



Belgium's Political Economy

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I. Introduction

From Brussels to Antwerp, and from Medieval Europe to the modern Internet Age, Belgium has endured two world wars, the Bubonic Plague, the Cold War, and many brushes with existential annihilation from regional conflicts. Hitler's Nazi war machine invaded Belgium in May 1940 and occupied the country for over four years, killing approximately 88,000 Belgians (over 1% of its entire national population), and decimating the Belgian economy (Frumkin 1952). Yet, as it has for over 1,000 years, Belgium survived and rose from the ashes to share its many cultural and philosophical treasures with us today in the 21st Century.

In the postwar era, the European Union and NATO have established their headquarters in Belgium's capital City of Brussels. This has catapulted Belgium to international prominence, transforming it into an important global platform for peaceful institutional negotiations between heads of state, diplomats, business leaders, and senior political officials from around the world. Belgium's post-1970 domestic political system, cosmopolitan culture, and consensus-based democracy have created the ideal environment for Belgium politicians and bureaucrats to develop the diplomatic skills that are necessary to support the international diplomacy that occurs within their country's borders every day.

Despite some political system growing pains after its relatively recent political reforms, "Belgium is among the top-25 most competitive nations," according to the Institute for Management Development (IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2016 Results) and is "ranked 17th in per-capita income" according to the World Economic Forum (Global Competitiveness Report 2016–2017). Economically and politically, it is difficult to imagine our world today without Belgium—a tiny country that makes a big impact in our world.

This paper explores the political system structures and events that have shaped Belgium's unique form of consensus-based democracy, in addition to a brief overview of some of Belgium's most significant economic and cultural contributions to our planet since the end of World War II.

II. History of Belgian Politics

The journey from a unitary to a decentralized model of democracy has presented Belgium society with many challenges and problems. Initially, the Belgium Government was born as a two-party political system in the

19th Century, but the linguistic and cultural divisions within Belgium society created too many tensions to sustain a unitary system with only two parties. Thus, the unitary system began to dissolve in approximately 1970, which marked the beginning of a nascent federalist state and an era of cultural and ideological polarization and fragmentation in Belgium politics that continues to this day.

In 1949, Belgium had only four parties, but by 1981, that number increased to fourteen (De Winter, et al. 2006). In fact, after the dissolution of the unitary system, the introduction of the new decentralized system of government and the widening linguistic and ethnic tensions between the Dutch-speaking Flemish, French-speaking Francophones, and German-speaking Germanophones paved the way for the rise of a large number of political parties. Between the 1960s and 1970s, the number of parties represented in the Belgian Parliament rose to a staggering number, creating more chaos than the system could reasonably tolerate (Beaufays 1988).

However, the electoral reforms of 2003 ushered in a new, simplified political system, which decreased the number of parties. As of late 2017, Belgium has thirteen political parties represented in the Belgium Parliament and about a dozen minor parties, which are not currently represented (Belgium Elections 2014). Interestingly, Belgium is the only country in Europe without national political parties, which is due to the coalescence of the parties around its regional linguistic groups. As a result of the long and winding evolution of its political system, Belgium has become a consensus-based democracy because it is the most effective way to integrate a wide diversity of interest groups and political parties within a civil society.

Today, the Belgium federal state systematically divides Belgium's major constituencies along regional and linguistic boundaries, primarily represented by two culturally distinct party systems: Flemish and Francophone (Swenden, et al. 2006). In Flemish-speaking regions, only Flemish parties compete for votes; in French-speaking regions, only French parties compete for votes (De Winter, et al. 2006). The German-speaking areas are much smaller and less influential, but they are sometimes large enough to influence electoral outcomes and they contribute to the overall fragmentation of the political system. In this context, Flemish-, French-, and German-speaking parties work almost exclusively to serve the interests of their own respective linguistic groups and regions. The Brussels-Capital region is the only part of the country where political parties from both ethnolinguistic groups are willing and able to vie for votes (De Winter 2006).

In Belgium, Flemish parties are generally positioned on the right of the political spectrum, Francophone parties are generally on the left, with the preponderance of Germans generally taking left-leaning positions, although a substantial number Germans still identify with the centrist Christian Social Party. Despite the ideological leanings of the parties, they all converge toward the center-left on economic matters.

However, the parties diverge significantly when it comes to the *socio-cultural left-right divide* (Swenden, et al. 2006). A prime example of this left-right divergence can be observed on the issue of homosexuals adopting children. This issue has sparked increasing controversy and polarization among virtually all the political parties across the ideological spectrum in Belgium (De Winter, et al.2006).

III. Social & Linguistic Divisions

After Belgium adopted a consensus-based federalist system of democracy, there was less pressure to homogenize the disparate cultures within Belgium, which, ironically, led to more pronounced social and political divisions between the three dominant linguistic groups (Beaufays 1988). In fact, the establishment of the relatively new decentralized system in Belgian created a plethora of linguistic and social problems. Today, each linguistic group competes for the attention and votes of their respective groups and generally disregards the interests of the other groups. This dynamic is often regarded as the “pillarization” of Belgium society.

The core of Belgium's modern political system was formed by two often contradictory reforms, which were instituted by the Belgian Government in the 1970s and 1980s. This is the period when the country's political system was *officially* divided along the Flemish and French languages. And subsequent reforms further exacerbated the precarious political situation. For example, the social and ethnic discord between the ethnic groups substantially intensified when the country was *officially* divided into three distinct regions: Flemish, Walloon, and Brussels-Capital (Beaufays 1988). Of course, these *official* divisions merely institutionalized long-standing linguistic and ethnic divisions that had already existed for generations.

The Flemish community is comprised of all areas in the predominantly Flemish northwestern region, which also includes Flemings from Brussels. The French community is predominantly comprised of French-speaking Belgians, which are concentrated in the southeastern region. The Brussels-Capital region—home to

Belgium's capital City of Brussels—is located in the geographical center of the country. Given its role as the headquarters for the European Union (EU), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and numerous other international organizations, the Brussels-Capital region is more cosmopolitan than the other regions. As a result, the Brussels-Capital regional authorities recognize Dutch *and* French as official languages.

IV. Electoral System

Belgium has adopted the Proportional Representation electoral system; thus, proportional representation in the parliament is based on the percentage of votes that each political party secures during each election (Frankland 2009). The Belgium House of Representatives (lower chamber) is comprised of 150 seats and the members of parliament (MPs) are elected for four-year terms. It is interesting to note that it is culturally acceptable *and even expected* for Belgium MPs to exclusively serve the interests of their constituent linguistic groups, which is a practice that would likely seem prejudicial and racist in many other countries.

The Belgium Government requires all adult Belgium citizens over the age of 18 to vote in national elections. Since Belgium is so divided along ethnic and linguistic boundaries, mandatory voting ensures that all segments of Belgium society are equally represented within all major branches of the government. This also ensures that the inherent fragmentation within Belgium society is not artificially amplified by individuals or groups who might try to claim that they have been disenfranchised in some way.

Each political party or linguistic group can veto legislation, which is called a “Veto Right” (Schenckner 2002). The Veto Right ensures cooperation and coordination in important local and national matters. The primary purpose of the Veto Right is to compel consensus within the government and all those who are involved in the governance process. Thus, the Veto Right compels all major and minor parties within the electoral system to compromise and coexist as a single political body within Belgian society.

In 2003, Belgium introduced a new electoral system which effectively reduced the number of constituencies to eleven. Today, each constituency corresponds with a province, including the country's capital City of Brussels. Additionally, the new electoral system uses a five-percent threshold at the provincial level, which has significantly reduced the number of political parties within the country. After the introduction of the

threshold, a number of parties lost their electoral niche and were forced to disband, but most Belgian citizens regard this as a positive tradeoff because it ameliorated the unsustainable political fragmentation and conflict that previously existed within the political party system (De Winter, et al, 2006).

V. What's So Great About Consensus?

One of the fundamental features of Belgian democracy is equal and balanced representation for every layer of Belgian society. Despite being fractious and divisive, the Belgian Model of Democracy is often cited as an example of effective coexistence and cooperation within a fragmented nation of ethnolinguistic groups.

Belgium is the epitome of a consensus-based democracy because every stratum of Belgian society, regardless of their language or ethnicity, is given the opportunity to be represented within the government (Schneckner 2002). And regardless of whether they are big or small, the Veto Right imbues Belgium political parties with real and meaningful power, which enables them to directly influence the composition and implementation of national and local laws and regulations.

Despite the ethnolinguistic tensions that exist in Belgium, stable bicameralism and decentralized governmental power are the foundations of Belgian-style democracy. The Belgian Government has adopted these institutional structures and procedures to ensure the integrity of the government and to ensure that Belgians from every layer of Belgian society are duly represented.

VI. Belgium's Executive Branch

After five national government reforms between 1970 to 2001, governmental decision-making power no longer resides exclusively within the Belgian National Government. Today, power is distributed throughout several dimensions of the Belgian political system. Specifically, the reforms added two new dimensions of government: the communities and the regions. The reforms were the result of a widespread societal consensus to equalize the distribution of power among the diverse linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic groups within Belgian society. Since the reforms, power within the Belgian political system is now shared between the federal

government, the regions, and local communities. And within the federal government, there is the executive branch, judicial branch, and legislative branch.

Belgium's system of government is classified as a "parliamentary democracy," which means, among many other things, that the Belgium Government (specifically, the executive branch) must share a significant amount of power with the legislative branch and the prime minister is selected *from* the legislative branch. In fact, the executive branch has limited power so that the legislative branch can effectively represent the Belgium people. Thus, in contrast to the executive branch, the legislative branch represents the Belgium people by exerting substantial influence over the formation and implementation of laws and regulations.

Although the executive branch is empowered to make *some* decisions based on beliefs commonly held by Belgian society, and it can take *some* actions to represent the Belgium people in matters of foreign policy, the executive branch is not the same as the legislative branch because it does not actually represent the interests of the domestic population. As such, "It is therefore crucial to focus on the relationship between Parliament and the government in order to assess the role of both actors in policy evaluation," wrote Varone, Jacob, and Winter in "Polity, Politics and Policy Evaluation in Belgium."

In fact, the executive branch cannot dictate or control the agenda of the entire government, which ensures that the other branches can contribute to the government's decision-making and law-making processes. However, Varone, et al. argue that Belgium's legislative branch is losing power altogether because:

Several empirical studies show that the power of the Parliament seems to be low and declining in Belgium (and in other western countries as well). As De Winter (1996) notes, the traditional tools for parliamentary monitoring of the government seem quite ineffective. In spite of permanent and specialized parliamentary committees, the legislative function of the Parliament has been sidelined. A large majority of bills passed by Parliament in Belgium are introduced by the government rather than by individual MPs." (Varone, et al. 2005)

In Belgium, much like other monarchial democracies, the king is the head of state and the prime minister is the head of government. The latest King of Belgium, King Philippe I, ascended to the throne after his father abdicated in 2013. The king primarily serves a ceremonial role. Prime Minister Charles Michel has complimented the king as a member of the executive branch since his arrival in 2014.

The king technically does not get involved in the day-to-day operations of government. In contrast, the prime minister is deeply involved in the day-to-day operations of government. These positions in the

Belgian executive branch are less powerful than a king would typically hold in an absolute monarchy, which means that the king and prime minister must work together to keep all the culturally and linguistically fragmented parties united. Collectively, this is a very important job, which impacts the entire country and its relations with the international community.

VII. Legislative Branch

As a federal government, power is assigned to the branches of government by the states' constitution. In Belgium the federal legislative power belongs to the king, the house of representatives and the senate. The elected members of each chamber are divided into one of two linguistic groups: Dutch or French. These members meet on the second Tuesday of October and must meet for at least 40 days per year. However, the king retains the right to call for extra meetings. The king also has the right to adjourn the meetings. Meetings cannot be for longer than a month or more than once per session. Each chamber is responsible for verifying the credentials of its members, which can be disputed by judges at any time. Nobody can be a member of both houses at the same time. If a member of parliament were to either get appointed to a position by the king or the federal government to a ministerial position or other salaried position, they would be forced to immediately forfeit their position in the parliament. All resolutions must receive an absolute majority to pass. If a vote happens to ever be tied, then the proposal is rejected. Votes are cast by sitting and standing or by roll-call vote.

The House of Representatives is comprised of 150 members who are elected directly by the citizens. In order to vote in Belgium, one must be at least 18 years old and not belong to one of the excluded categories. Voting is obligatory in Belgium and usually takes place in the municipality. The number of seats directly corresponds to the number of inhabitants in each electoral district. This is determined by a census taken every 10 years. To be eligible to be a member of the House of Representatives, "one must: 1) be Belgian; 2) enjoy civil and political rights; 3) have reached the age of twenty-one; 4) be resident in Belgium. No other condition of eligibility can be required" (Belgium Constitution, Article 64). The members serve four-year terms and the House as a whole gets re-elected every four years.

After the 1993 “4th Reform,” the Belgium Senate is composed of 71 senators. They include: 25 senators elected from the Dutch electoral college, 15 from the French electoral college; then 10 are appointed from the Parliament of the Flemish Community, 10 from the Parliament of the French Community, and one from the Parliament of the German-speaking community. The remaining 10 are appointed by senators from the first four groups. These members are divided in order to create proportional representation. To be eligible to become a senator, “one must: 1) be Belgian; 2) enjoy civil and political rights; 3) have reached the age of twenty-one; 4) be resident in Belgium. No other condition of eligibility can be required” (Belgium Constitution, Article 64). The members serve four-year terms and the House as a whole gets re-elected every four years.

The king, along with the House and the Senate, work together to form the legislative branch. The king and the House work together to: grant naturalism, create laws that relate to civil and criminal liability, and create state budgets and set army quotas. Bills that are created by the House are then sent to the Senate. Then the Senate has 60 days to amend and adopt the draft bill. If they decide not to adopt the amendment, the bill is then sent to the king. A parliamentary committee can also be created, which is comprised of an equal number of members from the House and the Senate. They can settle conflicts that arise between the two of them by a mutual agreement or two-thirds majority.

VIII. Levels of the Belgium Government

All federal governments have many moving parts that must work together to form a cohesive governance system that delivers the quality of government that their citizens expect. An effective relationship between national and regional governments is crucial to achieving social and economic stability at all levels of a nation.

There are many arenas in which local Belgian governments have a significant amount of power. For example, these areas include, but are not limited to: “civil and social rights, the environment, mobility [transportation], building regulations, as well as permits and planning, playing a major role in the enforcement of higher level regulations” (OECD 2011, 169). These governments are comprised of 10 provinces and 589 municipalities. The provinces are led by a governor while the municipalities are led by a bourgmestre (burgmaster). These provinces and municipalities are autonomous and work with the national government.

There are three different types of oversight with which the national government can control the regional provinces and municipalities. They are, “(i) ex ante oversight (advice, approval, authorisation); (ii) ex post cancellation and suspension of a decision; and (iii) coercive oversight (where the province or municipality fails to fulfill its legal obligations, after being formally notified, a special commissioner takes automatic measures)” (OECD 2011, 171). However, in recent years, oversight has begun to ease and in many aspects local governments do not need to submit administrative decisions for approval. They can merely act; and if the national authority does not approve of these actions, they can show it through suspensions or annulments.

The powers of the regional governments fall into two main categories. These are deemed as either *mandatory* and *optional* missions. These missions are then divided further into those that are for the provinces and those for the municipalities. For provinces, mandatory missions include tutelage over the municipalities and security (e.g., in the case of a national disaster). For the municipalities, their missions include the maintenance of birth and death registries, municipal roads, and organizing various public centers and activities.

All regional governments also have the mandatory obligation to implement and enforce the policies and laws of the national government. With respect to optional missions, in many cases the federal government will supply a set of general conditions that must be met; everything else is under the regulation of the local governments. These usually relate to education, social, and cultural infrastructure.

How are all these missions and governments funded? Many are funded by taxes, transfers, and subsidies from higher authorities. For example, “In Wallonia, local taxes account for about 40% of the revenues of municipalities. A large part of these taxes (around 80%) are additions to the personal income tax and VAT levied by the federal state (shared taxes). The ‘municipality fund,’ a non-affected transfer from the region, accounts for around 20% of the municipality revenues” (OECD 2011, 172).

How do the national and local governments communicate? Local governments are consulted through the established advisory councils. Many of the smaller local governments have representation in these councils. The federal government consults the municipalities on “relevant regulatory developments” (OECD 2011, 173). In many regions, the regional governments have created specific groups in order to effectively communicate with the smaller local governments. Examples of this are the High Council of Cities, Municipalities, and

Provinces in the Walloon region, and the Ministry for Administrative Affairs for Domestic Governance in Flanders. “The main objective of this agency is to ensure coherent implementation of policies such as cities policy, diversity policy and integration policy.” (Ibid.)

IX. Belgium Interest Groups

The creation of policy in the Belgian government can be affected in many ways throughout the policymaking process. Interest groups can have a large impact on the creation and implementation of laws and policies. The influence that an interest group can wield depends heavily on how legitimate and cohesive the group is perceived by others, regardless of how the legitimacy is derived. It does not matter whether the legitimacy comes from the Belgium Constitution, an institutional body, or merely public opinion.

Regardless of whether they support or oppose a bill, interest groups can have an impact in many ways. Their impact can be felt through the use of the media, petitions, and demonstrations or lobbying through various advisory commissions that help to create policy. The groups tend to focus on creating good working relations with the federal government in order to best create better working and living conditions for their constituents. The primary purpose of these groups is communicating their issues to the government.

The interest groups of Belgium include labour unions, employers' associations, religious groups, etc. Among others, these include the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions, Belgian General Federation of Labour, Federation of Liberal Trade Unions of Belgium, and the Federation of Belgian Enterprises. These groups try to represent the many different groups within Belgium's diverse and highly fragmented society.

X. Belgium's Economic & Social Influence on Europe

As every country begins to mature and settle into its place within the global geopolitical hierarchy, it starts to cultivate two identities: an individual identity and a collective (or regional) international identity. Belgium offers a certain appeal to Europe while trying, like all countries, to retain a sense of individual identity. How a country retains its culture while simultaneously absorbing the people and values of immigrant populations can be a controversial topic. However, if this balance can be sustainably achieved at all, Belgium's consensus-

based democracy is likely the only sustainable path to achieving it, based on peaceful coexistence among Belgium's culturally disparate constituent groups. This is important because a country that is plagued by political conflict and civil war cannot be a model of cultural virtue or a beacon of economic prosperity.

Despite some challenges with relatively infrequent political corruption scandals and increasing tensions with a growing population of Islamic radicals, so far, Belgium seems to have achieved this balance. "Belgium is among the top-25 most competitive nations," according to the Institute for Management Development (IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2016 Results) and is "ranked 17th in per-capita income" according to the World Economic Forum (Global Competitiveness Report 2016–2017). And according to a recent report by the Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Great Britain, "From 2008 to 2012, the Belgian share of international trade has increased with countries outside the European Union. . . ."

In fact, over the past 1,000 years, Belgium has served an important role in Europe and throughout the world as a vibrant business hub, particularly through its port City of Antwerp. Second only to the Rotterdam Port in the Netherlands in terms of European trading volume, Antwerp has been a world-renown destination for diamond merchants, seafaring traders of all kinds, and talented artisans. Additionally, in more recent years, Belgium has bequeathed to the world many literary, musical, and cinematic luminaries like Hugo Claus, Pierre Mertens, César Franck, and the Dardenne Brothers. And of course, the benefits are multilateral: The prosperity of Belgium "is a consequence of the European presence," according to Jean-Luc Vanraes, a Minister of Parliament in the Brussels-Capital Region.

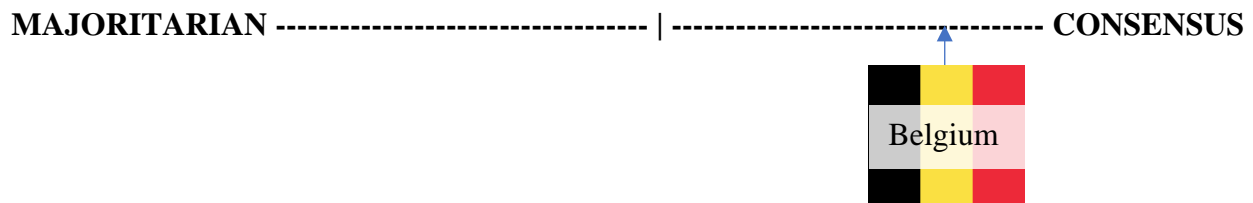
Diplomatically and geopolitically, Belgium has emerged as a regional and international platform for peaceful negotiations as a result of being the de facto capital of the European Union, NATO, and many other international organizations. Hosting such globally important organizations compels all levels of the Belgium Government to continuously cultivate a pristine international reputation in all dimensions of national and international performance. Few nations on Earth have as much practice with consensus-based democracy as Belgium. For this reason, Belgium's post-1970 domestic political system and culture may be the ideal environment for Belgium politicians and institutional bureaucrats to develop the diplomatic skills that are necessary to support the international diplomacy that occurs within their country's borders every day.

XI. Conclusion

The Belgium Government has created a unique form of consensus-based democracy, which has evolved from the fragmented ethnolinguistic conditions that have given rise to Belgium's challenging political culture. Despite these challenges, Belgium is widely regarded as a high-performing state, both economically and in terms of the high-quality outcomes and integrity of its institutional governance systems and procedures. Belgian citizens are legally compelled to exercise their right to vote, which ensures that all Belgians feel like their votes are at least counted, even if they do not always feel their voices are heard amid the cacophony of competing interests within Belgian society. This goes a long way toward preserving the peaceful coexistence of the disparate interests that compete for the attention and resources of the Belgian Government.

After World War II, Belgium was devastated in virtually every conceivable way, but the inherent optimism of traditional Belgium culture, combined with hard work and skillful diplomacy, enabled the Belgium State to rise from the ashes to become one of Earth's most important platforms for peace. Today, heads of state, diplomats, business leaders, and other important stakeholders from around the world depend on Belgium's unique insight and experience with consensus-based decision-making to help them navigate the increasingly challenging geopolitical problems of the modern world.

Based on all the Belgian political structures and procedures that we have learned in our research, including Belgium's constitutionally embedded egalitarianism, mandatory voting, strong parliamentary influence over the executive branch, Proportional Representation electoral system, Veto Right bestowed upon all political parties represented in the Belgian Parliament, and an enduring political culture that compels compromise and consensus throughout the multiple layers of the Belgium political system, we think the Belgium Government can be visually depicted along Arend Lijphart's Majoritarian-Consensus Continuum as follows:



XII. Annotated Bibliography

Belgium Elections 2014 – Chamber List Results. 2014.

http://polling2014.belgium.be/en/cha/results/results_tab_CKR00000.html

This is the most comprehensive and detailed source for the composition, seat allocation, and election results for the most recent parliamentary elections in Belgium.

Beaufays, Jean. 1988. "Belgium: A Dualist Political System?" *Publius* 18 (2): 63-73.

<http://www.jstor.org.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/stable/3330461>

This article provides a comprehensive view of the existing institution and policy under bipolar and centrifugal federalism. It also sheds light on Belgium's unique form of federalism and how relegating power to regional governments maintained relative political and social stability throughout the country. Moreover, it also sheds light on the current political structure as well as the role of parties in the country's politics and how it has helped create a culture of corruption and venality among Belgian politicians.

Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Great Britain. 2017. "Belgium's Economy in a Nutshell."

This article helped us to verify Belgium's economic performance in recent years.

Central Intelligence Agency, Central Intelligence Agency. 2017. "The World Factbook:

BELGIUM." <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/be.html>.

The CIA World Factbook is an excellent resource for many types of geopolitical and economic investigations. In this case, we used it to verify various aspects of Belgium's infrastructure and economic conditions.

Deschouwer, Kris. 2012. "The Politics of Belgium: Governing a Divided Society." London: Palgrave Macmillan, 249-257

This article describes how the government system is affected of the bi-polarity of the nation. It shows how this dichotomy can also create problems between the parties as well as in the institutions and organizations. The article also brings up the problems that a system like this could face. The lack of consensus between groups can bring the government to a standstill. The presence of what the article terms a, "caretaker" government which is one that is more based on overseeing the lower governments rather than enacting its own federal policies is also a problem seen by the author. This has led to incongruent coalitions that then leads to tensions between both parties and governments.

De Winter, Lieven, Marc Swyngedouw, and Patrick Dumont. 2006. "Party System(s) and Electoral Behaviour in Belgium: From Stability to Balkanisation." *West European Politics* 29(5): 933–56.

The title of the journal clearly communicates its message and intent to a reader. The author initially starts with the history of political parties in Belgium. Furthermore, it also adds how a

once vibrant and stable unitary system was torn asunder by political and linguistic tensions. The rising tensions paved the way for centrifugal political tendencies and electoral behavior, which had given rise to over thirty different political parties each vying for representation in both local and national elections. Subsequent electoral reforms and the introduction of threshold system significantly decreased the number of parties. The journal also talks about inter-party cooperation at numerous levels and voters' behavior along the party lines.

Dujardin, Vincent. 2015. "Belgium Wrestles with its identity(ies): A test lab for Europe?" *Politeja* (37); 25-33. (October 25, 2017).

This article argues that Belgium is key component in Europe's identity. Searching for a source that covered economics and social growth in one article did not yield many usable sources, however, this source incorporates Belgium's culture and politics as they compare in Europe. In essence, this article covered what Belgium "brings" to Europe and makes it valued. There's much to throw away with this article, but I appreciated the political aspect and it's comparison to other European countries.

Frankland, E. Gene. 2009. *Global Studies: Europe*. 10th Edition. Boston: McGraw-Hill

This book provides relevant information about all European countries notably Belgium. The chapter about Belgium encompasses everything from the creation of the country to the country's geography and politics.

Fraussen, Bert; Dejaeghere, Yves; Bursens, P., & Van, H. S. 2012. Chapter 4: Belgian Parties, Interest Groups, Media and Public Opinion and the Presidency: A Non-Issue for Non-State Actors?; 83-87. VUB University Press.

This article showed many interest groups and how they work in the government to push their interests, and affect policy.

Frumkin, Gregory. 1952. *Population Changes in Europe Since 1939*. <https://search-proquest-com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/docview/1301286368>

This article provides statistical data on the number of casualties and lives lost during WWII, which was needed to accurately state the number of Belgians killed by the Nazis after their 1940 invasion of Belgium.

Joly, Jeroen, Brandon C Zicha, and Régis Dandoy. 2015. "Does the government agreement's grip on policy fade over time? An analysis of policy drift in Belgium." *Acta Politica* 50 (3): 297-319. (October 25, 2017).

At first this source seemed too broad, but upon further reading it clearly defined the executive and legislative branches, their roles, and how they work together, leading to a decent article for a base understanding of this topic. This article focused heavily on policy making and general practice, such as a policy "drift." While it does not focus on the 2014 elections it did include decades of material, graphs, and general supporting data. Overall, I found this article to be the most informative of all the articles I considered.

Lijphart, A. 2004. *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies*. *Journal of Democracy*, 15(2), 96-109. doi:10.1353/jod.2004.0029

This article provides a succinct response to some critics who disagree with Lijphart's emphasis on "power-sharing" as a universally essential feature in every good constitutional design, particularly for culturally divided societies. Lijphart also illustrates several examples of the problems that occur when countries attempt to apply Majoritarian Democracy to culturally divided countries. Additionally, the article describes how power-sharing alone is not enough; the bureaucratic institutions of a country's government must also be tailored for the specific cultural institutions that already exist within a country. Finally, the article discusses the three main electoral systems (Majoritarian, Proportional Representation, and Intermediate) within the context of effective constitutional design.

Lobbes, Tessa, and Reine Meylaerts. 2015. "Cultural Mediators and the Circulation of Cultural Identities in Interwar Bilingual Belgium." *Orbis Litterarum*. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/oli.12075/abstract>. (8 Sept. 2015.)

This article was useful because it gave us deeper insight into how Belgium's cultural fragmentation has impacted the country's social and political institutions. The survey of Belgium's cultural dynamics between WWI and WWII was particularly useful in giving us insight into the evolution of Belgium's consensus-based democracy that emerged after 1970.

OECD. 2011. *Better Regulation in Europe: Belgium*. Chapter 8; 169-174. <http://www.oecd.org/gov/regulatory-policy/45424282.pdf>

This article showed the difference between the federal and regional levels of government. It also shows how the local governments are divided and run.

Pilet, J. 2012. *Executive-Legislative Relations Without a Government*. *European Political Science: EPS*, 11(1), 96-101. [doi:http://dx.doi.org.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/10.1057/eps.2011.61](http://dx.doi.org.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/10.1057/eps.2011.61)

This article provides an interesting overview of how Belgium went 541 days without an elected government, starting in June 2010 and lasting until December 2011. This was a world record in modern political science history. Among other insights, this article was significant for our research because it revealed how a traditionally strong executive branch (within the context of Lijphart's framework) of a national government can be functionally replaced by a legislative branch without a constitutional crisis, as long as the legislative branch is imbued with the appropriate authority and incentives to perform the executive functions of government. This was a case of "government without government."

Schneckener, Ulrich. 2002. "Making Power-Sharing Work: Lessons from Successes and Failures in Ethnic Conflict Regulation." *Journal of Peace Research* 39 (2): 203-28. <http://www.jstor.org.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/stable/1555299>

This article, in general, talks about power-sharing and the benefits associated with it. The initial part of the journal is focused on Belgium and the interplay of different facets a consensus-based democracy in shaping the country's political and social culture.

Sinardet, D. 2008. *Belgian Federalism Put to The Test: The 2007 Belgian Federal Elections and Their Aftermath*. *West European Politics*, 31(5), 1016-1032. [doi:10.1080/01402380802234706](https://doi.org/10.1080/01402380802234706)

This article provides insight into the increasing fragmentation of the political landscape within Belgium. Belgium's system of federalism is dominated by linguistic and corresponding cultural divisions, which seems to increasingly resemble a "federation without federalism." In this context, the cultural divisions within Belgian society create the need for a political system that can represent many separate political constituencies, but the political system in Belgium is primarily used as a deal-making framework between the two dominant French- and Flemish-speaking groups. This is not indicative of a true system of federalism. To create a true system of federalism, Belgium will need to find a politically viable way to dismantle the tight relationship between language and policymaking so that its political system can more equitably represent the interests of the entire country without being dominated by these two frequently polarized groups.

Swenden, Wilfried, Marleen Brans, and Lieven De Winter. 2006. "The Politics of Belgium: Institutions and Policy under Bipolar and Centrifugal Federalism." *West European Politics* 29(5): 863–73.

The central theme explored in this journal is how federalism by disaggregation works in Belgium. Belgium's experience with Federalism vastly differs from that of those that were created as a result of the aggregation of various states. In this journal, the author talks about how policy making and decision making was taken away from the center and relegated to the three regions, which paved the way for balkanization of politics and creation of extreme linguistic cleavages among the nation's various linguistic groups. Furthermore, the article also explores the pros and cons of Belgium's existing system.

Vigour, Cecile. 2014. "Veto Players and Interest Groups in Lawmaking: A Comparative Analysis of Judicial Reforms in Italy, Belgium, and France" *Comparative Political studies* 47(14): 1891-1918

This article focuses on the affects that interest groups have on the governments including that of Belgium. It theorizes that the more legitimate an interest group is perceived to be the more likely they have the ability to affect the policy making process. It also states that many interest groups have the ability to sway the minds of the people by using the media, demonstrations, and petitions to bring citizens into the policy making process. The article states that that more cohesive and united an interest group it the greater the ability of the group to push their interests.