

Did Geert Wilders win by losing?



Geert Wilders at Protest Rally, January 23, 2017

Geert Wilders of the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) lost in the March 15, 2017 elections to Mark Rutte of the conservative Freedom and Democracy VVD, who will be asked by King Willem to form a new ruling coalition government.

Rutte's VVD won 32 seats, while Wilders' PVV won 22 seats in the 150 seat lower house of the Hague parliament, the tweeder kamer.

While the PVV won second position in the general election results there is a razor thin margin over third place Christian Democrats (CD) which might change in the final vote tally. Wilders did win the port city of Rotterdam despite its Muslim mayor. Moreover the Dutch Labor Party (PDVA) took a shellacking.

Wilders touts that he won more votes than in 2012, while Rutte's VVD lost 9 seats; 32 versus 41.

Wilders indicated he might join a coalition government headed

by Rutte if asked. Rutte was fairly adamant during the campaign that he and other center parties would not invite Wilders and PVV. Wilders loss today ensures that a Rutte led government would remain in the EU. Wilders had proposed a NExit from the EU.

Rutte's victory reflected his move to some of the nationalist and anti Muslim immigration positions of Wilders. That figured in his ousting one Turkish cabinet minister and denying the Foreign minister from holding rallies in the Netherlands seeking Dutch Turkish votes in a national referendum that would confer executive powers on Turkish autocrat President Erdogan. Erdogan had accused Rutte of acting like "Nazi remnants" that the latter strenuously condemned.

Some analysts we had posted on thought that Wilders losing the Dutch Premiership may still have won reflected in the shift by Rutte and other parties to some of Wilders' more nationalist and Dutch values views. Further, Wilders might have some leverage as Rutte is unlikely to enlist the vanquished Labor Party in order to reach the required 76 seats plurality to form a ruling coalition. Some consider this a Pyrrhic victory, at best.

Hence the formation of the new government under Rutte's third term as PM could take a while.

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