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Walking the Tightrope

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Walking the Tightrope: Populist Radical Right Parties' Framing of 'Good' and 'Bad' Migrants in Belgium and Switzerland*

*Judith Sijstermans & Adrian Favero***

Abstract

In this article, we look in detail at two populist radical right (PRR) parties' framing and discourse around a key ideological area for PRRPs: migration and migrants. PRRPs have succeeded in agenda-setting around these issues, which have been a source of their electoral success. However, parties' framing of these issues has also been a place for vagueness, through 'doublespeak' and euphemizing. Building on over 100 interviews with party representatives and members in Belgium and Switzerland, we investigate how the Swiss People's Party (in government) and the Vlaams Belang (in opposition) portray migrants. In both cases, parties frame some migrants as 'good' and others as 'bad' based on cultural and economic criteria. This differentiation is enabled by euphemistic, unclear language. Parties' substantive formulation of who fits into the 'good' and 'bad' migrant criteria differs. However, for both parties this differentiated portrayal of migrants reflects the need to walk a tightrope between moderate reputations and radical credentials on the key issue of nativism.

Keywords: migration, populist radical right, nativism, Belgium, Switzerland.

1 Introduction

Most European countries have witnessed a 'surge' of populist radical right parties (PRRPs) in recent decades (Mudde, 2016). While electoral success is by no means on a linear trajectory, there is a general 'upward trend' (Akkerman et al., 2016: 3). Anti-immigration policies have been an important contributor to this success (Shehaj et al., 2021). Particularly on this issue, PRRPs have also been identified as 'contagious' within European party systems and in coalitions (Lutz, 2019; Van Spanje, 2010). Examining PRRPs' nativist ideology and exclusionary narratives is an important part of populism research (see, for example, Betz, 2019; Hogan &

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Haltinner, 2015). We agree with other scholars that the 'central characteristic' of PRRPs is not populism but 'protection' of the nation against perceived enemies (predominantly immigrants and those 'allied' with them) (Newth, 2021; Stavrakakis et al., 2017; Wodak, 2015).

In this article, we first examine how immigrants are portrayed in PRRPs' discourses. We focus on parties' nativist *framing* of migrants' role in society and the relationship to racist and xenophobic *discourse*, building on the developing literature on these issues (Betz, 2019; Newth, 2021). Secondly, we examine why narratives differ within or between parties. Looking within the party, we draw on rich interview data with party representatives and members to show how PRR messages around migrants might differ in different party strata. When comparing parties, we particularly consider their inclusion (or lack thereof) in the national political system. Scholars have examined how the inclusion of some PRRPs into governments has affected policy agendas and shown that there is not a straightforward relationship between inclusion and moderation (Akkerman et al., 2016, Capaul & Ewert, 2021).

We focus on two parties that vary in their level of inclusion: the *Schweizerische Volkspartei* (Swiss People's Party, SVP) and the *Vlaams Belang* (Flemish Interest, VB). Analysing these parties' approaches to migrants, we find that both develop a division between 'good' acceptable migrants and 'bad' excluded migrants. This indicates a more nuanced nativist framing, which is achieved through discursive tools often ascribed to the far and radical right (doublespeak, euphemism). We argue that the VB and SVP adopt this 'good' and 'bad' migrant narrative in part owing to the tension between their governing position or potential and the need to maintain radical ideological roots and supporters.

In the following section, we discuss existing understandings of how PRRPs frame and discuss migrants. We show how existing literature underpins our argument that these frames, discourses and strategic choices consolidate into 'good' and 'bad' migrant narratives. The third section sets forth our case selection and methods. Then we present the cases of the Vlaams Belang (VB, Flemish Interest) and Schweizerische Volkspartei (Swiss People's Party, SVP) and conclude with a comparative discussion.

2 Framing Good versus Bad Migrants

In this section, we look at the literature on PRRPs' framing of nativist ideologies and discourses. We are particularly interested in portrayals of immigrants, so we first identify parties' in- and out-group threat narratives and then highlight how doublespeak and euphemism have been used to moderate threat narratives. Third, we offer a conceptualization of 'good' and 'bad' migrant frames. Finally, we address why PRRPs might approach migrants differently – both within the party and between parties. In terms of the first dynamic, we are interested in party organizational structures and potential differences in communication on the front and backstage (Goffman, 1959).

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2.1 Nativist Construction of In-/Out-group Threats

The populist ideology describes a *vertical* distinction between the pure people (in-group) and the corrupt elite (out-group), whereas nativism emphasizes a *horizontal* level, where immigrants (out-group) are framed as a threat to the members of the native group (in-group) and threaten the homogeneous nation-state (Mudde, 2012). Rooduijn calls this concept a "Manichean form of nationalism, which emphasises the antagonistic relationship between the Good nation and Evil outsiders" (2014: 82).

Narratives about the threat of immigration often fall into two categories that juxtapose the in-group (national citizens) against the out-group (immigrants): (1) interest-based explanations, where immigrants are blamed for economic grievances or (2) identity-based explanations, where immigrants are seen as responsible for cultural challenges (Hameleers & De Vreese, 2020; Hogan & Haltinner, 2015).

PRRPs frame migrants as economic 'free riders' at the expense of the native population. Economic nativism, including welfare chauvinism and protectionism, is the 'most important unifying factor' between Europe's PRRPs in a post-economic crisis world (Otjes et al., 2018: 286). Globalization, intensified trade, and immigration are potential triggers for the perception of immigrants as an economic threat (Ferrari, 2021). This perception of immigrants (particularly after the 'Great Recession') increases PRRP support but has a lower-level effect than cultural nativism (Cavallaro & Zanetti, 2020).

In the case of European PRRPs, cultural threat narratives have increasingly centred on Islam and Islamophobia as part of a strategic 'moderation', moving away from anti-Semitism and relationships with Nazi ideologies (Williams, 2010). Islamophobia is justified by threat narratives around security and terrorism and the cultural argument that Islam is wholly incompatible with European values (Betz, 2019). Muslims are culturally the 'ideal type of other' (Cervi, 2020). Dividing immigrants according to their *specific* cultural background, rather than simply their difference from the dominant culture, has allowed PRRPs to "mobilize on xenophobic and racist public opinions without being stigmatized as racist" (Rydgren, 2005: 427). In the following section, we elaborate on the discourse and discursive tools that accompany nativist ideas and policies.

2.2 PRR Discursive Tools

Scholars have recently argued that purely ideational approaches to nativism can become euphemism, obscuring racism. They emphasize that nativism is a form of *racist* discourse (De Cleen et al., 2018; Newth, 2021), which contrasts with an ideational approach that defines nativism as anti-immigrant attitudes. Newth provides a definition of nativism as "a discursive element of a broader racist ideology which focuses principally on 'otherness' identity and aspects of cultural difference based on the constructed idea of the nation" (2021). PRRPs not only profess anti-migrant nativist *attitudes* but also develop racist discourses about who does or does not belong to the 'native' population.

Scholars of political communication have long identified discursive tools used by PRRPs. The first tool that we highlight is doublespeak, which obscures meaning

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in order to make certain ideas more 'palatable' (Jackson & Feldman, 2014). Doublespeak is

> language which pretends to communicate but really does not. It is language which makes the bad seem good, something negative appear positive, something unpleasant appear attractive, or at least tolerable. (Lutz, 1988 40)

Four key aspects of doublespeak are euphemism, technical jargon, bureaucratese ('overwhelming of the audience with words') and inflated language (Lutz, 1989). Doublespeak is most often intentionally crafted and deliberate (Lutz, 1987a).

The PRR are particularly likely to use euphemism. Euphemism and doublespeak has been identified in numerous case studies of the radical right: in Austria (Wodak, 2019: 204), Belgium (Coffé and Dewulf, 2014), Greece (Lazaridis & Veikou, 2017) and the UK (Bull & Simon-Vandenbergen, 2014). For example, Austrian, Hungarian and Italian populists used the term 'regional disembarkation platforms' instead of 'camps' to describe the detention of refugees in Northern Africa (Wodak, 2019: 204).

The purpose of such linguistic manipulations is clear: language is "an indispensable key in unlocking respectability" (Feldman, 2015: 17). PRRPs have engaged in a discursive shift towards seemingly more acceptable ideological positioning. For example, Rydgren (2005) identified a new PRRP 'master frame' that emphasized 'ethnopluralism' (a less hierarchical form of racial and ethnic discrimination) in order to bypass the stigma of racism. Interestingly, Rydgren also notes that "its non-hierarchical elements were often disregarded by ERP [extreme right] parties in practice", highlighting the kind of discursive differences within parties we analyse in this article. Moffitt (2017) has also documented a similar rhetorical shift towards the seemingly contradictory 'liberal illiberalism'. PRRPs adopting the language of civic nationalism (liberalism, diversity, tolerance) are potentially more electorally successful depending "on their ability to walk a delicate rhetorical balance: one that is explicitly critical of, but nonetheless operates within, the system" (Halikiopoulou et al., 2013: 111). In this article's empirical sections, we consider how this rhetorical balance is found in the creation of 'good' and 'bad' migrants in the narratives of the VB and SVP.

2.3 Conceptualizing the 'Good' and 'Bad' Migrant Narratives

In our introduction, we showed that the PRR, traditionally focused on nativist ideology and rhetoric, has faced an organizational dilemma requiring balancing between the two faces of the party – on the one hand, radical, while, on the other hand, moderating. In this section, we consider how this affects PRRPs framing of nativist policies: highlighting the creation of cultural and economic out groups and how PRRPs use discursive tools such as doublespeak and euphemism around nativist policy.

As the title of this article suggests, we outline the shared rhetorical choice for the SVP and VB: a division between 'good' and 'bad' migrants. Kuisma identified this division in the Finns Party where 'bad immigration' is separated from

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acceptable 'good immigration' through economic nationalism (linked to but distinguishable from cultural nationalism) (2013, p. 95).

The 'good' migrant emerges as a trope across academic disciplines, beyond political science. The 'good' migrant is an expectation and 'ideal type' produced by the labour market (Findlay et al., 2013). A 'good migrant' narrative is sometimes upheld by migrants themselves, altering how migrants identify and portray themselves (Cranston, 2017). While the 'good' migrant tends to be compared against a 'bad' migrant, the 'good migrant' worker may also be seen as superior to the local worker (Green, 2019).

The specific characteristics of the 'good' and 'bad' migrant depend on context, but common characteristics of the 'good' migrant centre on economic worth ('work ethic', for example) and cultural compatibility (based in nativist 'othering'). In the policy discourse around global migration regimes, "good migrants are well-informed, respectful of the law, flexible to market needs, ready to circulate and eager to contribute to the development of their home country" (Geiger & Pécoud, 2010: 17). The division between 'good' and 'bad' migrants confers legitimacy on the former and rejects the latter.

In the context of the presented literature, we expect PRRPs to use various forms of doublespeak to construct images of good and bad migrants while maintaining restrictive migration policies and nativist attitudes. In the next two sections, we outline why narratives and use of rhetoric tools may differ within and between PRRPs.

2.4 Intra-party Factors: The Front- and the Backstage of Communication

In the introduction to this article we identified discussions around PRR 'mainstreaming'. These processes occur in relation to external actors (i.e. 'mainstreaming' within the wider political system), and thus they crucially occur in the 'frontstage' of the PRRP, the public-facing side of the party, not on the 'backstage' with loyal voters, members and active supporters. The front- and backstage have different incentives in terms of 'mainstreaming' and provide different arenas for communication. Party representatives may use these arenas to "formulate two different appeals simultaneously: one targeted at their core electorate, and the other at the general public" (Borbáth & Gessler, 2021: 5).

To distinguish between the front stage and the backstage of political communication, we rely on Goffman's (1959) theoretical framework for research that was later used to analyse PRRP's discourses (Wodak, 2015). The front stage is where the official performance happens and where the audience is present. Backstage is where the performers could step out of character because there is no immediate audience. However, it does not mean that politicians stop performing as they still act as members of their political team – the party, the local section, etc. – and its related practices and community (Goffman, 1959).

Scholars have found that ideological platforms across front- and backstage arenas stay relatively coherent but 'particularly sensitive', and controversial stances such as anti-Semitism emerge predominantly backstage (Feldman, 2015; Mudde, 2000: 167-169). PRRPs discipline members in the 'backstage' to uphold this discursive division, to maintain a more acceptable public reputation (Akkerman et

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al., 2016: 278). Based on Goffman's (1959) distinction, the content of SVP's and VB's newest party programmes – both from 2019 – and selected data from the media and social media are treated as the front stage, where the parties present their carefully crafted frames and narratives to an audience. In contrast, we treat interviews with political representatives and members as backstage communication. However, we note that they are still part of a political performance as the representatives and members retain the ability to decide what information they want to share (Goffman, 1959). We expect that 'ordinary' members in interviews are more likely to engage in 'backstage' types of discourse given their lack of an immediate public platform. Similarly, in interviews representatives (when assured of anonymity) may also see the arena as a more 'backstage' environment. We nonetheless recognize that these actors may straddle the back and front stage.

Research has shown that strategic moderation can be a dangerous proposition for PRR representatives on the backstage. Voters have punished moves towards moderation (Adams et al., 2006). PRR voters have not become more mainstream but maintain strong anti-immigration and anti-European integration stances (Akkerman et al., 2016: 269). Party representatives are incentivized to please and maintain party members and activists, while making sure they stay within the boundaries of the official party programme. Recent scholarship has shown that PRRPs adopt a 'mass party' structure and rely on and seek a large, engaged group of party activists (Heinisch & Mazzoleni, 2016). This mass party structure provides 'boots on the ground' for campaigns, morale and a sense of authenticity (Albertazzi & Van Kessel, 2021).

2.5 Between-Party Differences: The Effect of National Context

Although authors do find similar narratives employed by PRRP's across different countries (Hogan & Haltinner, 2015; Rydgren, 2005), specific domestic factors facilitate negative framing, such as unemployment (Arzheimer, 2009), immigration rates (Kaufmann, 2017) and immigrant characteristics (Shehaj et al., 2021).

Authors also emphasize that PRRPs' positions in national political systems affect their framing of migration. Being an opposition party or a part of the government influences the politicization of migrants (Grande et al., 2019; Mudde, 2012). The 'inclusion-moderation' thesis might suggest that electoral success and inclusion in political systems might trigger processes of moderation and mainstreaming (a term that underlines the relative nature of 'moderation' within a wider political system) (Akkerman et al., 2016). However, studies have shown that moderation does not or only partially occurs (Akkerman & Rooduijn, 2015; Capaul & Ewert, 2021). Mainstreaming does not occur on parties' radical ideological positions but is visible in the tempering of anti-establishment attitudes and extreme right reputations (Akkerman et al., 2016: 276-278). As part of this tempering process, radical right parties may target nativist appeals to different audiences, with more radical claims aimed at more committed party-identifiers (Borbáth & Gessler, 2021).

These studies make clear that party positioning in government or in opposition affects their level of moderation or radicalness, but the relationship is not straightforward. We choose two case studies that vary significantly on their

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governing position to explore the complex relationship between governing position and moderation on the particularly contested issue of migrants and migration.

3 Methodological Approach

Our methodological approach reflects our interest in in-depth case studies that facilitate an analysis of party discourse and framing and our investigation of both intra- and between-party differences. We use interviews of varied party members/representatives from both the SVP and VB to explore the intra-party dimension. These two parties also differ on some of the key dimensions of national context set forth previously, most interestingly in our analysis: the inclusion or lack thereof in national government. In this section we justify the cases we have selected and our data collection and analysis process.

3.1 Case Selection

In the following sections, we will conduct an in-depth analysis of two large and successful PRRPs, the Vlaams Belang (VB), from Belgium, and Swiss People's Party (SVP), from Switzerland. Both countries are not classic nation-states but rather multilingual countries with complex federal systems, cultural and socio-economic cleavages, and identities along sub-national boundaries. In these national contexts, which already contain contested and overlapping linguistic and cultural identities, the portrayal of the migrant 'other' may be particularly important and particularly fraught.

Both parties are electorally successful. While the SVP suffered losses in 2019, it remained Switzerland's largest party.The VB made significant electoral gains to secure the second place in the 2019 regional Flemish and federal Belgian elections. Both countries have had an average net migration rate of around (Belgium) or above (Switzerland) 50,000 people since 2019 (FSO, 2021; StatBel, 2022). In Switzerland, the share of the foreign population is 25.5%, and in Belgium it is 12.7% of the whole population (Eurostat, 2021). These numbers are relatively high in the European context.

However, the parties differ in important ways. The Swiss Peoples' Party (SVP) is well established in all Swiss regions and a member of the Swiss coalition government. In contrast, the VB acts only within Flanders and is restricted by a *cordon sanitaire*, which ostracizes it from the rest of the political system and forces the party into permanent opposition (Heinisch & Mazzoleni, 2016). Governing position may affect whether a party struggles to or has already become *salonfähig*, i.e. socially or politically acceptable. As noted in the previous section, we expect that different positions will affect the way that nativism is framed and migrants are discussed.

Additionally, as noted previously, research suggests that the PRRP's immigration discourses and agenda-setting need to be evaluated within the national political systems they operate (Grande et al., 2019; Zaslove, 2004). Political parties do not adopt frames randomly but carefully select what resonates with their voters. As such, this comparison of the VB and the SVP seeks not to

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generalize about the nature of PRRP framing of migrants but rather to explore the complex interaction between these two parties' framing and discourse of migrants, the context of their layered systems of politics and identity, and domestic inter- and intra-party organizational dynamics.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

To provide insights into the narratives of PRRPs and their members and representatives, we employ a sequential qualitative approach. First, we analysed the VB's and SVP's official positions by analysing their newest party programmes, issued in 2019. We consider these documents as the front stage to examine how migrants are portrayed for the audience. In these party programmes, we identified dominant policy areas and framing, with a focus on nativism and the different types of nativist claims (economic, cultural, symbolic, for example).

This content analysis served as the basis for the analysis of semi-structured interviews with approximately 50 representatives and members from each party between spring 2020 and summer 2021 (the backstage).[1] Interviews were conducted with representatives and members from varied regions of Flanders and Switzerland, chosen for their differing electoral success and party organizational strength. Representatives acted at various levels, from local councils to national parliament, and numerous representatives also held important organizational functions within the party (on party executive and leadership boards).

Those interviews offer rich data that allow us to identify similarities and differences *between* parties and *within* parties. Within parties, we consider how the role of the interview respondent as a representative (local or national), or ordinary member, might affect portrayals of migrants. Interviewees are not a homogeneous group, but it would go beyond the scope of this article to address personal backgrounds that may shape individuals' view on migrant groups.

In addition, we understand the sensitivity of the topic and the danger of potential biases of party members and representatives (Goffman, 1959). We assured interviewees that they would remain anonymous and tried to mitigate this issue directly during the data collection process. We did not ask leading questions and did not provide cues to avoid socially desirable responses, in line with previous qualitative research on PRRP's (Kamenova, 2021). Instead, we analysed spontaneous remarks that indicate how representatives and members think about the topic. Most interviewees referred in one way or another to migrants and nativism without prompting.

Our approach and identification of 'good' and 'bad' migrant narratives allow us to consider both positive and negative statements about migrants. We can consider whether narratives about migrants are identity related, exclusionary or even inclusionary. However, we also recognize that negative discourse may often be obscured by euphemism, as identified by other scholars and set out in Section 2.

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4 Results: Vlaams Belang

The VB has long been selected as a PRR case study owing to outspoken and recognizable leaders (notably Filip Dewinter); its 'pioneering' turn towards Islamophobia in the 1980s, led partly by Dewinter (Kallis, 2018: 42); and its electoral successes. Electoral successes made the VB's articulation of exclusionary Flemish nationalism paired with secessionism influential across Belgian politics (De Cleen, 2016). Coffé and Dewulf (2014) analysed VB rhetoric from 1978 to the 2010s and showed that discourse fluctuated from radical to moderate in this period based on external domestic factors, such as the 2004 judicial ruling against it and the rise of the more moderate secessionist conservative party the Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA).

The VB had a resurgence in electoral support since the 2018 local elections. In the 2019 election it secured the second place, and since then the VB has regularly topped public opinion polls in Belgium. Preceding these successes, there was a shift towards new leadership. The party elected Tom Van Grieken as party leader in 2014 and under Van Grieken Dewinter has been sidelined and at times even disciplined. Dewinter and Van Grieken sit on opposite sides of the party's spectrum: the former embodies the party's radical wing and is celebrated by his supporters as being 'on the streets', while the new leader advocates mainstreaming the parties' message (although not ideology) and excels on social media (Pauwels & Van Haute, 2017). This horizontal division means that not all party members take forward the nuanced doublespeak around migrants, but Van Grieken's strategy has ultimately triumphed in the last eight years. The time is ripe for a (re-)evaluation of the party's framing and discourses on migrants in the Van Grieken era.

Central party documents (party magazines and programme) and national party representatives make a rhetorical division between 'good' and 'bad' migrants, for example including certain ethnic backgrounds and rejecting others. However, party members often apply negative framing uniformly to all migrants. This 'front stage' division between good and bad migrants reflects the party's rhetorical moderation, while the backstage rejection of migrants by local members and some representatives shows that apparent moderation obscures (as is typical of doublespeak) a continued restrictive attitude. I argue that this two-sided approach reflects the new party leadership's interest in overcoming Belgium's strict *cordon sanitaire* while satisfying more radical existing supporters.

4.1 Description of 'Good' and 'Bad' Migrant Narratives in the Vlaams Belang

The VB, as a secessionist party, positions the Flemish nation in contrast to Wallonia in the Belgian system and the 'homogeneous' Flemish people in contrast to migrants. The dominant theme of the VB's 2019 programme, diffused throughout different sections, was nativism. Migrants were portrayed as a threat to Flemish culture, social welfare, economy and education. The 2019 party programme refers to migrants as 'cheap imported labour' and opposes what they term 'social dumping' from other EU nations (particularly Eastern European nations) (p. 22). The VB opposes migrants' use of social services and seeks to limit access (VB Party Programme, 2019: 61). The party also promotes a ten-year halt in migration (VB

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Magazine, February 2019: 9), a stronger incentive for migrant return, and a reduction in family reunion visas and humanitarian visas (VB Party Programme, 2019: 24-34). Meanwhile, in terms of integration the party programme states:

> People of foreign origin who are loyal to Flanders, who observe our laws and are prepared to learn our language, are fully fledged Flemish people for the VB. The VB rejects racism. (p. 30)

As such, in its public face, the party's official documents rebuke the stigma of racism while portraying migrants as threatening (economically and culturally).

The biggest threat narrative for the VB is focused on cultural critiques of Islam. One local councillor argued: "Our people are scared of Islam. When they [Muslims] are present in too big numbers, they want to change society" (VB M37).[2] The party promotes a 'clash of civilizations' narrative, common in PRRPs and long promoted by Dewinter (Betz & Johnson, 2004: 319). A provincial councillor argued: "We don't have any problems with religion, except one religion" (VB R12). This statement is characteristic of doublespeak: one statement is directly contradicted by another. Tolerance is professed but in reality, immediately retracted. Another local councillor stated: "I don't have anything against foreigners, but I do have something against foreigners when they misuse the system for their own benefit" (VB R28). These statements show the kind of doublespeak employed by representatives. Nuance is *professed* and then caveated.

Euphemism is often used to refer to migrants such as 'illegals' and 'youths' (particularly in the context of protests and riots). Respondents often used the term '*allochtoon*' – meaning immigrants and those with at least one immigrant parent – which has been under scrutiny in the Netherlands for its subtle negative connotations. Prominent young representative Dries van Langenhove, who leads a youth group called *Schild en Vrienden*, has been documented as promoting identitarian narratives around the 'great replacement' of white populations (Davey and Ebner, 2019: 16). The Great Replacement discourse is often called euphemistic since it ultimately obscures its calls for violence or expulsion against migrants (Davey and Ebner, 2019: 9). Another party representative lamented the 'discoloration' of Flanders by "a lot of illegal people and a lot of welfare recipients who are putting pressure on society. So, the feeling of safety has reduced" (VB R21). Euphemistic terms for migrants and migration are thus used by these party representatives particularly to allude to threat narratives.

Alluding to economic threats, Van Grieken argued that "our social security system is being exploited by people who have never contributed to it" (VB Magazine, April 2019: 3). Some representatives sought to frame social welfare narratives more positively. For example, a VB MP noted: "We want them to work, we want them to contribute to society, so we are happy that they are putting in an effort" (VB R24). One MP explained that people misunderstood the party, arguing that nationalists love their people 'like a mother loves its baby' and that they would fight 'like a lion' to protect those people (VB R25). A similar narrative is expressed by the party's social welfare campaign slogan: 'a Heart for Our People'. National party elites' attempt to frame welfare chauvinism reflects the doublespeak

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technique of stating something negative positively, using narratives of love to underpin exclusion of migrants.

The party sometimes supports incorporation of 'good' migrants. One MP explained,

> The VB gets the label that we're racists…we are of course anti-Islam, that's obvious, but we have lots of Europeans, people who aren't Flemish, who also vote for us.

The MP planned to create a VB local group bringing together supporters from European and Asian countries. These people were framed as 'good': "people who are adjusted, who speak Dutch, who have respect for our culture" (VB R16). One party staffer argued the party should "attract them [migrants] to the party so outsiders can say, oh the Vlaams Belang aren't racists after all. Now we get the stigma because we're all white" (VB M46).

Another MP explicitly differentiated the integration of 'bad' Muslim and 'good' non-Muslim (predominantly European) migrants:

> Why was it so easy to integrate Portuguese and Italian people in Limburg? Because there is a common descent and European ideas … those Muslims have a completely different starting point.

Among representatives who seek to identify certain 'good' migrants, cultural compatibility stays dominant: Muslim migrants are the archetypal 'bad' migrant.

Representatives' public 'front stage' statements around 'good' migrants do not fully penetrate the backstage of party discourse. Party members locally note that migrants can *never* fully be part of Flemish society. For example, a local councillor explained: "[migrants] can be here to a point but they can't come be the boss here" (VB M46). Another member argued, "Even if foreigners integrate themselves well, you can never make them 100% Flemish" (VB M44). Ultimately, migrant political participation is a grievance. The VB critiques other Flemish parties for relying on immigrant voters and 'the ethnic vote' (VB Magazine, February 2019: 20). The negative portrayal of the migrant voters is particularly strong from representatives in Antwerp, which used to be the party's 'heartland'. One MP from Antwerp explained:

> In the cities, [Vlaams Belang voters] are gone for the most part, replaced by migrants. And those who are left have a sense of getting used to it. So, the cities, their role has, certainly in our party, changed. (VB R15)

This tension between inclusiveness as professed and exclusion as practised also occurs in respondents' professional lives. For example, one business owner discussed hiring a new employee and noted,

> I can't find Flemish people who want to work … I'm looking for new people to work and the only people who can work are foreigners. As a Vlaams Belang

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> member, it's difficult to put someone with a foreign origin in your business. (VB M55)

Like this respondent, locally active representatives and members engage in a more explicit negative framing of all migrants. For example:

- "We are against the foreigners and want an end to migration" (VB R28, local councillor).
- "That town is literally flooded with 300 asylum seekers … It gives you an uncomfortable feeling" (VB R17, local staffer).
- "Mass migration [is very important right now] – that the tap is turned off, that we first put our own land in order before we import problems from other countries in war zones" (VB M52, local branch convenor).

This suggests that those with less of a public-facing, 'frontstage' role are also less likely to present a differentiated or nuanced view of migrants while national representatives suggest the possibility for 'good' migrants: those that might be 'super nice people' or 'people who are adjusted'. Some even considered incorporating 'good' migrants into the party. However, whether in the front or backstage, respondents quickly turn around to emphasize the limitations to such inclusion. In this sense, the party engages in doublespeak: "language which is at variance with its real and its purported meaning" (Lutz, 1989: 4).

4.2 Why the VB Uses 'Good' and 'Bad' Migrant Narratives

The tension between the ostensible inclusion of 'good' migrants and condemnations of the 'bad migrant' reflect how the VBs 'play moderateness' (Maly, 2019). This moderateness has been particularly promoted by new leader Van Grieken. Van Grieken is associated with a more professionalized and 'polite' image and discursive style: "things are worded more nicely and brought forward more correctly, and it's better communicated" (VB R12). Representatives' doublespeak in their discourse around migrants can be seen as an example of taking forward Van Grieken's new communications strategy, aimed at overcoming racist stigma and the *cordon sanitaire*, while maintaining radical credentials with party members.

Stigmatization is both a personal and political problem for party members. One local councillor explained that the negative side of party membership was "the stigma of fascist, racist, every negative word possible" (VB M50). An MP explained: "You still have people who are scared off by [the stigma], by being associated with the Vlaams Belang" (VB R13). According to one MP, the party found that Dewinter's "hard approach doesn't work with the people anymore" (VB R24). Institutionally, the party's reputation for racism led to the *cordon sanitaire*.

Pauwels (2011) has suggested, using survey data, that the permanent state of opposition created by the *cordon* was crucial to the VB's loss of electoral support in the mid-2000s. However, Abts' (2015) interviews with VB supporters suggest that for the VB expressing radical views on migrants and migration and the resulting stigmatization has organizational value by creating a sense of social exclusion and bonds party members. As one MP said, "One of the benefits [of the *cordon]* is that people who engage with us do it much louder and with more conviction than for

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another party" (VB R27). One new member explained that the *cordon* drew them to the party:

> the Vlaams Belang is pushed out of everywhere and I think the party actually deserves support … So if I'm like minded, I'm the person who needs to support that. (VB M37)

As such, party elites must balance the incentives of overcoming the *cordon*, with the benefits of a more radical image for gaining and maintaining party members. This balance is reflected in the double-sided discourse around migrants.

The previous section identified that national representatives tended to be more nuanced than local members. Horizontally within the party there are also two distinct groups in terms of communication style: one more moderate (close to Van Grieken), another more radical (closer to Dewinter). It is important to note that Van Grieken's style particularly encourages doublespeak: he projects a moderate rhetorical face publicly but privately remains ideologically radical. A representative with a prominent role in the party organizationally explained: "People think [van Grieken] is more moderate than he is…but the programme literally did not change. How the programme was being communicated was the problem" (VB R25).

The change in communication style is particularly aimed at the party's approach to race and its approach to people of colour and migrants. One representative explained this new communication style thus:

> In the past, it was more crudely stated, like with Filip Dewinter…the current party leaders, Tom van Grieken, Chris Janssens, and Barbara Pas, say things more reasonably and that convinces the normal 'middle class' person. It's more acceptable. In the past, we got the label of extremist racist party because of extreme statements. (VB R12)

Another local representative noted:

> the new party leaders present [themselves] in a way that is more moderate… you can present a problem crudely to people and you can present a problem thoughtfully to people. (VB R32)

A local party member noted, "I think it's a shame that we are stigmatized as racists and maybe you noticed that it's more nuanced that that" (VB M37).

The new leaders' focus on a softer communication style is exemplified by (but not limited to) the division between 'good' and 'bad migrants'. Importantly, prominent party representatives emphasize that this new style does not alter members and representatives' underlying beliefs or policy – showing the dual performance of politeness and radicalism. The use of doublespeak enables the VB to strike a balance between its existing PRR ideological views backstage, among loyal members, and 'playing' moderation front stage to potential members and coalition partners.

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5 Results: Swiss People's Party

The SVP was founded in 1971 as a merger of two conservative agrarian parties: the Swiss Farmers', Trade and Citizens' Party (Schweizerische Bauern-, Gewerbe- und Bürgerpartei, BGB) and the Democratic Parties of the Cantons of Glarus and Grisons. The party soon positioned itself as a national-conservative force with the arrival of a new party leadership mainly originating from the party's Zurich branch and a subsequent ideological transformation of the previously dominant party branches, such as Bern. By the 1990s, the party developed a new 'winning formula' (Mazzoleni & Skenderovic, 2007), which combined a focus on nationalism and euphemistically called 'traditional values' with market-friendly policies. In pure populist fashion, the party openly opposed and criticized the '*classe politique*' (political establishment) (SVP, 2019) allegedly composed of all other parties in Switzerland. Adding nativism to a newly adopted populist agenda, starting in the 1990s, the SVP increasingly focused its rhetoric on issues having to do with migration, asylum seeking and European integration. As such, the SVP drastically developed a profile of good and bad migrants and became the largest party in the national parliament.

In the following section we, first, compare the framing and narratives surrounding different migrant groups in the party programme (the front stage) and among SVP members and representatives (the backstage). Secondly, we analyse why the SVP develops specific narratives of in- and out-group threat and how these frames are constructed.

5.1 Description of 'Good' and 'Bad' Migrants

The SVP claims in its party programme (2019) that "Switzerland is home to everyone who believes in Swiss values and lives by them". Good migrants show efforts to integrate, which includes a willingness to learn the language, having no criminal record, abiding by the legal system and familiarizing themselves with national customs and traditions. In addition, the party emphasizes in its programme that it welcomes the recruitment of specialists in their field of work to ensure competitiveness of the Swiss economy (SVP, 2019: 38) and – true to its humanitarian tradition – that Switzerland offers refuge to people who have been genuinely persecuted (SVP, 2019: 51).

Yet the party presents itself to its supporters (Goffman, 1959) as also being critical of certain groups of migrants, which are portrayed as a potential threat to the Swiss identity, economy, social welfare and national values (SVP, 2019: 7). The SVP highlights two nativist dimensions in which certain migrants or their migration practices are portrayed as 'bad' or a threat. First, regarding economic nativism, the SVP criticizes the influx of economic migrants that are falsely portrayed as refugees in the media and by other parties (SVP, 2019: 46) and the mass immigration of EU migrants that enter the country as part of the free movement principle (SVP, 2019: 38-40). These migrants are being framed as a threat to the domestic job and housing market. In addition, this economic nativist stance is often paired with welfare chauvinism. This facet of nativism refers to the perception of mostly low-skilled migrants who pay lower taxes and receive large

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social benefits (SVP, 2019: 49). Based on the party's views, some scholars argue that SVP identifies more with a nationalist and less with a nativist ideology, because the party does not treat every non-national as a threat to the nation-state (Mudde, 2007).

Secondly, regarding symbolic nativism, Switzerland is portrayed as a country built on a Christian-Western foundation, with a high quality of life, regional traditions and its own history and values (SVP, 2019: 38). In recent years, the SVP's focus was predominately on Muslims and the radical Islam, which are described as creating cultural issues. The SVP warns that tolerance and openness should not prevent the Swiss from taking a precise and critical look at Islam because developing parallel societies shall not be tolerated (SVP, 2019: 121-122). The party's framing of Muslims as a cultural out-group was further illustrated by campaigns for the ban on minarets in 2009, against facilitated naturalization in 2017, and for a ban on concealment in 2020. In this context, the SVP's front stage performance (Wodak, 2015) conveys both the impression of a euphemistic care about the Swiss economy and Swiss identity without being moderate in its demands (Capaul & Ewert, 2021).

When analysing the interviews and comparing statements made by representatives in the backstage context (Wodak, 2015), we noticed a similarity regarding the framing of good and bad migrants. In line with the party programme, the out-group and in-groups are clearly defined. Many interviewees had a strong idea of what they deem being inappropriate behaviour of migrants or migrant groups. Immigration was often described by representatives and ordinary members as a threat to the national welfare system (SVP R5, SVP M60), national traditions and values (SVP R13, SVP M44), the job market and the economy (SVP R33, SVP M57) and security (SVP M41, SVP M46).

In contrast to official party documents, few interviewees offered clear examples of whom they see as good migrants and why. One member mentioned that she has a good friend who originally comes from Kosovo (SVP M38) and who is very nice, while another said that some of the foreigners work well in her company (SVP M55). Yet most interviewees would euphemistically state that they are not against foreigners if they behave, thereby keeping their view rather general.

In short, good migrants are the ones that adjust and integrate, whereas bad migrants are the ones that exploit the welfare system, show criminal behaviour and are unwilling to adapt to Swiss values (R24, M44, M55). These statements demonstrate different facets of nativism, including economic nativism, welfare chauvinism and symbolic nativism (Betz, 2019). Interestingly, only a few party members, and none of the representatives, explicitly mentioned the importance of Christian values (SVP M60) or the potential incompatibility of specific ethnic or religious groups with Swiss traditions and values (SVP M41, SVP M52). Most interviewees referred to a general notion of foreigners and economic migrants that they deemed good or bad (SVP R33, SVP M46).

Nevertheless, some ordinary members seemed very outspoken about their concerns on 'bad migrants'. They referred to personal experiences and used slurs when explaining how they perceive certain groups of immigrants and why they see their behaviour as bad. Some examples include calling them 'foreign rascals' (SVP M54) and criticizing perceived lazy immigrants who benefit from social welfare as

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'trash' (SVP M43), while another member voiced their disdain for the 'pigs' who leave their garbage on the ground and don't appreciate the [Swiss] culture (SVP M55). Party representatives, in contrast, were more measured and careful in their answers (Goffman, 1959). Being loyal to the party's official view, they usually reiterated the nativist tropes as stated in the party programme and euphemistically referred to constituents as beneficiaries of immigration control (SVP R13, SVP R27).

Some members and representatives also referred to more general issues of centrally issued communication in political campaigns. They criticized the polarizing style and the inflated language used by the party when it addresses cultural conflicts. However, some members align themselves with this provocative rhetoric and even see it as an advantage for the party's support and legitimacy, demonstrating that the SVP – unlike other parties and the government – is the only party that stands up for Swiss independence and defends the country's citizens. As one member from Zurich put it:

> We stand up and fight for things. We are not conformists. We always say no, everyone knows that (laughs). It works. There is a reason why we are the biggest party. (SVP M43)

In contrast, other members and representatives criticized the party's way of communication as too radical, too polarizing and not conducive to increasing the support or membership numbers (SVP R32, SVP R39). As one member talking about national campaigns pointed out,

> I was talking once to former National Councillor Christoph Mörgeli and told him that I don't like the aggressive tone in the party. I rather try to find a consensus to make sure everyone is on board. And I told Mörgeli: "If my kids see this campaign poster, they would shake their heads. And you want people to wake up but if they only shake their heads, then you won't achieve anything. You need to convince people with arguments. Polarising posters are not good". (SVP M57)

Irrespective of their own view on the party's rhetoric, one aspect that repeatedly occurred among interviewees was a feeling of stigmatization – often in connection with their party membership and the SVP's policies on immigration. They felt that criticizing immigrants leads to a stigmatization, labelling them extremist or racist (Akkerman, 2011; Rydgren, 2005). To avoid stigmatization, many members emphasized that they, or the party, are neither extremist nor racists. As one ordinary member pointed out, "I would not say I am against foreigners, I like different cultures. And often people say the SVP is racist" (SVP M57).

5.2 Why the SVP Uses 'Good' and 'Bad' Migrant Narratives

Among its members, the SVP's nativist rhetoric falls on fertile ground and provides the SVP with a unique selling point as the sole defender of Swiss values. Put differently, the SVP aims to please and protect its working-class voters by

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emphasizing strict immigration control while simultaneously advocating for migrant employment, catering to its electorate of small business owners. Moreover, the relentless focus on key topics such as mass immigration, anti-EU integration and Swiss institutions helps the party to shape a collective identity rooted in a common ideology (Favero, 2021) constructed around the defence of freedom and security in Switzerland (SVP, 2019). Many Swiss see themselves and the country's political institutions as a *Sonderfall* (special case) and react sensitively to the perception of threats to national interests, freedom and fundamental Swiss institutions. However, owing to the federal nature of the country, cantonal branches retain some of their organizational and programmatic autonomy, which leads to discussions about political priorities between cantonal branches. In other words, while in rural Bern, agricultural policies may be more important, in urban Zurich, the party branch works more with issues about foreigners (SVP R05):

> Of course, the SVP Zurich is positioned further to the right….they work more with issues about foreigners. In Bern, farmers play a bigger role in the cantonal parties than in Zurich.

Besides using specific frames to denote the good and bad migrants, the SVP uses the Swiss direct democratic instruments such as referendums and initiatives to oppose the federal government's immigration policies and to position itself as the sole defender of Swiss values against the political establishment, consisting of the same parties with which it shares power in the Federal Council. Hence, the SVP "presents itself as a party of government and a party in opposition at the same time" (Zaslove, 2012). This polarizing rhetoric and institutional political pressure from the PRR eventually forced the national government to adopt immigration policies that are "driven by economic and labour-market demands and concerned with immigration regulation rather than the integration of immigrants" (Skenderovic, 2007).

As shown in this section, the SVP uses specific narratives and direct democratic tools to distinguish between good and bad migrants depending on their economic value as labour, willingness to integrate and perceived potential threat. By problematizing certain groups of migrants, the party effectively utilizes cultural and economic conflict dimensions to create an in-group (Swiss citizens, migrants who are integrated and needed on the job market) and an out-group (EU migrants, Muslims), while also highlighting their position as the only party that cares about issues connected to immigration.

6 Comparative Discussion

In both cases, we identify that parties create narratives of 'good' and 'bad' migrants based on cultural (language, religion) and economic factors (employment, wealth). Parties uphold this division through euphemism and doublespeak. Such differentiated, obscured portrayals of migrants allow parties to walk the tightrope between radical supporters and systemic incentives for party moderation. In this

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section we briefly compare the parties' approaches to migrants ideologically and discursively, organizationally and within their domestic political systems.

6.1 Discourse Around and Framing of Migrants

Unlike their more monocultural neighbours, Switzerland and Belgium are not unitary nation-states. Switzerland is a *Willensnation*, and being Swiss means having strong allegiances to Switzerland's political institutions, traditions and civic practices (Theiler, 2004). Flemish nationalism (including but beyond VB) emerged from a linguistic and cultural movement promoting the Flemish language (vis-à-vis the Belgian state), and a nostalgic view of Flanders' history feeds the VB's rhetoric (Mols & Jetten, 2014). For both parties, the maintenance of tradition in a multinational state is paramount. For PRRPs, immigration and 'Islamization' are threatening the nation's core values, heritage and political institutions.

Nativist attitudes and xenophobic discourses are central to both parties' programmes (the front stage), which – in case of the SVP – contradicts the inclusion-moderation thesis. Both parties' respondents spontaneously (unprompted) brought up discussions of migration and/or nativism, with members often referring to it as a motivating force for joining the party.

However, members' and elites' approaches to the issue differed. In both the SVP and the VB, xenophobic discourse is nuanced to accept some inclusion of 'good' migrants particularly in official party documents and interviews with party representatives. Ordinary, local members tended to speak more bluntly. This aligns with our understanding of the 'front stage' and 'backstage' arenas, with representatives more likely to engage in public-facing roles.

Ordinary members often justified their views with specific personal experiences and grievances, for example, one VB respondent's difficulty with hiring 'non-Flemish' employees (VB M55) or a sense that everything became multicultural (SVP M54). Representatives and staffers, on the other hand, were more likely to use doublespeak to avoid making harsh or controversial remarks (Lutz, 1989: 18). Representatives identified certain criteria that ostensibly made migrants acceptable, particularly tied into welfare chauvinist framing of the 'deserving' migrant (Van Oorschot, 2006). For example, migrants "cause problems and receive too much welfare benefits" (SVP R5) or the "system is being exploited by people who have never contributed to it" (VB Magazine, April 2019: 3). In both parties, euphemisms and a variety of terms were often used to refer to migrants, tying into the tools of doublespeak.

However, the VB uses a more cultural/symbolic nativist framing, particularly Islamophobic narratives, than the SVP. As such, the targeting of the 'bad migrant' differs substantively between the parties. The VB's 2019 electoral programme included entire sections on 'Islamization' and 'Islamic terror' and argued that Muslim countries should be excluded from the European Union. In the SVP, on the other hand, very few interviewees referred to religion-based incompatibility of migrants and rather focused on a collectivized notion of foreigners, EU migrants or fake economic refugees.

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6.2 Intra-party Dynamics

The use of doublespeak and euphemism shows that both parties' representatives had a self-awareness around accusations of racism and xenophobia that affected communication strategies. Many interviewees in both parties emphasized their opposition to racism and focus on combatting racist stigma. This claim had organizational ramifications, for example disciplinary procedures against members who are too extreme or party staffers monitoring local branch magazines "to make sure there's no racist messages in it" (VB R30, SVP R24). Both parties were engaged in ongoing internal debates about the extent to which rhetoric was too moderate or too radical.

Radical rhetoric against out groups was seen as a potential electoral problem by SVP and VB members and representatives, but the dynamics of this internal discussion differ across the parties. In the SVP, critical remarks related to extreme programmatic proposals and targeted the tone of national campaigns organized by the centralized party leadership (SVP R05, SVP R27). Members' critiques show that front stage radical rhetoric at the national level may gain attention and electoral support but that at the backstage the "aggressive style is sometimes seen as too provocative and disturbing by the grassroots" (Favero, 2021). In the VB, this dynamic was reversed. If anything, members made more sweeping and extreme statements (e.g. noting general discomfort at migrants – not caveated by 'good' or 'bad identifications). Furthermore, the VB has a horizontal split: between a more radical wing – characterized by Dewinter – and a more outwardly moderate communication style – led by Van Grieken.

Despite this added dimension of internal conflict, the VB's centralized structure ensures a relatively uniform message across the country that follows the Van Grieken line of outward moderation, often employing euphemistic language. None of the more than 50 VB interviewees explicitly opposed Van Grieken's messaging, not even those who allied themselves more concretely within the 'radical' camp. On the other hand, in the decentralized Swiss political system, it is difficult to achieve coherence across regionally organized party branches. This was exemplified by party members who criticized the SVP's constant focus on migration and advocated for more engagement in other areas such as infrastructure or agriculture.

6.3 Political System Effects

Party representatives expressed a willingness to stay in or enter government, in line with the parties' 'office-seeking' behaviour. However, inclusion in public office or promise thereof has a complex effect on parties' behaviour and evidence. Our findings further confirm that inclusion does not always lead to moderation (as might be expected) (Akkerman et al., 2016). In fact, similar narratives of 'good' and 'bad' migrants emerged in a party in almost permanent opposition (VB) and one in government (SVP). Both parties used doublespeak to develop a more nuanced portrayal of migrants, while maintaining an emphasis on nativism programmatically.

While for the SVP inclusion has not led to moderation, we do find that the state of permanent opposition caused by the *cordon sanitaire* was a key factor in VB's electoral strategy. As one respondent said bluntly, "The cordon sanitaire must end. That's the main task" (VB M42). Another noted,

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Tom [van Grieken] wants to break through the cordon sanitaire in a number of municipalities not only to break that cordon but to show that we can also be a governing party. (VB R9)

However, the *cordon* is also often seen to bind members together "in the same boat" (VB R27). The party must thus balance more moderate, tolerant language to overcome the *cordon* and foster a close group of members through radical language. The promise of inclusion incentivizes outward-facing moderation but not a fundamental programmatic shift.

Unlike the VB, the SVP *acts* from a position as partner in a coalition government, and its party programme is riddled with inflated language (Lutz, 1987b). This populist front stage rhetoric allows the SVP to challenge the very political elite of which it is part. Radical statements, the launch of controversial initiatives on migration, emphasizing Swiss values, and its opposition to government actions allow them to *stay* in power, as the constantly high voter share since the mid-1990s demonstrates – quite the opposite to the dynamics of the VB. Owing to low voter volatility and efficient use of direct democratic instruments, the party is able to play a dual role of being both in government and in opposition without moderation (Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013, Capaul & Ewert, 2021). Despite possible tensions with regional branches, the national party's radical immigration agenda and anti-EU rhetoric were important reasons for its electoral appeal (Skenderovic, 2007).

Our article shows that parties' fundamental nativist platforms and restrictive attitudes towards migration and migrants do not necessarily respond to the incentives and demands of being in government. Rather, parties' participation or interest in entering government encourages them to maintain a more 'acceptable' approach to migrants in the front stage while doubling down on radical identities in backstage venues. This leads parties towards a two-sided doublespeak – such as identifying 'good' and 'bad' migrants – on their 'flagship' nativist policies. This doublespeak may be challenged internally – for example, by the SVP's members or the more radical flank of the VB. These challenges precisely show the tightrope parties walk.

7 Conclusion

In this article, we have looked closely at how PRRPs frame migrants and articulate nativist stances. Our study reveals a common thread between the SVP and VB: the division of migrants into more acceptable 'good migrants' and excluded 'bad migrants'. These 'good' and 'bad' migrant narratives draw on economic and cultural nativist frames, identified by Betz (2019). 'Good' and 'bad' migrants are also differentiated using common radical right discursive tools such as doublespeak and euphemism, identified by Jackson and Feldman (2014). We have drawn on significant data of our own, including 100 interviews with party members and representatives, and have identified numerous examples of doublespeak. Interviews

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have also given us an 'insider' look at the organizational strategies and dilemmas informing parties' approach to nativism and migrants.

Typically, these parties are characterized as either moderate or radical or hovering between these two approaches. In fact, we argue that the parties and their representatives regularly make both moderate and radical statements, often simultaneously and in ways that obscure their true meaning. Variation between radical and moderate portrayals of migrants may occur between different individuals in the party but also within statements made by one individual. In this way, members and representatives of PRRPs employ doublespeak as a part of wider debates and strategic choices around moderation and mainstreaming.

Our approach could be well applied to a wider range of PRRPs. It would be fruitful to identify whether narratives of 'good' and 'bad' migrants are common across Europe and to consider whether these are contagious, either domestically or across Europe. Further research could also examine in more granular detail the specific communicative tools related to doublespeak, to unpack the veiled language used to discuss migrants. Given our identification of the differences between ordinary members and party representatives, it would also be useful to go further into the 'localist' turn indicated by Chou et al. (2022), for example by considering how different local economic contexts affect the criteria assigned to 'good' and 'bad' migrants.

Understanding PRRPs' portrayals of migrants is relevant for our understanding of PRRPs' key nativist stance, but it also emphasizes the effects of PRR rhetoric on popular perceptions of migrants. This is particularly important given that the political focus on anti-immigration issues increases negative attitudes towards immigrants (Ferrari, 2021; Rydgren, 2008). PRR discourse has power in its own right, and far right "politics and political shifts [towards the mainstream] have violent and real effects for those at the sharp end of these discourses" (Brown et al., 2021: 8). We thus seek to make explicit the implicit: identifying the doublespeak and euphemism employed to develop portrayals of migrants and nativist attitudes employed by the PRR.

Notes

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2 We denote interviews as follows: VB = Vlaams Belang, SVP = Swiss People's Party, R = Representative, M = Member, followed by the number of each interviewee, which refers to a system of interview anonymisation.

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