, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/9872>, Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties, Groningen University.

46. Duncan, "'Lately, Things Just Don't Seem the Same,'" 73; see also Ten Hooven, "Een machtspartij met idealen," 106.

47. CDA, Gardeniers Commission, "Rapport Evaluatiecommissie," 11-12.

This Christian Democratic basic principle complements the “people’s party character” which expresses the party’s informal electoral base attachment and expresses a strong symbolism for the party that cannot be disregarded.

As a part of this symbolism, the ideological attachment of the CDA complements and reinforces the expected effect of electoral base attachment towards the reinforcement strategy. After all, the model stipulates that ideological attachment leads to a reinforcement strategy because it presents a strong part of the party’s institutional identity that prejudices against the extension strategy, which usually changes away from the party’s roots. Combined with the expectation based on electoral base attachment, therefore, this leads to the expectation that the CDA would pursue a reinforcement strategy out of the gate.

### 5.2.3 External environment: electoral and party system

As discussed in chapter 4, the Dutch electoral system can be said to be one of the most radically proportional in the world. This was also the case in 1994, as demonstrated by the high Rose index of proportionality of 97.65<sup>48</sup> at this election.<sup>49</sup> During and even after the pillarization period, the political landscape was dominated by three major ideological subcurrents – the Christian Democratic tradition of the CDA and its predecessors; its main competitor to the left, the social democratic Labour Party (PvdA); and the growing conservative-liberal People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) to the right from 1960. These parties usually controlled well over a 100 seats in the 150-seat lower house, even in 1994.<sup>50</sup>

However, the low threshold in this extremely proportional electoral system indisputably leads to great potential for new parties, which started entering the party system again from the 1960s onwards.<sup>51</sup> As Mair observes, this use of the relatively open party system coincides with the loosening of the pillarized cleavage structure.<sup>52</sup> A few of these parties became (at least for the moment) permanent fixtures, such as Democrats 66 (D66), Democratic Socialists ’70 (DS’70) and the Radical Political Party (PPR). This contrasts with the earlier stability of the party system after the second World War, where rarely more than 20 out of 150 seats changed parties at any election. With 34 seats (over a fifth) changing hands, 1994 represented a new record. According to figures presented by Mair, the 1994 election was only surpassed by the system-shaking elections of 1994 in Italy and 1958 in France in terms of level of volatility.<sup>53</sup> Over the entire 1990s, Mair finds that

48. Calculated by the author based on data from H. Döring and P. Manow, “Parliaments and governments database (ParlGov),” Information on parties, elections and cabinets in modern democracies, 2018, accessed December 11, 2018, <http://www.parlgov.org>.

49. The Rose index is calculated by subtracting the sum of the differences between each party’s voteshare and seatshare at a given election, divided by two, from 100. See R. Rose, ed., *International Encyclopedia of Elections* (Washington: CQ Press, 2000)

50. Döring and Manow, “Parliaments and governments database (ParlGov).”

51. Although the effect of PR was also visible in the pre-war years, see also K. Vossen, *Vrij wissen in het Vondelpark: Kleine politieke partijen in Nederland 1918-1940* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2003), 37.

52. P. Mair, “Electoral Volatility and the Dutch Party System: a Comparative Perspective,” *Acta Politica* 43 (2008): 241-242.

53. *Ibid.*, 239.

the Netherlands was the second-most volatile electorate in Western Europe.<sup>54</sup> The 1994 election saw the creation of two senior citizens' parties (the General Pensioners Union (AOV) and Union 55+), which were in direct electoral competition with the CDA and entered into Parliament with a combined 7 seats.<sup>55</sup>

The low electoral threshold also has consequences for the number of minor parties. Though the number of parties with seats in Parliament increased from 7 in the first post-war election to 11 in 1994, there was already a great diversity of parties, in particular within Dutch Christian politics. These smaller religious parties were exclusively of an orthodox Protestant persuasion. Two of them originated in church splits, but the third, the Reformatory Political Federation (RPF), split from the ARP in the 70s as a response to the cooperation with the Catholics. Most were rather more conservative than the CDA, evidenced in their usually being bundled under the term of the "small Christian right". There was therefore competition for parts of the CDA's core vote.<sup>56</sup> According to the model presented of chapter three, the presence of other parties in the same party family should lead to a pressure towards the reinforcement strategy.

The low barriers to enter into the party system mean that as dealignment continued, competition to established parties like the CDA was always an option. The rise of the AOV and Union 55+ in 1994 no doubt has something to do with the fact that the CDA was seen as wanting to cut pensions (and the party itself agreed with this assessment). In the Gardeniers report, the party would signal that the senior citizens constituency had to some extent returned to the party between the municipal and national elections of 1994.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, the threat posed by these newcomers to part of the CDA's core electorate acts as part of the overall effect of the electoral system to reinforce pressures towards a reinforcement strategy if the model is born out.

#### **5.2.4 Overview and expectations**

The configuration of the independent variables in the CDA case is simple, as can be seen in table 5.1. It is not difficult, therefore, to generate expectations on the course of events that is likely to unfold in this case. The party scores high on both electoral base attachment and ideological attachment. This means that proposition 3 and 4 (and by extension propositions 5a through 5c) point in the same direction. For these propositions to be supported by the data in this case, the party should display a preference towards the reinforcement strategy and therefore pursue a reinforcement strategy in the first cycle following the electoral defeat. As for proposition 6 on the effect of electoral systems, the PR system the party operates in favours the reinforcement strategy. Therefore, we should not see the CDA change course after the 1998 election, and it should remain on the reinforcement trajectory at the end of the second electoral cycle.

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54. Mair, "Electoral Volatility and the Dutch Party System," 238.

55. Döring and Manow, "Parliaments and governments database (ParlGov)."

56. Although in 2002, the party's campaign handbook noted that the main competitors were the VVD and the PvdA and that there was less overlap with the smaller parties, including the Christian right: Christen-Democratisch Appèl, "Campagnewijzer Tweede Kamerverkiezingen 2002" (2002), Collection of Party Documents, CDA Central Office, the Hague.

57. CDA, Gardeniers Commission, "Rapport Evaluatiecommissie," 16.

Table 5.1: Overview of the Independent Variables: the CDA in 1994

Internal factors	Measurement	Expected Strategy
Electoral base attachment	Strong (personal ties)	Reinforcement
Ideological attachment	Strong	Reinforcement
<b>External environment</b>		
Electoral system	Proportional Representation	Reinforcement
Previous election	Above average (+2,9%)	Extension

### 5.3 The 1994 General Election defeat

The leadup to the 1994 General Election had already spelled trouble for the CDA. The 12-year premiership and party leadership of Ruud Lubbers was coming to an end and by established party tradition, he was succeeded by the parliamentary party chairman, Elco Brinkman. The two, however, had clashed in the run-up to the election over various issues, primarily in the field of the welfare state, with Brinkman being regarded as more right-wing than the Prime Minister, and during the campaign, their relationship remained fractious.<sup>58</sup> The matter came to a head publicly when the Prime Minister announced he would be casting his preference vote for a candidate lower on the list rather than his successor, which was widely portrayed as backstabbing Brinkman.<sup>59</sup> Lubbers himself recorded in his memoirs that this had not been his intention, and that with hindsight he should not have done it, but he did acknowledge that the differences between him and Brinkman caused friction.<sup>60</sup>

In addition, the municipal elections held earlier that year went particularly badly for the party. A statement by an economist on the manifesto committee that the CDA “would not exempt pension law” from the proposed reforms of the welfare state went down badly with the party’s many older voters.<sup>61</sup> In the municipal elections, they turned away from the party towards newly organised senior citizens’ parties AOV and Unie 55+.

In the 1994 general election, the party lost 20 of its 54 seats in Parliament, reaching its lowest level of electoral performance so far. This is well above the rule of thumb of a third of the seats defined in chapter three. The crisis was further aggravated by the looming loss of government office.<sup>62</sup> It reopened the debate around the party’s foundation about the future of Christian democracy in an increasingly secular society, thereby causing exactly the kind of re-evaluation that our theory, following the literature, assumes happens in the event of a crisis.

With regard to the way the 1994 election defeat related to the previous performance

58. See M. Metze, *De Stranding: het CDA van Hoogtepunt naar Catastrofe* (Nijmegen: SUN, 1995), 236; R. F. M. Lubbers, *Persoonlijke Herinneringen* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2018), 196.

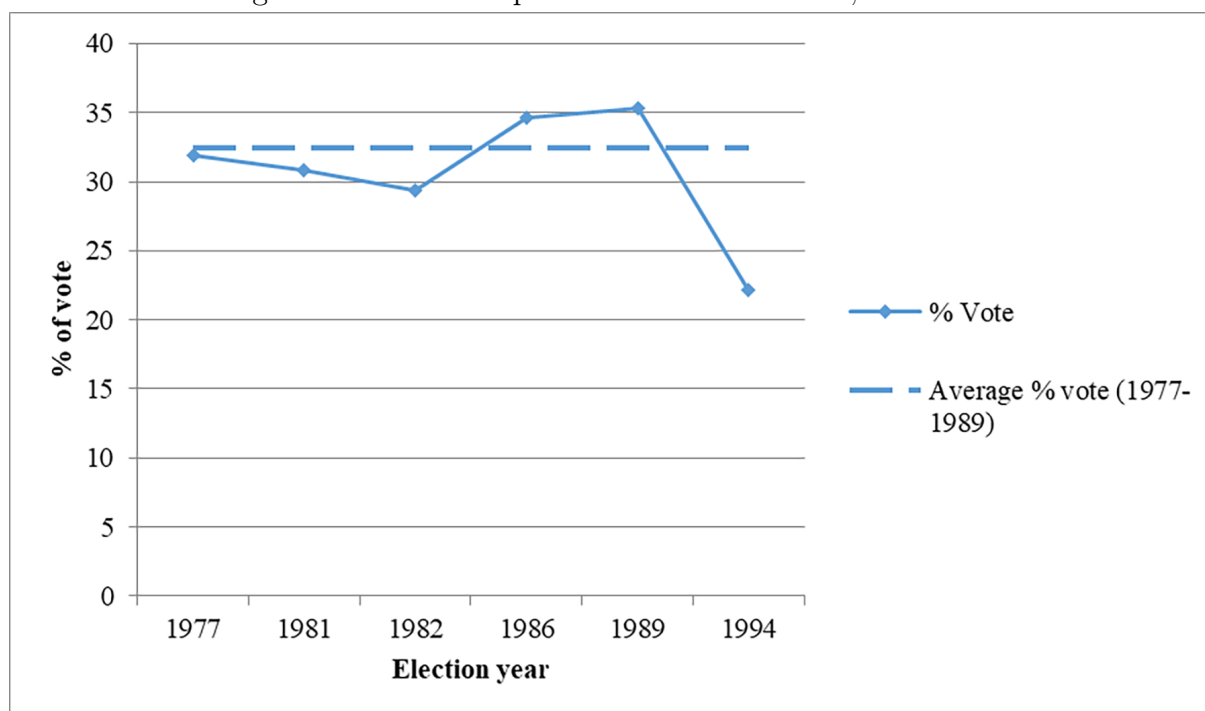
59. Metze, *De Stranding*, 237-238.

60. Lubbers, *Persoonlijke Herinneringen*, 196.

61. Ten Hooven, “Een machtspartij met idealen,” 84.

62. There was still a chance of retaining government office and joining the new PvdA-led coalition was not ruled out. However, D66 was pushing for a cabinet without the CDA, and when PvdA and VVD overcame their differences to join the “Purple” cabinet, the CDA was left with no choice but opposition.

Figure 5.1: Electoral performance of the CDA, 1977-1994



of the party and the identity of those who deserted the party, the picture is mixed, as can be seen in figure 5.1.<sup>63</sup> Over the five elections between 1977 and 1989, the party had polled an average of 32,4% of the vote. At 35,3%, the 1989 election was, with 2,9%, slightly above this average. By contrast, the 1994 election, at which the party polled only 22,2% of the vote, is 10,2% below the average. Employing the rough operationalisation of the identity of the defectors given in chapter 4, this would mean that the party had lost core voters as well as non-core voters. Some of the evidence the party itself had, which describes the largest losses as having taken place among young (below age 24), urban and irreligious voters, which are all more likely to be non-core voters, although big losses were also recorded in the Province of North Brabant and among voters between 35 and 49, where the party had historically been stronger.<sup>64</sup> Combining this with the fact that the final election before the shock was above-average, there must have been a significant amount of non-core voters that deserted the party, as well as core voters.

Indeed, this fits what we know about the vulnerability of the CDA as a result of partisan dealignment and rising levels of volatility.<sup>65</sup> This decline of the party's Christian base was already reason for pessimism around the time of its formation. As a consequence, the CDA was more dependent on the floating vote, and would become increasingly dependent in the future. The Gardeniers Commission showed itself aware of this.<sup>66</sup> Combined with the election result, this would mean that if the party wanted to return to its previous level of performance, it would have to win non-core voters as well as core voters back. A purely functional strategy would therefore lean towards the extension strategy so as to

63. Based on data from Döring and Manow, "Parliaments and governments database (ParlGov)."

64. CDA, Gardeniers Commission, "Rapport Evaluatiecommissie," 16.

65. Van Kersbergen, "De christendemocratische feniks en de moderne, niet-seculiere politiek," 201-202.

66. CDA, Gardeniers Commission, "Rapport Evaluatiecommissie," 16.

win back the required non-core voters. This runs counter to the expectations derived from the institutional variables in our model, and should thus provide an interesting test of the model's central idea that party change after an external shock is driven by institutional rather than by purely functional factors.

## 5.4 The recovery strategy

As we have argued earlier in chapters three and four, the evaluations carried out by political parties are a prime source on the background of the recovery process. The CDA case is notable for the influence of its 1994 evaluation report, which resonated strongly with the embattled party. This resonance is evidenced from the very start by the many positive reactions to the report summarised in the national committee papers.<sup>67</sup> This, in turn, suggests that its fundamental analysis was recognised and shared by many in the CDA. Therefore, we can conclude that this positive, ideological appraisal of what the CDA was and what it was for seems to have been shared at least by those in the party that were important to the recovery, and probably more broadly as well. This makes the Gardeniers report a valuable piece of evidence in linking the picture of the CDA's strengths and weaknesses in the literature via its recommendations to the actions, thereby allowing a clear evaluation of the propositions.<sup>68</sup>

Before diving into a detailed discussion of the recovery strategy, discussion of this influential report is therefore in order. The committee was set up shortly after the 1994 defeat by the national committee. Its chair was to be Councillor of State and former minister Til Gardeniers-Berendsen. The terms of reference were to look at the structural causes of the defeat.<sup>69</sup> Central question, according to then-acting party chair, Tineke Lodders, was whether the result reflected dissatisfaction with the way the party had approached the 1990s or whether there were more structural causes.<sup>70</sup> The commission itself emphasised repeatedly that it was not in the business of passing judgment on persons or apportioning blame, also at the urging of the national committee.<sup>71</sup>

67. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, "Beknopte samenvatting ontvangen reacties op rapport evaluatiecommissie," Summary of the reactions to the Gardeniers Report (1994), inventory nr. 1679, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague; Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, "Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-Partijbestuur d.d. 2 juni 1994, gehouden in het SBI-congrescentrum te Doorn," Minutes of the National Committee, 2nd of July 1994 (1994), PB/9453766V/ps, inventory nr. 1679, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 5.

68. Ten Hooven, "Een machtspartij met idealen," 108; Lane and Ersson, *Politics and Society in Western Europe*, 149.

69. CDA, Gardeniers Commission, "Rapport Evaluatiecommissie," 3; 45; Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, "Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-Partijbestuur d.d. 6 mei 1994, gehouden in vergadercentrum 'Hoog Brabant' te Utrecht," Minutes of the National Committee, 6th of May 1994 (1994), PB/9453193V/ps, inventory nr. 1678, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 4.

70. CDA, National Committee, "Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-Partijbestuur d.d. 6 mei 1994, gehouden in vergadercentrum 'Hoog Brabant' te Utrecht," 2.

71. CDA, Gardeniers Commission, "Rapport Evaluatiecommissie," 8; CDA, National Committee, "Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-Partijbestuur d.d. 6 mei 1994, gehouden in vergadercentrum 'Hoog Brabant' te Utrecht," 4.

Reference has already been made above to what the Gardeniers report signifies for the evaluation of electoral base attachment, ideological attachment and external challenges it presents. We also know that the report resonated strongly within the party and got many positive reactions.<sup>72</sup> This is important because it signifies that the report's core analysis of the party as strong ideologically and in terms of membership but facing the challenge of a declining core vote was taken to heart. Decision-makers, therefore, can be assumed to take mostly the same line in assessing the parties strengths and vulnerabilities as the Gardeniers report did. This assessment also, significantly, matches up with the measurements of the independent variables in section 5.2. This is important to keep in mind as the recovery strategy is discussed, since connecting these attitudes to the measures allows a judgment of the internal versus the external pressures. In general, the former should push the party in the direction of the reinforcement strategy, while the latter should push the party in the direction of the extension strategy.

The Gardeniers report appears in the recovery process as a central thread running through the recovery process. Therefore, the analysis below of the 1994-1998 period starts with describing the relevant parts of the Gardeniers analysis and recommendations in each area. Special attention should be paid as to whether the strong conviction that the party's ideology and membership were strong and the threat of demographic decline led to the expected recommendations, and to what extent these were implemented. As we shall see, this offers strong evidence about the strength of internal factors in the case of the CDA, even after a further demoralising defeat in 1998.

### 5.4.1 Strong foundations? 1994-1998

There was a leadership change immediately following the election, with the Party Chairman, Van Velzen, taking responsibility for the electoral defeat and resigning. He was succeeded by former prison director Hans Helgers after a brief interim period under the chairmanship of the Deputy Chairman, Tineke Lodders. The party leader, Brinkman, would resign in August 1994, pressured by the national executive into resignation because they were unsure he could lead the party to recovery in opposition (much to the consternation of some on the national committee).<sup>73</sup> A shift of power within the party ensued, for various reasons. One was the struggle of the new parliamentary party with its new role in opposition. Brinkman's successor as party leader and parliamentary party chairman, Enneüs Heerma, was a safe pair of hands who struggled to project the party line in Parliament, and was replaced in 1997 by the younger Jaap de Hoop Scheffer.<sup>74</sup> The high average incumbency of the parliamentary party that has already been noted meant that almost all of its members were socialised in the role of supporting the government. It

72. CDA, National Committee, "Beknopte samenvatting ontvangen reacties op rapport evaluatiecommissie"; CDA, National Committee, "Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-Partijbestuur d.d. 2 juni 1994, gehouden in het SBI-congrescentrum te Doorn," 5.

73. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, "Resumé van de vergadering van het Partijbestuur d.d. 5 september 1994", Minutes of the National Committee, 5th of September 1994 (1994), inventory nr. 1679, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague.

74. Ten Hooven, "Een machtspartij met idealen," 91.

was therefore ill-equipped for opposition, and the parliamentary party seemed an unlikely candidate at best to lead the way for change.

This, in turn, perhaps in response to the criticism of the Gardeniers report, led to a new assertiveness of the national committee and particularly of the Party Chairmanship. The incoming party chairman would play a highly visible role in the recovery process as the extra-parliamentary party reasserted its influence. Important pressures towards renewal did not come from the struggling parliamentary group or indeed from the national committee, but from actors at a further distance such as the Research Institute.

#### 5.4.1.1 Organisational changes, 1994-1998

The Gardeniers analysis strongly projects the image of a party which was proud of its large membership and convinced that it was part of its core strength, reflecting an informal norm reinforcing the party's electoral base attachment. In the very introduction of the report, the committee notes how inspiring the involvement of the membership in the process was.<sup>75</sup> This perhaps served to convince the committee that the CDA remained a 'bottom-up' organization, full of involved members who were its strength. In contrast, the committee was less kind to the party elite, whom it accused of technocratic smugness.<sup>76</sup> The national committee, in particular, had failed to balance the concerns of the membership with political pressures on the political leadership, leading to disgruntlement over the 1994 selection and manifesto processes.<sup>77</sup> In general, the erosion of checks and balances was observed to have allowed the technocratic and political concerns of leadership to prevail over the need for a clear Christian Democratic course.<sup>78</sup>

Relating all this to our model, the high degree of electoral base attachment (both personal and informal) should produce an organisational strategy shifting power towards the membership. The reasoning for this is that the membership provides the party with a valuable link to its core supporters in society and that strengthening the membership therefore could serve to make the party more attractive to them. This is only strengthened by the described disconnect between supporters and elites of the party, since it increases the need for such a strategy. The importance of the membership is also underlined by the prominence of the 'people's party character' (*volkspartijkarakter*) as a frame for discussion about the party organisation.<sup>79</sup> This term often recurs in the minutes of discussions on organizational reforms in the national committee<sup>80</sup> and in documents surrounding organization.<sup>81</sup> It bears remembering, in addition, that the party was the largest party in terms of membership numbers at some distance. All this leads to strengthen even further the expectation of a reinforcement strategy.

75. CDA, Gardeniers Commission, "Rapport Evaluatiecommissie," 10.

76. *Ibid.*, 29.

77. *Ibid.*, 29-30.

78. *Ibid.*, 30.

79. *Ibid.*, 40.

80. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, "Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-Partijbestuur van 13 mei 1996, gehouden in het Jaarbeurscongrescentrum te Utrecht," Minutes of the National Committee, 13th of May 1996 (1996), PB/9652215V/ps, inventory nr. 2805, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 2.

81. CDA, Klaassen Commission, "Beknopte versie," 1; CDA, Klaassen Commission, "Herkenbaar en Slagvaardig," 8-9; 29.

This expectation is borne out by the recommendations of the report and the way they were justified. The party had become too administrative in its orientation, and the closer involvement of members and sympathisers was seen as a solution, particularly in policy-making.<sup>82</sup> While going little into specifics, the Commission did specifically call for extended consultation of the membership, and therefore increased internal democracy.<sup>83</sup> This general thrust was taken up by the Klaassen Commission (also known as the *Appel & Weerklank II* committee), a commission set up before 1994 under the chairmanship of regional branch chairman and executive member Leendert Klaassen to review the party organisation. Reconsidering its prepared recommendations in light of the evaluation of 1994, the commission recommended the introduction of membership elections on the election of “high-profile persons” such as the party chairman, the top candidate on the list (who is the party leader) and the top 50 candidates on the list.<sup>84</sup>

The national committee seems to have been ambivalent to this. First of all, two regional branch chairmen openly questioned the wisdom of an overhaul of the party structure while the party was in dire straits.<sup>85</sup> Secondly, and more specifically, the national committee indicated that it was broadly supportive of the principle, but proposed a number of practical variants which included more limited and consultative versions.<sup>86</sup> Earlier, voices on the national committee had opposed the value of membership consultation on selection altogether.<sup>87</sup>

The party council, however, proved more unambiguously sympathetic. This is not surprising. Often when the national committee offered an election by acclamation in the absence of a countercandidate rather than nominating multiple candidates, currents of opposition to this practice surfaced.<sup>88</sup> At the committee session that discussed the proposals a majority supported membership elections, although not for the list.<sup>89</sup> In the 1997 revision of the statutes, a membership referendum initiated by the council on a specific issue<sup>90</sup> and the direct election of the party chairman (though not the top candidate), made

82. CDA, Gardeniers Commission, “Rapport Evaluatiecommissie,” 40-42.

83. *Ibid.*, 41.

84. *Ibid.*, 29-30.

85. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, “Concept-Partijbestuursstandpunt Herkenbaar en Slagvaardig,” Draft National Committee response to *Herkenbaar en Slagvaardig* (1995), inventory nr. 1680, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 4.

86. *Ibid.*, 15-16.

87. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, “Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-Partijbestuur d.d. 14 oktober 1994,” Minutes of the National Committee, 14th of October 1994 (1994), PB/9453766V/ps, inventory nr. 1680, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague.

88. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Party Council, “Vergaderstukken Partijraad 10 juni 1995,” Papers of the Party Council, 10th of June 1995 (1995), Collection of Party Documents, CDA Central Office, the Hague; Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Party Council, “Vergaderstukken Partijraad 23 november 1996,” Papers of the Party Council, 23rd of November 1996 (1996), Collection of Party Documents, CDA Central Office, the Hague.

89. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Party Council, “Verslag Parallelsessie II Herkenbaar en Slagvaardig op 10 juni in de Reehorst in Ede,” Report on the parallel session on the Klaassen report at the Party Council on the 10th of June 1995 (1995), inventory nr. 1681, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, p. 3.

90. Though this is left implicit, it can safely be presumed that this option was meant to cover matters of policy, because elections of party officeholders and candidates were covered elsewhere.

it to practice.<sup>91</sup> It should be noted, however, that there would not be a contested election for the chairmanship for the duration of the crisis.<sup>92</sup>

Further steps were planned in the area of membership involvement. The working group ‘Political Party New Style’ (PPNS) was instituted by the national executive in 1996 to make the party more attractive to “socially-active people” (“*maatschappelijk betrokken mensen*”) as a result of an action plan formulated by Helgers.<sup>93</sup> Although some regional branches immediately offered themselves as pilot locations, the enthusiasm seems to have waned quickly and attendance at grassroots meetings to implement the PPNS proposals was noted to be disappointing.<sup>94</sup> After the report of PPNS, which recommended various smaller initiatives, the only one that seems to have led to structural change was the creation of differentiated types of membership, introduced only in 2003.<sup>95</sup>

It seems hard to get at the reason why PPNS failed where Klaassen succeeded. Likely, issues of power were involved, as evidenced by the ambivalence of the national committee to membership consultation which also resulted in the more limited scope of One Member, One Vote (OMOV) involvement of the membership in selection (through direct elections) and policy-making (through referenda) than Klaassen recommended.<sup>96</sup> Important though the chairman was, the proposals to elect the top candidate and the list via OMOV would have constituted far more extensive reforms. It is likely that though the national committee was convinced by the arguments that the membership was a vital resource to be tapped, issues of power and influence may have limited the scope of the reforms.

The same seems to have been the case in another major area of organisational reforms proposed by the Gardeniers Committee: the unsatisfactory performance of the party

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91. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, “Statuten en Reglementen CDA,” 1997, art. 58g and 59a1, accessed August 22, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/9485>, Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties, Groningen University.

92. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Party Council, “Vergaderstukken Partijraad 5 juni 1999,” Papers of the Party Council, 5th of June 1999 (1999), Collection of Party Documents, CDA Central Office, the Hague, 10.

93. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, “Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-Partijbestuur, gehouden op vrijdag 16 februari 1996, in het Jaarbeurscongrescentrum te Utrecht,” Minutes of the National Committee, 16th of February 1996 (1996), PB/9652101V/ps, inventory nr. 2805, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 5.

94. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, “Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-Partijbestuur d.d. 21 oktober 1996, gehouden in vergadercentrum Pax Christi te Utrecht,” Minutes of the National Committee, 21st of October 1996 (1996), PB/9652385V/ps, inventory nr. 2806, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 5; Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, “Resumé vergadering CDA Partijbestuur d.d. 12 mei 1997 gehouden in vergadercentrum Pax Christi te Utrecht,” Minutes of the National Committee Meeting, 12th of May 1997 (1997), PB/9752321V/ps, inventory nr. 2984, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 3-4, p. 3-4.

95. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, *Politieke Partij Nieuwe Stijl* Working Group, “Concrete Acties naar Partijvernieuwing,” Draft of the Report (1996), report nr. 9600810 version 4, inventory nr. 2806, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 7-9; Implementation found in the 2003 statutes revision: Christen-Democratisch Appèl, “Statuten en Huishoudelijk Reglement,” 2003, art. 5.2 statutes and art. 2 HR, accessed August 22, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/9486>, Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties, Groningen University.

96. CDA, National Committee, “Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-Partijbestuur d.d. 14 oktober 1994.”

council.<sup>97</sup> Here, the findings seemed to have been shared in a fashion similar to the area of membership involvement. After all, the ineffectiveness of the party council was and remained a complaint in discussions on organisation. Discussing the issue, the national committee pointed out that a lack of preparation time and pressure put on the regional chairmen by their membership of the national committee, seems to have been unhelpful.<sup>98</sup>

The size of the party council was also seen as part of the problem by the Klaassen Commission. The recommendations of the Klaassen report about the party council were mostly concerned with the numbers. The committee proposed that after the move from regional to provincial branches which it proposed, the number of party council delegates allotted to each association relative to their membership would be decreased.<sup>99</sup> Like membership consultation, this seems to have run into concerns of power and influence within the party, because these proposals failed to make it to the 1997 revision of the statutes.<sup>100</sup> A reform to the national congress limiting its membership to municipal delegates, intended to make it more democratic, did pass.<sup>101</sup> However, since the national congress had rather limited powers (as noted in section 5.2 above, it was the party council which considered manifestoes and candidate lists), this change can be regarded as a minor one.

Ironically, the party's organisational culture which Gardeniers saw as part of the problem seems to have limited the scope of the structural reforms proposed by the Klaassen commission. However, it cannot be denied that significant steps towards democratisation were made which followed the spirit of the evaluation report: the Klaassen commission revised its recommendations based on Gardeniers, and the national committee and party council followed by introducing OMOV elections for the party chairmanship and membership referenda on specific issues. In this way, the power of the membership was enhanced. It is also quite clear that these were made by the same logic as our propositions presuppose: that a strong membership, being rooted in society, helps to gain electoral support if it is given a greater degree of power in the party organisation. In this way, the 'people's party character' of the CDA presents solid evidence in favour of a connection between a strong attachment to a particular base and the reinforcement strategy.

97. CDA, Gardeniers Commission, "Rapport Evaluatiecommissie," 32; 42.

98. CDA, National Committee, "Beknopt memo discussie in Partijbestuur over rapport Herkenbaar en Slagvaardig, 23 september 1994."

99. CDA, Klaassen Commission, "Herkenbaar en Slagvaardig," 26; CDA, National Committee, "Concept-Partijbestuursstandpunt Herkenbaar en Slagvaardig," 9-11.

100. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, "Statuten en Reglementen CDA," 1997, art. 55a, accessed August 22, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/9485>, Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties, Groningen University; Christen-Democratisch Appèl, "Statuten, Huishoudelijk Reglement en Standaard Reglementen CDA," 1994, art. 66a, accessed August 22, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/9484>, Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties, Groningen University.

101. Proposal made in CDA, Klaassen Commission, "Herkenbaar en Slagvaardig," 25-26; Christen-Democratisch Appèl, "Statuten en Reglementen CDA," 1997, art. 55a, accessed August 22, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/9485>, Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties, Groningen University; Christen-Democratisch Appèl, "Statuten, Huishoudelijk Reglement en Standaard Reglementen CDA," 1994, art. 66a, accessed August 22, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/9484>, Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties, Groningen University

#### 5.4.1.2 Programmatic changes 1994-1998: the strength of ideology

The key variable in the model on programmatic changes is ideological attachment. As has been argued above, the CDA, even as an office-seeking party, maintained a strong ideological orientation. The Gardeniers report shows that this appraisal in the literature also prevailed within the party. By casting the “responsible society” as an ideological advantage enabling a middle way on the reform of the welfare state, the Commission shows how confident the party was of its ideological relevance.<sup>102</sup> The unifying importance of the ideology in the relatively young party should also not be underestimated. All this shows that the party had a high degree of ideological attachment that should lead to a focus on traditional issues and ideology rather than a broader profile in which these traditional values are downplayed.

Again, the recommendations of the Gardeniers report offer the first signs that the party did in fact reason in this way. This is a first sign that the party did approach the crisis from an institutional rather than a functional perspective as we have predicted, and provides evidence in favour of proposition 5c that strong ideological attachment inclines a party towards the reinforcement strategy. After all, as has been argued in 4.3. above, the decline of the party’s traditional base, which it was also aware of, might have enticed the party to play down its traditional values. The diagnosis of the report was that the party’s external image had “flattened out” due to the technocratic demands of office.<sup>103</sup> To remedy this, a renewed focus on the core tenets of the party ideology, united under the concept of “the responsible society”, was prescribed, with a special focus on immaterial issues.<sup>104</sup>

The party acted on this recommendation by setting up a Policy Review (*Strategisch Beraad*, roughly translating as Strategic Council<sup>105</sup>) under the chairmanship of party grandee and former Minister of Finance Frans Andriessen. It was prompted by a resolution of the party council of November 1994, instructing the national committee to initiate such discussions “in short order” and offer proposals for decision-making at the 1995 Spring party council.<sup>106</sup> This resolution also called for analysis of the recent social developments to be guided by the Christian democratic ideology and the programme of principles and named a few issues it felt should feature.<sup>107</sup>

The Policy Review was set up and carried out under the auspices of the party’s Research Institute. Although the minutes note that formally, the institute was charged with the

102. CDA, Gardeniers Commission, “Rapport Evaluatiecommissie,” 11-12.

103. Ibid., 39. Original text uses the term “vervlakking”.

104. Ibid., 37.

105. The translation “Policy Review” has been preferred over a more literal translation to draw attention to the comparison with the Labour case (ch. 6).

106. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Party Council, “Resolutie m.b.t. plaatsbepaling” (1994), inventory nr. 1679, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague.

107. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Party Council, “Resolutie m.b.t. plaatsbepaling” (1994), inventory nr. 1679, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague.

review by the national committee<sup>108</sup>, other documents<sup>109</sup> noted that the initiative itself came from the institute and its director, Jos van Gennip. This sheds an interesting light on the agency of this actor. Much respected for their medium-term policy studies, the Research Institute does seem to have had an authority that might have added to the Review's influence.

The Review was seen as, essentially, a renewed application of the Programme of Principles, which would form its point of departure, to contemporary politics and society.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, the Policy Review Group, consisting of people “with some distance to the daily policy formulation process”<sup>111</sup>, was given a threefold task: to advise with regards to a repositioning of the party on “major social challenges” in the coming decades, to promote dialogue and discussion and to recruit new capacity and expertise for Christian democracy.<sup>112</sup> The Policy Review Group included many exponents of a younger generation of party thinkers, most prominently its influential secretary, Christian-social philosopher and future Prime Minister, Jan-Peter Balkenende.<sup>113</sup>

The title of the report provides an apt summary of its contents: “New Ways, Firm Values”.<sup>114</sup> The “Strategic Choices” it made rarely shift the party's ideological foundations, but in fact return to the roots of the party's ideology as expressed in its Programme of Principles.<sup>115</sup> In terms of issues, themes of security and values prevail – it gives priority to immaterial issues as Gardeniers seems to have recommended.<sup>116</sup>

One might expect the party's ideological tradition to have led to a more Christian-social positioning. Indeed, the issues the party council asked for in the positioning resolution of

108. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, “Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-partijbestuur gehouden 20 januari 1995,” Minutes of the National Committee, 21st of January 1995 (1995), inventory nr. 1680, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, p. 6-7.

109. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, “Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-partijbestuur gehouden op 12 december 1994 in het Jaarbeurscongrescentrum te Utrecht,” Minutes (*Resumé*) of the National Committee, 12th of December 1994 (1994), inventory nr. 1680, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 2; Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, “Het Strategisch Beraad,” Memo on the Policy Review dated 19th January 1995 distributed at National Committee Meeting (1995), inventory nr. 1680, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, p. 2.

110. F.H.J.J. Andriessen, “Aan het bestuur van de gemeentelijke afdelingen van het CDA,” Letter to the Boards of the Municipal Associations, dated 5th of April 1995. (1995), WI/SBG/22.95/JPB/MJ, inventory nr. 1680, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague; CDA, National Committee, “Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-partijbestuur gehouden op 12 december 1994 in het Jaarbeurscongrescentrum te Utrecht,” 2.

111. CDA, National Committee, “Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-partijbestuur gehouden op 12 december 1994 in het Jaarbeurscongrescentrum te Utrecht,” 2, translation by the author of this dissertation.

112. CDA, National Committee, “Het Strategisch Beraad,” 1.

113. *Ibid.*, 2.

114. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Policy Review, *Nieuwe Wegen, Vaste Waarden*, Report of the Policy Review (The Hague: CDA, 1995), translation is the official party translation of the title. Accessed August 22, 2017, [https://d2vry01uvf8h31.cloudfront.net/Organisaties/Visiegroepen/Publicaties/Nieuwe\\_wegen\\_vaste\\_waarden\\_1995.pdf](https://d2vry01uvf8h31.cloudfront.net/Organisaties/Visiegroepen/Publicaties/Nieuwe_wegen_vaste_waarden_1995.pdf).

115. CDA, National Committee, “Het Strategisch Beraad,” 2.

116. CDA, Gardeniers Commission, “Rapport Evaluatiecommissie,” 37.

November 1994 seemed to call for this.<sup>117</sup> However, the Policy Review turned up something else. Voerman casts *New Ways, Firm Values* as a socially conservative document, introducing a strong focus on values and standards that was not there before.<sup>118</sup> Indeed, while the document seems strongly grounded in Christian democratic ideology, it does focus on issues that had not been part of the party's core appeal earlier or focuses on old issues in a new way.<sup>119</sup> These choices would later prove very important, a crucial part of the party's return to power.<sup>120</sup>

Although the minutes of the national committee also give fear that the discussion would be mired in procedures as a reason for ruling out amendments to the document itself,<sup>121</sup> the party decided upon a new and less conventional method for discussion of its contents in order to get a wide-ranging discussion of the report beforehand in a 'bottom-up' manner, encouraging the district branches to take the lead in bundling reactions that would be used to formulate the resolutions that would be presented to the party council.<sup>122</sup> The report was well-received in the branches, judging by a summary of the responses to this consultation.<sup>123</sup> One would expect that the 1998 manifesto would therefore have made heavy reference to a report so well-received. The 1998 manifesto, however, follows very Christian-social "centre-left" lines, as Lidders, chairwoman of the manifesto committee, named community, family, healthcare and education as main priorities to the national committee, with values and security missing.<sup>124</sup> This might be due to the fact that it was agreed that the committee should have some room to deviate from the Review.<sup>125</sup> Later, the 2002 manifesto would be based heavily on the work of the Review.

117. CDA, Party Council, "Resolutie m.b.t. plaatsbepaling."

118. Voerman, "Inleiding," 18.

119. For example, security, in the Dutch context, has mostly been associated with the VVD rather than the CDA, and it figures as one of the main strategic choices of the Policy Review.

Reference is made to these 5 themes in Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, "Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-Partijbestuur, gehouden op vrijdag 3 november 1995 bij het SBI te Doorn," Minutes of the National Committee 3rd of November 1995 (1995), PB/9552753V/ps, inventory nr. 1681, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 2

120. As also argued by Voerman, "Inleiding," 19.

121. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, "Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-Partijbestuur d.d. 19 januari 1996 gehouden bij het SBI te Doorn," Minutes of the National Committee, 19th of January 1996 (1996), PB/9652032V/ps, inventory nr. 2805, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 2.

122. J.J.M. Helgers, "Aan de Kamerkringvoorzitters, c.c. de secretarissen," Letter to the chairmen of the District Branches, dated 25th of October 1995 (1995), VZ/9500179/SvE, inventory nr. 1861, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague; Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, "Besluitvormingsprocedure Strategisch Beraad" (1996), inventory nr. 2805, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague.

123. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, "Samenvattende Inventarisatie Notitie Strategisch Beraad: op basis van samenvattende reacties kamerkringen en reacties gelieerde organisaties," Summary of responses to the Policy Review (1996), inventory nr. 2805, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 4.

124. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, "Resumé van de vergadering van het versterkt CDA-Partijbestuur gehouden op maandag 13 oktober in "De Poort van Cleef" te Utrecht," Minutes of the expanded National Committee Meeting, 13th of October 1997 (1997), inventory nr. 2816, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, p. 3-4.

125. CDA, National Committee, "Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-Partijbestuur, gehouden op vrijdag 16 februari 1996, in het Jaarbeurscongrescentrum te Utrecht," 4.

The programmatic changes follow quite directly from the analysis and the recommendations of the Gardeniers Commission. The high amount of confidence in the party's ideology and in particular in its focus on the 'responsible society', as well as the prescription to give more attention to immaterial issues, were taken to heart by the Policy Review. The report of the Policy Review does exactly this: it sheds light on the issues of the day, including rediscovered issues of security and values, while starting from an extensive reflection on the Christian democratic ideology and maintaining the typically Christian democratic focus on responsibility and society. In so doing, the Policy Review became the cornerstone of a programmatic reinforcement strategy: it highlighted the party's traditional values, rather than downplay them. In this way, the programmatic dimension of the CDA's recovery strategy shows a clear connection between ideological attachment and the reinforcement strategy: from the confidence in the party's ideology shown by Gardeniers, to a Policy Review which took this ideological heritage as a point of departure.

#### **5.4.1.3 Tactical Changes, 1994-1998: the advent of marketing**

With high electoral base attachment through both informal norms and personal ties as well as ideological attachment in evidence, one would expect that the tactical choices made by the CDA would be guided towards a reinforcement strategy as well and lead to a tactical focus on a narrower constituency. Indeed, this seemed to have been the early preference of the parliamentary party.<sup>126</sup> However, the evaluation commission's recommendations and, as we shall see, the party's actions, did not conform to expectations. Instead, the recommendations stressed a broader appeal by bringing in new organisations in civil society and strengthening the position of those of non-Christian faiths.<sup>127</sup>

In looking for an explanation for this surprising deviation from the overall pattern, two pieces of evidence suggesting lower electoral base attachment and a challenging external environment should be kept in mind. First, the party was avowedly catch-all, since its statutes committed it to appealing to the whole of Dutch society, and this could qualify the generally strong electoral base attachment. Related to this, the evidence of partisan dealignment contained in the Gardeniers Report suggest that the numerical importance of the base in the future would decline. Based on a functional strategy, this would mean some pressure towards an extension strategy to remedy the decline of the base. This interaction of external factors with internal factors could lead to elements of a broader-based strategy being introduced in the tactical dimension in particular.

A large role in these matters must be attributed to a number of bodies set up by the national committee with the intention, sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit, to help the party reach certain groups. The Intercultural Group (*Intercultureel Beraad*, ICB) was reformed from a committee into a special organisation to help integrate ethnic minorities into the CDA. The extension background of this initiative was not just clear, it was actually explicit: the memo of the National Executive proposing this ICB-new style explicitly referred to the clause of the programme of principles that states the CDA

126. CDA, National Committee, "Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-partijbestuur gehouden op 12 december 1994 in het Jaarbeurscongrescentrum te Utrecht," 8.

127. CDA, Gardeniers Commission, "Rapport Evaluatiecommissie," 29 & 39.

directs itself to the entire Dutch population and it referred to a 1991 resolution which sets the body a two-fold goal of promoting minority participation in the party and in politics in general.<sup>128</sup> A later memo on the body, however, made note of the tension between the party's Christian orientation and the position of minorities, a matter, as we shall see, which would be a recurring theme and which would mean a natural constraint on efforts to implement this particular Gardeniers recommendation.<sup>129</sup>

There were, however, also reinforcement elements. These largely concerned specific groups that had deserted the party in 1994 and contributed to a combination of measures appealing to core and non-core voters that is part of the extension strategy. The way the pension system had figured negatively in the party's image over the course of the 1994 campaign gave rise to a clearly tactical initiative: the wish, first expressed in 1994, for the formation of an old-age group or association.<sup>130</sup> The initiator of the eventual proposal, Van Egmond, explicitly mentioned the relation to electoral targetting<sup>131</sup>, which is not surprising as the elderly were one of the major base groups deserting the party in 1994.<sup>132</sup> This *Seniorenberaad* was instituted by resolution of the party council in June 1996.<sup>133</sup> Measures were also undertaken to strengthen the party where it was structurally weak, in the cities, particularly the larger ones in the *Randstad*<sup>134</sup> conurbation.<sup>135</sup> To improve the position of the party in the big cities, a working group was created devoting its attention entirely to this topic.<sup>136</sup>

Under Helgers's chairmanship, the CDA moved to using marketing techniques based on lifestyle instead of demographics. In an analysis of (among others) the strategy of the CDA in 1998, Van Praag and Penseel make note of the use of lifestyle segments from the model of Amsterdam marketing firm Trendbox by the party.<sup>137</sup> They note that religious altruists (older religious voters) belong to the CDA's core electorate, and the profile given for "reserved social activity" (religious but less so than the altruists) also

128. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Executive, "Betreft: opzet ICB nieuwe stijl," Memo to the National Committee on the ICB-New Style (1994), PB/9453578/N/ps, inventory nr. 1679, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 9-11.

129. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, ICB Steering Group, "Betreft: Startnotitie / Plan van Aanpak," Memo to the National Committee (1995), PL06/9454071c/N/ps, inventory nr. 1680, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 1.

130. CDA, National Committee, "Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-Partijbestuur d.d. 14 oktober 1994," 5.

131. CDA, National Committee, "Resumé van de vergadering van het CDA-Partijbestuur van 13 mei 1996, gehouden in het Jaarbeurscongrescentrum te Utrecht," 5.

132. CDA, Gardeniers Commission, "Rapport Evaluatiecommissie," 16.

133. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Party Council, "Vergaderstukken Partijraad 30 mei en 1 juni 1996," Papers of the Party Council, 30th May and 1st June 1996 (1996), Collection of Party Documents, CDA Central Office, the Hague, 14.

134. The Randstad is the Dutch term for the country's major conurbation, formed by the urbanized area between the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht. It contains the four largest Dutch cities: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and the Hague.

135. CDA, Gardeniers Commission, "Rapport Evaluatiecommissie," 16 & 53.

136. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, "Betreft: Werkgroep Grote Steden," Memo on the Big Cities Working Group (1994), JK/05/12/1994, inventory nr. 1679, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague.

137. P. Van Praag Jr. and S. Penseel, "Wat Wil de Kiezer? Politieke Marketing en de Verkiezingscampagne van 1998," in *Jaarboek 1998*, ed. G. Voerman (Groningen: Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen, 1999), 107.

implies that many of them were CDA core voters.<sup>138</sup> The other two categories - labelled "dependent security" and "civilized hedonism" and corresponding roughly speaking to the "average Dutchman" who watched RTL4 and more individualist voters - are mostly floating voters for whose vote the primary competitor is the VVD.<sup>139</sup> The analysis also makes note of a category of "more progressive young voters" ("caring postmaterialists", in the Trendbox terminology), who would have been attracted to the party on the basis of the manifesto but were not chosen as a target constituency. Crucially, they note that the "dependent security" segment of voters supported the CDA in large numbers during the Lubbers years.<sup>140</sup> Therefore, insofar as the short-term campaign plan is concerned, the CDA's strategy is accurately characterised as tending towards the reinforcement strategy. However, with more long-term projects in the cities and among minorities, there are significant elements of an extension strategy as well.

In response to the inability of the Parliamentary Party (which was not much rejuvenated in the 1994 election, as stated before) to achieve breakthroughs in opposition, Helgers and the executive came up with a very different candidate list for 1998: of the top 15 candidates, only the top candidate, new party leader Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, was an incumbent MP. This intention to bring in a new generation was an explicit part of the profile established for the new parliamentary party.<sup>141</sup> Although none of these candidates (save perhaps for Doctors Without Borders co-founder Jacques de Milliano) were new to the party, the sheer scope of the overhaul and its intent of bringing in a new generation are enough to qualify it as an increase in the number of "outsider candidates" and part of the extension strategy. It has to be noted, however, that many of the candidates were connected and identified with the new course set out in the Policy Review which, as already noted, did not move away overly much from the party line.

In an interesting way, the actions of the CDA on the tactical dimension between 1994 and 1998 show how these strategies are often trade-offs. Nevertheless, this particular combination of core and non-core voters leans on balance towards the extension strategy rather than the reinforcement strategy. It seems that where short-term campaign strategy was characterised as tending more towards reinforcing the base, several long-term projects such as the ICB and the big-cities group were justified with reference to the demographic decline of the base. These measures generally fall within the bounds of the extension strategy. However, it is interesting to note that there is an element in the process which does reflect some of the influence of high electoral base attachment towards a reinforcement strategy in the form of the resistance to broadening the base to non-Christian faiths with explicit reference to the 'C' of the CDA.

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138. Van Praag Jr. and Penseel, "Wat Wil de Kiezer?," 107.

139. Ibid.

140. Ibid.

141. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Candidate Selection Committee (*Vertrouwenscommissie*), "Rapport van de CDA Vertrouwenscommissie Kandidaatstelling Tweede Kamerverkiezingen 1998," Report dated 15th of September 1997 (1997), inventory nr. 2984, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 6-8.

### 5.4.2 Sticking to the plan: 1998-2002

The 1998 election was without a doubt another crisis for the party. Despite its best efforts in opposition, the party not only failed to gain any seat in Parliament but actually lost a further five, bringing it to another record low of 29 seats. The party fell from second place and was displaced by the VVD. The polls, however, had the CDA more or less constantly around 30 seats up until the last campaign week.<sup>142</sup> The loss was therefore more or less anticipated. A report found that the party's loyal electoral base (good for around 23 seats) had held, and ascribed the loss of CDA-leaning voters to a premiership battle between the PvdA and the VVD.

Despite the devastating effect on morale, an evaluation working group chaired by former Central Office director Gert Groenendijk reported optimistically. The base had held, despite its long-term decline.<sup>143</sup> The party's profile was strengthened on important issues such as security. Despite an image problem, there was, according to the committee, an opportunity to compensate by gaining the allegiance of newer voters.<sup>144</sup> This must in part have been due to the good position among the youngest cohort of voters.<sup>145</sup>

Given the shock of losing seats while in opposition, one could have reasonably argued that the CDA might reverse course after 1998, adopting a clearer extension strategy after the previous reinforcement strategy had failed to work out. As we shall see, this is not in fact what happened. It bears keeping in mind that seat loss could have been more or less expected looking at the polls.<sup>146</sup> More importantly, the Groenendijk report states that certain recommendations of the Gardeniers report hadn't been completely implemented yet.<sup>147</sup> On that basis, it is less surprising that the party, rather than pivot towards extension, went even further on the path it had set out on in 1994.

#### 5.4.2.1 Towards OMOV: Organisational changes, 1998-2002

In 1997, the CDA revised its statutes, incorporating some of the Klaassen recommendations (see 5.4.1.1.). Combined with the lacklustre results of the PPNS pilots, one might surmise that this was about as far as the CDA would go in terms of organisational reforms. However, six years later in 2003, the party revised its statutes yet another time, this time abolishing party council and national congress in favour of a single congress operating by OMOV.<sup>148</sup> Though the amendment is outside of our period of inquiry, its preparation is not.

As we have seen between 1994 and 1998, while the principle of internal democratisation was universally held on the national committee, the practice of full OMOV ran into political constraints. Attachment of actors, especially the regional branches, to the current

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142. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Groenendijk Working Group, "Nieuwe Wegen in Aanleg" (1998), Copy supplied to the author by the Research Institute of the CDA, the Hague, 13-14.

143. *Ibid.*, 18.

144. *Ibid.*

145. *Ibid.*, 16.

146. *Ibid.*, 13-14.

147. *Ibid.*, 10.

148. The result of this revision can be found in Christen-Democratisch Appèl, "Statuten en Huishoudelijk Reglement," 2003, accessed August 22, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/9486>, Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties, Groningen University.

setup of party organs and the accompanying power structures, seems to have played a key role here. The party council and national congress and their respective powers gave to each lower level its own way to get influence. This much was evidenced by the reluctance even to accept a change to the basis on which membership numbers transferred into delegate numbers.<sup>149</sup> On that basis, one would expect that the status quo after the 1999 revision would be held.

What caused the CDA to change its mind about OMOV? It could have been the disappointing results of the 1998 elections, but if that were the case *Nieuwe Wegen in Aanleg* would have recommended this course of action.<sup>150</sup> Another possible reason is external to the party, and should be mentioned because it presents the possibility that the party's hand was forced. In 1998, a lawsuit calling for the dissolution of the party was filed by a private citizen because the party allegedly violated association law provisions stating that the general assembly should be a single body.<sup>151</sup> In the case of the CDA, it was unclear whether the national congress or party council was this supreme body.<sup>152</sup> The response of the party reveals that there is no direct link with OMOV, however, since the same letter by the party's lawyer notes that the national executive then decided that this role should be played by the national congress, while the party council should become a 'political forum'. Merging the two, as in the later OMOV scenario, was not on the table.<sup>153</sup>

The debate on OMOV was reopened when the youth wing CDJA submitted a resolution on party structure to the November 1999 party council.<sup>154</sup> This resolution explicitly called for the consideration of a full OMOV system, strict separation between council and congress, multiple nominations as the rule and a new division of responsibilities between sub-national branches and national organs.<sup>155</sup> The text of the resolution, which was supported by the national executive at the party council, mentions the desirability of more influence for members.

In response to this adopted call for proposals to be presented at the 2000 spring party council, the national executive instituted a committee led by executive member Koos Janssen to report on these issues.<sup>156</sup> At the next party council and each subsequent meeting, the committee reported in a way that much resembled the intent of the original CDJA resolution.<sup>157</sup> The OMOV system was to be extended to the entire party, including council

149. As described in 4.1.2., this recommendation of the Klaassen Commission was not implemented.

150. In fact, *Nieuwe Wegen in Aanleg* did not make any recommendations as regards the structure of the party. Such was not even part of its rather technical terms of reference as reported on page 7 of the report.

151. R. Steenvoorde, "Betreft: Aanpassing statuten," Letter to the members of the Statutes Commission dated 8th of December 1998 (1998), inventory nr. 3084, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 1.

152. Ibid.

153. Ibid.

154. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Party Council, "Resolutie Partijstructuur ingediend door het CDJA" (1999), Digital Archives, CDA Central Office, the Hague.

155. Ibid.

156. M. Stolk, "Partij in Beweging; Partij in Ontwikkeling," Draft Discussion Paper on Party Development, dated 6th of December 1999 (1999), inventory nr. 2987, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague, 6.

157. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Party Council, "Vergaderstukken," Papers of the Party Council, 13th

and congress.<sup>158</sup> In addition, multiple nominations would be made compulsory at least for the party chairmanship.<sup>159</sup> It seems likely that this radical course of action was made possible because of the support of the national executive; not least because running up to 2001, there were still notes of disquiet on the national committee about the extent of OMOV.<sup>160</sup> In other words: the same constraints we observed in 1994-1998 with OMOV were still present, but seem to have been circumvented by an alliance between the national executive and interested parties like the CDJA. In addition, Janssen defended his proposals to the national committee by pointing out that newer and younger members were overwhelmingly in favour of OMOV.<sup>161</sup> This justification by appealing to the preferences of new members implies that OMOV was considered important to stopping the decline of the membership.

The Janssen Committee's recommendations, in line with the CDJA resolution, appear in the 2003 Statutes revision.<sup>162</sup> OMOV was introduced in the new national congress of the party that replaced congress and council, although each provincial branch could send a number of delegates who would get an additional vote in addition to their vote as a member.<sup>163</sup> It is hard to infer causality here, but both the court case and the new OMOV system seems to have played a role in merging the two organs. In the internal regulations of the party (*Huishoudelijk Reglement*), there is an explicit requirement for multiple nominations for the party chairman and his deputies.<sup>164</sup> In this way, a discussion that had been ongoing for a long time was brought to a conclusion.

Interestingly, the CDA also experimented with a very limited form of external democratisation, which is conceptually part of the extension strategy. The national executive chose a new way of compiling a manifesto. Rather than the usual internal committee which would come up with a proposal to be amended and confirmed by the party council, there

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of May 2000 (2000), Collection of Party Documents, CDA Central Office, the Hague, 89-92; Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Party Council, "Spelregels Partijraad 4 november 2000" (2000), Collection of Party Documents, CDA Central Office, the Hague, 16-19; Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Party Council, "Vergaderstukken CDA-Partijraad en Congres 3 november," Papers of the Party Council and National Congress, 3rd of November 2001 (Collection of Party Documents, CDA Central Office, the Hague, 2001), 17-26, The run of national committee minutes available at CDA Central Office reveals that Party Development was a monthly recurring item on the agenda.

158. CDA, Party Council, "Vergaderstukken CDA-Partijraad en Congres 3 november," 17-26.

159. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Party Council, "Vergaderstukken Partijraad 17 februari 2001," Papers of the Party Council, 17th of February 2001 (Collection of Party Documents, CDA Central Office, the Hague, 2001), 84-87.

160. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, "Verslag vergadering van het Partijbestuur van het CDA d.d. 31 augustus 2001 in Utrecht," Minutes of the National Committee Meeting, 31st of August 2001 (2001), Anonymous Personal Archive consisting of National Committee Minutes, CDA Central Office, the Hague, 1.

161. *Ibid.*, 2.

162. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, "Statuten en Huishoudelijk Reglement," 2003, art. 27 and 30. Accessed August 22, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/9486>, Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties, Groningen University.

163. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, "Statuten en Huishoudelijk Reglement," 2003, art. 30. Accessed August 22, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/9486>, Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties, Groningen University.

164. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, "Statuten en Huishoudelijk Reglement," 2003, art. 24 and 25 HR, accessed August 22, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/9486>, Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties, Groningen University.

would be a “Competition of Ideas”.<sup>165</sup> In this competition, members and non-members could submit ideas on ten major themes. The best ten of each issue area, as determined by groups of experts reporting to the program team, would then be put into the manifesto.<sup>166</sup> The 2002 manifesto marks each pledge inspired by such an idea with an asterisk, giving us insight in the extent to which the ideas influenced party policy: about 75% of the pledges, a substantial part, was influenced by the competition.<sup>167</sup>

It should be noted that there was no question of the Competition ever being enshrined in any rules. It was deliberately presented as an experiment with an innovative way of coming up with a new manifesto. The keyword here was “bottom-up”. The involvement of non-members in this crucial policy formulation process was defended by stating that ideas from outsiders were considered worthwhile even if the sources of those ideas could or would not commit to membership.<sup>168</sup> It serves the logic of an extension strategy as we outlined it: the more people that are involved through external democratisation, the more people are potentially bound to the party.

Because the Competition was an experiment with empowering non-members, it also does not weigh up against the OMOV reforms which empowered the membership. This means that power, on balance, shifted towards the membership, resulting in a reinforcement strategy. This reinforcement strategy admittedly might not have taken the exact same form without the court case brought against the party. However, the fact that the party also entertained the possibility of a more limited change retaining the delegate-based system, but in the end chose to go with the OMOV-based new national congress in a similar vein as the first-cycle attempts at empowering the membership shows a continuing thread between the Gardeniers report and its analysis and the recovery strategy.

#### 5.4.2.2 Programmatic changes, 1998-2002

In programmatic terms, the reinforcement strategy continued. Despite the 1998 defeat, there seems to have been a general consensus that the manifesto from that year was a solid Christian Democratic document. This was, among others, expressed in references to the manifesto alongside the Policy Review as a primary source of direction for the future.<sup>169</sup> The only problem the Groenendijk working group found was a mismatch between various

165. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, “Besluitenlijst CDA-Partijbestuur van 22 september 2000,” Conclusions of the National Committee Meeting, 22nd of September 2000 (2000), Anonymous Personal Archive consisting of National Committee Minutes, CDA Central Office, the Hague, 1-2.

166. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, “Betrokken Samenleving, Betrouwbare Overheid,” 2002, 4, accessed November 3, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/424>; It should be noted that the original way the Competition was presented would have only six winners, independent of focus group. This is stated in CDA, Party Council, “Vergaderstukken Partijraad 17 februari 2001,” 77.

167. CDA, “Betrokken Samenleving, Betrouwbare Overheid,” 76 out of a total of 100 chapters marked with an asterisk.

168. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, Party Council, “Vergaderstukken Partijraad 4 november 2000,” Papers of the Party Council, 4th of November 2000 (2000), Collection of Party Documents, CDA Central Office, the Hague, 43.

169. Resolution submitted by the CDJA, found in CDA, Party Council, “Spelregels Partijraad 4 november 2000,” 24; Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, “Besluitenlijst Partijbestuur van 2 juni 2000,” Conclusions of the National Committee Meeting, 5th of June 2000 (2000), Anonymous Personal Archive consisting of National Committee Minutes, CDA Central Office, the Hague, 2.

documents on issues like security released in addition to the manifesto, which were seen as being external to it.<sup>170</sup> A major conclusion of the committee based on electoral research after the election was that the approach of 1994 through 1998 seemed to be working: in addition to being the owner of issues like family, agriculture and values, the party was fully in contention for healthcare and education and had made solid progress towards ownership of the VVD-held security issue.<sup>171</sup>

The consensus therefore seems to have been that the party was on the right track programmatically. Both in minutes of the national committee and in resolutions of the party council, the drafters of the party's newest manifesto were explicitly given both the Policy Review and the 1998 manifesto as their frame of reference.<sup>172</sup> Perhaps due to the Competition of Ideas and a deliberate choice on chairman Van Rij's part to push for businessman Hessels, a relative outsider, to head the process, however, the final product of the committee looked very different from its predecessor.<sup>173</sup> The 1998 manifesto had been regarded as a more social-Christian document – the 2002 manifesto's top 10 priorities include more conservative policies on law and order and immigration which were hitherto regarded as the territory of the VVD.<sup>174</sup> It is also telling that the issue areas named by the Groenendijk report as areas with potential for issue ownership – healthcare, education and security – contain prominent new initiatives.

A similar focus can be seen in various “themed years” geared towards claiming ownership of various issues during the 1998-2002 parliamentary session. 1999 was declared the Year of Security, with various programmatic efforts focusing on this topic.<sup>175</sup> 2000 became the Year of Generations, focusing on both the elderly and families, two core CDA segments.<sup>176</sup> Nevertheless, especially the Year of Security was not typical CDA programmatic territory (as has been noted above, law and order issues are largely regarded as VVD territory) and it can thus be regarded as a shift towards a broader political programme, part of the extension strategy.

In conclusion, the party remained on the reinforcement track. This is largely due to the continued optimism in CDA ranks about the strength of the party ideology. Combined with perhaps slightly more realism arrived at through electoral research, this makes for a strategy which hangs towards a focused programme playing on the party's electoral strengths – values and families – while attempting to gain ownership of a few highly topical issues such as security using the conclusions of the Policy Review.

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170. CDA, Groenendijk Working Group, “Nieuwe Wegen in Aanleg,” 21-22.

171. *Ibid.*, 16-17.

172. Resolution submitted by the CDJA, found in CDA, Party Council, “Spelregels Partijraad 4 november 2000,” 24; CDA, National Committee, “Besluitenlijst Partijbestuur van 2 juni 2000,” 2.

173. M. L. J. Van Rij, *Duizend Dagen in de Landspolitiek: Leiderschapscrises in het CDA* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 2002), 105.

174. CDA, “Betrokken Samenleving, Betrouwbare Overheid.”

175. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, “Jaarverslag CDA 1999,” Annual report of the CDA, 2000, 22-23, accessed November 3, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/822>.

176. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, “Jaarverslag CDA 2000,” Annual Report of the CDA, 2001, 28-29, accessed November 3, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/823>.

### 5.4.2.3 Tactical changes, 1998-2002

In the tactical area of the recovery process, there also seems to have been a continuation along the lines inspired by the Gardeniers report earlier. The Groenendijk report found that the 1998 general election had consolidated the party's core electorate, although that group was still declining.<sup>177</sup> This observation is significant in two ways. First of all, it notes the success of the defensive narrow-base reinforcement measures of 1994-1998, such as those among senior citizens. Secondly, it once again draws attention to the realities of partisan dealignment. Because the base had been more or less successfully defended, this leads to the expectation that dealignment will become a bigger factor and lead to a broader focus in tactics. This view was indeed taken as the basis for a presentation of campaign strategy by Communications Director Joep Mourits, which advocated focus on new groups of voters, especially younger CDA-leaning voters (*oproepbaren*).<sup>178</sup> This strategy was endorsed by the national committee.<sup>179</sup> A pocket campaign handbook for 2002 also notes that especially among non-religious voters and Roman Catholics, improvement of the party's fortunes was essential for a good result.<sup>180</sup> In addition, the CDA campaign focused more on the PvdA and the VVD than on smaller competitors, surmising that the main competition was with those parties.<sup>181</sup> It can be said, therefore, that the CDA was looking to recapture the support of non-core voters it had enjoyed under Lubbers.

A major initiative in terms of forming durable links with new segments of voters was a renewed pursuit of the Gardeniers report's recommendation to give a stronger position to those of non-Christian faiths. Acting on this idea, Van Rij initiated the formation of an arms-length Centre for Politics, Religion and Spirituality (*Centrum voor Politiek, Religie en Zingeving*, CPRZ). This provoked criticism, both in the broader party and on the national committee, that he wanted to do away with the party's Christian inspiration.<sup>182</sup> Saliently, though, the party chairman wrote in the party magazine that the CPRZ was "intended to form new coalitions in society".<sup>183</sup> The centre functioned for the entire period of Van Rij's chairmanship, and was successful in drawing in minority figures such as the Dutch-Surinamese Kathleen Ferrier, who would become the 'outsider' Deputy Chairperson of the manifesto drafting team.<sup>184</sup> It did not, however, durably lead to a visible shift in focus of the party's main tactical strategy towards minorities.

Meanwhile, Van Rij, himself a relative outsider (he had not been a member of the national committee before ascending to the chairmanship) came to office with a spirit of

177. CDA, Groenendijk Working Group, "Nieuwe Wegen in Aanleg," 18.

178. J. Mourits, "Waar liggen de groeikansen van het CDA," Sheets for a Powerpoint Presentation dated 7th of April 2000 (2000), inventory nr. 3001, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague.

179. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, "Besluitenlijst Partijbestuur 7 april 2000," Conclusions of the National Committee Meeting, 7th of April 2000 (2000), Anonymous Personal Archive consisting of National Committee Minutes, CDA Central Office, the Hague.

180. CDA, "Campagnewijzer Tweede Kamerverkiezingen 2002," 4.

181. *Ibid.*, 5.

182. CDA, National Committee, "Besluitenlijst van het Partijbestuur van het CDA d.d. 17 november 2000," 4.

183. M. L. J. Van Rij, "CDA in het politieke landschap: CDA moet zich ontwikkelen tot pluriforme, multiculturele partij," *CD/Actueel*, August 14, 1999, 4-5.

184. Van Rij, *Duizend Dagen in de Landspolitiek*, 105.

renewal in mind. Fraanje and de Vries and Van Rij himself note the range of appointments of outsiders in the party bureaucracy and key functions in the organisation.<sup>185</sup> This continued in the traditionally ‘in-house’ appointment of the chairman of the manifesto committee: rather than appoint a party grandee as usual, the national committee appointed two outsiders to the chairmanship and deputy chairmanship of the committee, businessman Hessels and the aforementioned Kathleen Ferrier.<sup>186</sup> The wish for the chairman to have a business background was even in the profile drafted for the vacancy.<sup>187</sup>

There are various versions of the precise agendas involved, but the fact of the matter remains that De Hoop Scheffer grew to distrust party chairman Van Rij, leading to the two being increasingly at odds towards the end of the second electoral cycle. Various memos on the leadership and the course of the party from the chairman and his allies were interpreted by the party leader as an assault on his position.<sup>188</sup> The exact personal interests involved need not be treated extensively in this chapter.<sup>189</sup> The fact remains, however, that by the end of the clash over the leadership this distrust escalated into, both Van Rij and De Hoop Scheffer resigned from their functions, leaving a sort of vacuum that was filled as by “Planned Coincidence”<sup>190</sup> by the young Finance spokesman, the later Prime Minister Jan-Peter Balkenende. Balkenende had been deeply involved with the programmatic renewal efforts as secretary of the Policy Review and was named by the campaign plan as “the personification of the (...) rich ideas and certain values”.<sup>191</sup> As such, this particular personal change can be seen mostly as a final choice of leader who had been deeply involved with the strategy in programme, and more generally with the new course of the party. So argued, it complements the reinforcement components of the strategy apparent in the Policy Review.

On balance, the decisions taken on targeting and the diversity of the party elite seem to continue the trend of the 1994-1998 period in containing both reinforcement and extension elements. The targeting focus on both Catholics (reinforcement) and non-religious voters (extension) in the short term had shifted slightly to extension, perhaps because of the success in reinforcing ties with the base earlier. The more important long-term measures enabled by long-term contingency, particularly the CPRZ were all geared towards extension. It has to be noted, however, that the same resistance to extending the base to non-Christian religious voters that was apparent in the response to the Gardeniers report also surfaced here and to some extent hampered the execution of the plan. However, on balance the strategy still focused in its long-run intent on broadening the base and

185. R. Fraanje and J. de Vries, *Gepland Toeval: hoe Balkenende in het CDA aan de macht kwam* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2010), 26; Van Rij, *Duizend Dagen in de Landspolitiek*, 105.

186. CDA, National Committee, “Besluitenlijst CDA-Partijbestuur van 22 september 2000,” 2.

187. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, National Committee, “Profielschets voor de voorzitter van het ProgramTeam” (2000), MS/20/09/00, inventory nr. 3001, Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA): Partij, 1980-2000, voorlopige toegang, Nationaal Archief, the Hague.

188. Van Rij, *Duizend Dagen in de Landspolitiek*, 99-100; Fraanje and Vries, *Gepland Toeval*, 40.

189. For example, it was rumoured that Van Rij had ambitions to become party leader himself. Van Rij has always denied this, and in an interview with the author paints the picture that by the end, he had created a power vacuum from which a new leader simply had to (and did) emerge. M.L.J. Van Rij, interview with the author, The Hague, 12th of June, 2014; see also Van Rij, *Duizend Dagen in de Landspolitiek*

190. Fraanje and Vries, *Gepland Toeval*.

191. CDA, “Campagnewijzer Tweede Kamerverkiezingen 2002,” 5.

projecting a more inclusive image, continuing the tactical extension strategy.

## 5.5 Conclusion: True colours

Although the party pursued a reinforcement strategy on balance during both cycles as expected, table 5.2 paints a puzzlingly mixed picture of the CDA's recovery strategy nevertheless. Although the organisational and programmatic dimensions show clear reinforcement strategies, with at most minor extending measures being taken on the organisational dimension, the tactical dimension turns up a strategy that leans more towards broadening the party's base than focusing on its core voters. Interestingly, this means that while the party reaffirmed its traditional values and empowered its large membership, where its targeting was concerned it focused more on those outside of its base of core voters. How come? A clue might be found in the information available to the party at the time. After all, the well-received and influential Gardeniers report made note both of the party's confidence in its membership and its ideology and of its vulnerability in the face of partisan dealignment.

This works in two ways. On the one hand, the reinforcing elements of the party's strategy seem clearly related to this high degree of electoral base attachment and ideological attachment, and this impression is further strengthened precisely because the party was also aware of its vulnerability. In the face of that particular piece of information, one might expect that the party would also downplay its traditional values and move power away from the membership to allow more leeway to appeal to a broader constituency. The fact that this did not happen is clearly related to the party's high ideological attachment and electoral base attachment. In the discussion of the Policy Review and the organisational reforms considered above, the confidence in the strength of Christian Democracy and in the membership from the Gardeniers report onwards clearly figure into the narrative for these changes and show a party confidently putting its faith in the strengths it believed it had.<sup>192</sup>

In particular, the resonance of the Gardeniers self-analysis throughout the process lends credence to these findings. There were two components to this analysis: the strength and relevance, according to members, of the ideology itself (the Christian Democratic vision on man and society) and the vitality of the membership organisation (related to the people's party character). Both lead, with a single exception, to a uniform pressure towards the reinforcement strategy on the organisational and tactical dimension: if one believes in the continuing strength of its core ideological tenets, strong social roots and vital membership, then of course one will tend towards going back to those strong foundations. This seems to be what happened in both the Policy Review and the major moves towards OMOV, although the latter naturally runs into institutional interests resulting in a reluctance to embrace it. This reluctance was only overcome when the CDJA resolution on party structure forced a breakthrough.

On the other hand, the party's existing membership did not help it much in the face of its own decline and particularly against the decline of its core vote that Gardeniers

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192. CDA, Gardeniers Commission, "Rapport Evaluatiecommissie," 11-12.

Table 5.2: Overview of the CDA recovery strategy, 1994-2002

Cycle	Organisational	Programmatic	Tactical	Overall
<i>First cycle, 1994-1998</i>	<p>Internal democratisation (<i>reinforcement</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OMOV elections for party chairmanship (<i>reinforcement</i>)</li> <li>• PPNS pilots including membership diversification (<i>minor extension</i>)</li> <li>• Reform of national congress (<i>minor reinforcement</i>)</li> </ul>	<p>Highlight traditional values (<i>reinforcement</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy Review <i>Nieuwe Wegen, Vaste Waarden</i> (<i>reinforcement</i>)</li> </ul>	<p>Broader targeting (<i>extension</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intercultural Group (<i>extension</i>)</li> <li>• Seniorenberaad (<i>reinforcement</i>)</li> <li>• Big Cities Group (<i>extension</i>)</li> <li>• Increase in number of newcomers on the list (<i>extension</i>)</li> </ul>	Reinforcement
<i>Second cycle, 1998-2002</i>	<p>Internal democratisation (<i>reinforcement</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full OMOV in national congress (<i>reinforcement</i>)</li> <li>• Competition of Ideas (<i>minor extension</i>)</li> </ul>	<p>Highlight traditional values (<i>reinforcement</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy Review as manifesto frame of reference (<i>reinforcement</i>)</li> <li>• Themed years on Security and Generations (<i>reinforcement</i>)</li> </ul>	<p>Broader targeting (<i>extension</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campaign plan targets younger voters as well as Catholics (<i>mixed</i>)</li> <li>• Centre for Politics, Religion and Spirituality (<i>extension</i>)</li> <li>• Outsiders in key functions (<i>extension</i>)</li> <li>• Balkenende becomes leader (<i>reinforcement</i>)</li> </ul>	Reinforcement

observed.<sup>193</sup> This might explain the apparent paradox that a party so attached to its electoral base and its ideology would still pursue a strategy on the tactical dimension that mostly seeks to broaden its appeal. This has been visible since the Gardeniers report, which also recommended measures to extend the appeal of the party to non-Christian groups. This could, on the one hand, be argued to emerge from the people's party character of the party – “the party, without distinction, appeals to the whole of Dutch society”.<sup>194</sup> On the other, however, there seems to have been more than a little resistance towards broadening the party to non-Christian faith groups for fear of the Christian inspiration of the party being lost. This attachment to the party's Christian ideological roots apparently prevailed over this commitment in the party statutes, as most of the measures to extend to non-Christians fell flat in the face of it. However, this does not explain why the party also took measures to broaden its core vote based on other factors than religion, such as the Big Cities Group.

What tipped the scales in favour of broadening the electoral base and kept the party leadership invested in their attempts to broaden their appeal was probably the reality of partisan dealignment itself. This occurred especially towards the end of the 1994-2002 period and is most visible in campaign strategy documents between 1998 and 2002. Although the documents do not directly link the two, the known decline of the party's core vote as recounted in the Gardeniers report and the renewed appeal to groups outside this core vote do coincide, suggesting a possible link between the two. Among the different facets of the recovery strategy, electoral tactics proved to be most susceptible to external pressures. We also see this same pattern emerging in a more limited way on the organisational dimension with the experiments with forms of external democratisation and membership diversification such as the PPNS pilots and the Competition of Ideas, introducing an extending element into an organisational strategy mostly based on empowering the membership.

When we compare both electoral cycles studied in this chapter and look at the impact of the second defeat, what stands out is that even if the party seemed deeply demoralised, there was a large amount of continuity. The election defeat did not lead the CDA to conclude that its current course must be wrong. In fact, the 1998 evaluation report explicitly sees the new defeat in the light of the as-of-yet incomplete implementation of the Gardeniers report.<sup>195</sup> Although the strength of the Gardeniers Report as a kick-off for the renewal agenda and the low expectations within the party for 1998 must be seen as a factor, we should also entertain the influence of the electoral system here. Further down the line, the argument of the lost election does not explicitly figure as a motivation to redouble the efforts towards implementing Gardeniers. This suggests that these were being pursued on their own merits and would have been increased even in the event of a moderate gain. This suggests, in turn, that at least in the CDA case, the question of the influence of PR can be settled by concluding that PR, at least in this case, has no effect

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193. CDA, Gardeniers Commission, “Rapport Evaluatiecommissie,” 16.

194. Christen-Democratisch Appèl, “Statuten en Reglementen CDA,” 1985, art. 3. Accessed August 22, 2017, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/9483>, Documentation Centre on Dutch Political Parties, Groningen University.

195. CDA, Groenendijk Working Group, “Nieuwe Wegen in Aanleg.”

on the choice of recovery strategy.

When its goals come under pressure, the first question the party has to deal with is what the party actually is. In the case of the CDA, the broad but principled Christian democratic people's party led to a reinforcement strategy. This image goes back to the time of its formation, and was undoubtedly reinforced in the pressure cooker of the party's early years. This is not surprising, given the prevalent idea in the literature on party change that parties are inherently conservative and resistant to change.

