

Belgium's history and politics

Min Reuchamps

When Belgians, in 1830, self-proclaimed their independence from the Kingdom of The Netherlands, they had never lived together in the same country. In fact, even though Gaius Julius Caesar wrote in his *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*, when he was fighting the Gallic Wars in the 1st century BC, that “of all the Gauls the Belgae are the bravest”, these early Belgians were living in a territory much broader than current Belgium. After the Roman period, the territories of what will become Belgium were spread over several empires, kingdoms, duchies, counties or principalities. The Napoleonic wars brought these territories under French rule for a decade before the Congress of Vienna brought them under Dutch rule in 1815. These – Belgian – southern provinces were united with the – Dutch – northern of provinces in the Kingdom of The Netherlands. Because of linguistic – the Belgian elites were French-speaking vs. Dutch-speaking rulers – and religious – the southern provinces were predominantly Catholic vs. a majority of Protestants in the northern provinces – grievances, the leaders of the southern provinces fostered – what will become known as – the Belgian revolution that led to the independence of the southern provinces (with the exception of the territory of the future independent Grand Duchy of Luxembourg) in 1830, quickly recognized by neighbouring countries and The Netherlands in 1839. Belgium was thus a whole new country (Deschouwer 2012).

Three main political cleavages

The new country established a liberal constitution in 1831 that set in motion a parliamentary monarchy. Three main political cleavages define and divide Belgian polity throughout her history. If the separation from the Kingdom of the Netherlands had been fuelled by the rejection of the Dutch King's pro-protestant policies, the national union of the first years of independence quickly gave way to the crystallization of the opposition between those, Catholics, in favour of a strong relationship between the Church and the State and those, Liberals, in favour of a clear separation between the Church and the State. This cleavage led to the progressive consociationalization of society, strengthened at the end of the 19th century by the creation of the Belgian Labour party, which sought to protect the interests of the working class against the capital holders, and politically fought on a socio-economic cleavage. The Belgian Labour party also joined some Liberals, supporters of a separation between State and Church, and some Catholics of the Catholic Workers' movement. This interweaving of cleavages explains Belgium's consociationalist nature. Three pillars governed the State – the Catholic, the Socialist and, to a lesser extent, the Liberal. These three pillars co-existed and organized the existence of their members from cradle to grave. Politically, contacts were limited to the cleavages' elites who ruled a segmented and pacified country, even though not united (Lijphart 1981; Caluwaerts and Reuchamps 2020).

A linguistic cleavage appeared at the creation of the Belgian State because it was unitary and above all francophone and unilingual. However, since its origins, a Dutch-speaking majority has inhabited Belgium. The first national census, in 1846, confirms that a majority of the population spoke Dutch/Flemish dialects (mainly living in the north of the country) and the remaining (around 40 per cent) spoke French/Walloon dialects (mainly in the south of the country). Yet, the language of the elites, independently of where they lived in the country,

was French and hence the only official language was French. This choice and its consequences on the Dutch-speaking Belgians, who were not allowed to use their mother tongue in any official matter, gave birth to the Flemish movement. This movement, born as a reaction to unilingual Belgium, demanded the recognition of Dutch as the second official language, at least in Flanders. These demands were vigorously rejected by the Belgian elites because they were thought harmful to the development of the Belgian nation, based on French as *lingua franca*, instead of the Germanic dialects spoken in the North and Walloon dialects spoken in the South. The constant refusal led to the hardening of the Flemish movement, slowly reinforced by the extension of the voting rights. In the 1870s the first linguistic laws were voted, which authorized the use of the Dutch language in tribunals and in the administration in Flemish Provinces (Zolberg 1974). Finally, in 1898 the law on equality recognized Dutch as an official language, placing it on the same footing as French, even though the latter was still the dominant language in the country.

In 1921, universal – male – suffrage did not modify the supremacy of the Francophone bourgeoisie, despite the increasing power of the Dutch-speaking citizens who became electors. However, the demands of the Flemish movement led to new linguistic laws in the 1920s and the 1930s, and made possible the use of Dutch notably for matters of justice, administration and education. At the same time, the idea of a generalized bilingualism, throughout the whole country, was rejected both by the French- and Dutch-speakers as each preferred to ensure the protection of their language in their territory (Swenden and Jans 2006). The logic behind these linguistic laws was thus *territorial*. Depending on the language spoken by the majority of its population, each municipality – the smallest administrative subdivision in Belgium – was included in a unilingual region – Dutch, French or German – with the exception of municipalities in Brussels that were gathered in the only bilingual region. However, Brussels was also the centre of the problem. Originally a Dutch-speaking city, it quickly ‘Frenchified’ because of its role as the capital that attracted French-speaking civil servants and elites (Witte and Van Velthoven 2000). It is therefore understandable why this dual issue, both linguistic and territorial, constitutes one of the main foundations of Belgian politics, leading to the – progressive – federalization of Belgium informally since 1970 and officially since 1993.

From a unitary to a federal state

As of the year 1993, the first article of the Belgian Constitution reads “Belgium is a federal State composed of Communities and Regions”. There are three Communities: the Flemish Community, the French Community and the German-speaking Community. They are in charge of matters related to education, culture and people. In charge of matters related to the economy, territory and environment, there are also three Regions: the Flemish Region, the Walloon Region and the Brussels-Capital Region. This dual federalism reflects the twofold origin of the Belgian federal state. On the one hand, the communities are the response to the linguistic and cultural demands from the Flemish movement described above. On the other hand, the regions are the response to the socio-economic demands from the Walloon movement.

In 1962-1963, when the territorial principal was set in the Belgian political system, another change was in motion in Belgium: Flemish economy surpassed Walloon’s for the first time in

the history of Belgium. Until then, the Walloon industry had always been the engine of Belgium's economic prosperity. But after World War II, Walloon economy entered a phase of decline, whereas Flemish economy was entering an economic boom (Reuchamps 2015). As an answer to this new economic order, Walloon elites started seeking greater autonomy, neither linguistic nor cultural, but socio-economic autonomy in order to develop policies more adapted to their struggling economy. Since then, the socio-economic dynamics have had a bigger impact on Belgian politics. In this context, demands for greater linguistic and cultural autonomy (but also socio-economic) coming from the North of the country, and the demands for greater socio-economic autonomy coming from the South, gave birth to a unique two-level federal system: Communities for cultural and linguistic matters and Regions for socio-economic matters.

The history of Belgium has always been based on a compromise that satisfies each party. This is reflected in its federal structure. The Flemish elites decided to merge the Flemish Community with the Flemish Region in a unique entity with one single Parliament and one Government. The Francophone elites, in turn, decided that the French will be the – linguistic – link between the French-speakers of Wallonia and of Brussels. These choices reflect different visions of what federal Belgium should be: for most of the Flemish elites, Belgium should be based on two Communities – the Flemish and the Francophone – and for most of the Francophone elites Belgium should be based on three Regions – Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels. Here appears the Belgian federalism paradox: the Flemings prefer linguistic ties, given by the Community, but need the Regions to ensure clear boundaries and obtain more autonomy, whereas the Francophones prefer a regional vision in order to recognize Brussels as a fully-fledged Region, but need the French Community in order to link Brussels and Wallonia.

A country of paradoxes

Belgium is indeed a country of paradoxes, in several aspects: economic, sociological and political. Since the economic shift in 1962-1963, the economic difference in terms of the gross domestic product (GDP) is still growing between the three Regions of the Country. What's more, since the income tax yield by person is higher in Flanders than in Wallonia (even higher than in Brussels, where there is a great difference between relative wealth created in the Region and the relative poverty of its inhabitants), financial transfers (through social security) go from North to South, in order to maintain solidarity. The pervasiveness of this dimension increased with the deepening of the gap between the two Regions' economies with, as a consequence, an increase in Flanders of a feeling that Walloons unfairly take advantage of the Flemish economy, whereas some people in Wallonia remind the pre-1962 economic flux the other way round.

Socio-economic factors play an important role in Belgium, because they ensure financial solidarity between the country's Regions, even though these transfers are regularly criticized and these criticisms are themselves criticized. Furthermore, two important paradoxes appear. The first one concerns Brussels. This City-Region at the heart of the country has the highest GDP per capita of the three Regions – more or less the double of Flanders. It attracts over 500 000 commuters who work there every day. They, however, do not pay their taxes there, which explains important discrepancy between Brussels's GDP and its income tax

return rate, for which Brussels is considerably under the Belgian mean. The second paradox concerns intra-regional differences, and not inter-regional ones. Even if Flanders is on average richer than Wallonia, differences between the provinces of these two Regions are not negligible. The Walloon Brabant is the second Province where most wealth is produced, right after the Flemish Province of Anvers, while the Flemish Province of Limburg comes right before the four other Walloon Provinces.

Despite political discourse often claiming homogeneous realities, we also find such heterogeneity in terms of identities. Survey data show that at least one Belgian out of two belongs to Belgium first, and that this feeling is rather stable over time (Niessen et al. 2022). In Flanders, in the largest Region of the country, we neither find an overwhelming support nor a complete rejection of Belgium. Up until 1982, a majority of Flemings felt Flemish first. Later on, they tended to feel more Belgian than Flemish. In Wallonia, even though the results are generally similar, there is a difference of degree. At different moments in time, between two thirds and three quarters of the people living in Wallonia felt Belgian above all. This amounts to a difference of almost 20% with Flanders. Moreover, it is interesting to see that unlike the Flemish, and since 1979, Walloons have always felt, above all, Belgian. However, the feeling of belonging to Belgium seems rather stable in both regions, even if the feeling of belonging to the Region/Community in Wallonia, as in Flanders, decreases with time.

These figures shed light on the dynamics of identity in Belgium. Far from being a marginal phenomenon, it is a crucial aspect of the transformation of the country, still under way (Deschouwer and Reuchamps 2013). However, no survey shows an identity gap between the two major communities in the country, the Flemings and the Francophones. In this regard, it is interesting to note that both electorates have had the same evolution in relation to their feelings of belonging, even if these took place at higher or lower levels. We can find an identity dualism in the country with a – more or less strong, depending on the Region – predominance of the feeling of belonging to Belgium. On this rather stable background, it is not surprising to observe a political paradox: despite the quite rapid transformation of a unitary state into a federal state in a couple of decades only, we do not witness strong support among the population for such a transformation.

In fact, in Flanders as much as in Wallonia, we find since 1991 (when the question was introduced in surveys) a larger proportion of people who believe that Belgium should decide for everything than people who believe that Flanders or Wallonia should decide for everything. During the last two decades, we observe around 15-20 per cent of the Flemish and around 20-25 per cent of the Walloons supporting a unitary Belgium, against around 5-10 per cent of the Flemish and less than 5 per cent of the Walloons supporting the independence of their Region. Between these two poles, the majority of the Flemish and of the Walloons choose an option ranging from predominance for Belgium to predominance for the regional level, going through a shared option. In Wallonia and Flanders, people who want Belgium to have more of a say than Flanders/Wallonia were often a relative majority. However, in Flanders, the following option is the predominance of Flanders while in Wallonia it is the median position (*status quo*) that comes second.

This look at the citizens' preferences confirms the multiplicity of the visions of the future of federalism in Belgium that the population holds (Reuchamps 2013). Unlike what could have

been *a priori* thought, in light of the political tensions shaking the country, Dutch-speakers and French-speakers are not diametrically opposed; above all, we find as many differences in these two groups as between them. Furthermore, as studies about voters of the Flemish regionalist parties show, the electoral behaviour is not directly influenced by the community issue but rather by socio-economic issues. This is actually applicable to all the voters leaving community issue far behind socio-economic aspects in the explanation of their vote (Niessen et al. 2022). This translates an overarching feature, if not a paradox, of Belgian politics: the predominance of party politics to the extent that the country can be described as a *partitocracy*.

Party politics and partitocracy

Partitocracy can be simply defined as a political regime where power is – in an excessive degree – in the hands of political parties. This is typically the case in Belgium where political parties are the key actors in most, if not all, facets of the state structure (Baudewyns et al. 2022) for the best and for the worse. Indeed, all the paradoxes mentioned in the previous section echo the importance of political parties and above all party politics. Political dynamics in Belgium are largely driven by different and even often opposed visions which were the cause and the consequence of the Belgian party system's record fragmentation, of the end of the national parties as the starting point of the federalization of the country, and of the centrifugal competition between the Flemish party system and the Francophone one. While parties can be seen as – reflecting – the problems, they can also broker solutions. In fact, hitherto, political parties have always found ways to accommodate their competing visions and objectives.

An interesting illustration of this reality is the analysis of the vote shares. In particular, by comparing the evolution of the cumulated vote shares obtained by traditional parties with the regionalist parties since World War II, it clearly appears that the 1971 election has been a turning point with a historical peak for the regionalist parties with some 20 per cent of the votes, followed by a diminishing phase until 1985 when the federalization was building up. In other words, the federalization of the country calmed down the political strain. But, in the medium term, new demands for autonomy appeared, which took part in the new rise of the regionalist parties, particularly in Flanders, in the decennia 2010. What had particularly changed between 1971 and the decennia 2010 is that, at the beginning of the State reform, regionalist forces were found on both sides of the linguistic boundary with the *Volksunie* in Flanders, the *Front démocratique des francophones* in Brussels and its periphery and the *Rassemblement wallon* in Wallonia. It was at the time possible to find compromises because each team of negotiators, composed of delegates of the traditional parties, were both under pressure by regionalists. From 2007 onwards, it was much less the case because the French-speakers were unwilling to further federalize the country, fearing that more federalism would *in fine* lead to separatism (Reuchamps et al. 2021).

There also exists a lag between political parties and voters due to the fact that in Flanders no party defends a lesser autonomy for the Regions while a part of the population considers that scenario, and in Wallonia no party presents itself as being openly regionalist (even if some of its members are), advocating as much autonomy as possible for this Region at the expense of the federal level. However, even within the political parties themselves, there is a

diversity of opinion. Several surveys among Belgian MPs have shown indeed that differences within a party (and within a language group) were sometimes greater than between Dutch-speaking as well as French-speaking political parties (Dodeigne et al. 2021). In this highly fragmented political context, it should not come as a surprise that many days are needed to form a governing coalition, at the federal level in particular. Belgium broke a world record after the 2010 general elections when 541 days were needed to form a federal government. In fact, in the last twenty years, the country was governed by a so-called caretaker government during no fewer than 1500 days, that is over four years (Dandoy and Terrière 2022). In February 2020, when the first cases of Covid-19 reached Belgium, it was actually such a caretaker government that was in charge, soon invested with plenary powers even though it was still a minority government.

A minority government to respond to Covid-19

On 26 May 2019, Belgians were called to the voting booths for the European, federal and regional elections (Reuchamps et al. 2020). A – long – period of governments' formation started. Regional executives are always more rapidly formed, even though less quickly than in the past. During this period, the previous executive acts as caretaker government. Since the federal government before the election was a minority government (52 out of 150 seats) made of Flemish and Francophone Liberals and Flemish Christian Democrats, led by the Francophone Liberal, Charles Michel, it remained a minority caretaker government after the election (with even fewer seats: 38 out of 150 seats). When in October 2019 Charles Michel was appointed President of the European Council, he was replaced as Prime Minister of this caretaker minority government by another Francophone Liberal, Sophie Wilmès, the first ever woman to occupy this function in Belgium. The Wilmès I government's life was supposed to be terminated as soon as an agreement could be reached to form a full-power government. Yet, when the Covid-19 pandemic hit Belgium in March 2020, no agreement was in sight.

On 17 March 2020, several parties (the Socialists, the Greens, the French-speaking Christian Democrats and the Francophone Democrats and Federalists that account altogether for 57 out of 150 seats) outside of the caretaker minority government agree to give special powers to the – still minority – Wilmès II government to make the necessary political decisions for an initial period of three months (that was extended for three months and then for two weeks). Only the Flemish Nationalists of N-VA (the party with the largest representation in parliament with 25 out of 150 seats), the radical right of Vlaams Belang and the radical left of the PVDA/PTB fully remained in the opposition (holding together 55 out of 150 seats). The same day, the Wilmès II government decided a full lockdown and made corona-related decisions during over six months, until an agreement was reached to form a majority government. On 1 October 2020, the Flemish Liberal, Alexander De Croo, was sworn in as Prime Minister of a majority government (87 out of 150 seats) composed of seven political parties. The so-called Vivaldi coalition (referring to the four seasons as four ideologies are brought together in this government) is formed by the Flemish and Francophone Liberals (respectively 12 and 14 seats), Socialists (respectively 9 and 19 seats) and Greens (respectively 9 and 12 seats) as well as the Flemish Christian Democrats (12 seats).

During over two years, these two federal governments devoted most of their actions to handle the coronavirus outbreak in Belgium and its public health but also socio-economic consequences. Many decisions were made of which several were contested before the courts of justice of the country, like in several neighbouring countries. Unlike many other states, however, the decision-making process was not left alone to the national/federal government but it included the representatives of the Communities and the Regions. Under the Wilmès II government, the Prime Minister chaired the National Council of Security (*Nationale Veiligheidsraad/Conseil national de sécurité*) and Alexander De Croo gathered about the same political representatives both from the federal and the substate governments in the Concertation Committee (*Overlegcomité/Comité de concertation*).

A flamboyant illustration of the multilevel structure of decision-making in Belgium lies in the coexistence of nine ministers of health, or more precisely in charge of matters related to health. Indeed at the federal level, there is one minister in charge of social security and public health. The federalization of the state has allocated large chunks of health policies to the Regions and the Communities. Since Flanders (over 6,6 million inhabitants) merged its Region into its Community, there is only one minister of health in Flanders. The German-speaking Community (almost 80 000 inhabitants) also has its minister. In Francophone Belgium where the Region was not merged with the Community (because French-speaking Brussels account for one fourth of the French-speaking community, whereas the ratio of Dutch-speaking Brussels among the Flemish community is much smaller), three ministers are in charge of health-related matters: one – main – health minister for the Walloon Region (over 3,6 million inhabitants) and two French Community ministers respectively in charge of childhood (from birth and babies to medical prevention for children all the way up to students) and university hospitals as well as access to the medical professions. In Brussels (over 1,2 million inhabitants), there are also three ministers: two at the regional level (one Dutch speaker and one French speaker) and one at the community level for the Francophones only. The responses to Covid-19 exemplify the multilevel nature of Belgium that can also be seen in the way this small country interacts with the large world.

A not-so-small country on the international scene

Belgium is a small country with a very open economy. Besides, due to its geographical position and also to its diplomacy it has, despite its small size, a disproportional influence on the international scene, and particularly on the European construction of which it was one of the pioneers. Brussels (whose name is often more familiar overseas than Belgium herself) hosts – some of – the European institutions and many other international organizations: among them, the seat of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Evere, Brussels. The invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was a harsh reminder of the presence and importance of NATO in Belgium. In fact, in addition to hosting the seat of NATO, Belgium hosts the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Casteau, near Mons. Belgium was one of the 12 founding members of NATO in 1949. Since then it has always been strongly politically committed to the organization but, and it is another paradox, was never fully devoted to commit many resources to its defence. For decades, Belgium has been lagging well behind and below the 2 per cent of the GDP that, as a NATO member, it has committed to spend for its defence budget. While there is quite a strong consensus to support Ukraine, Belgium is far from the top contributors. To put it in a more positive way, Belgium shows

more soft power than hard power. What's more, its national fate is intrinsically linked with its international interdependence. In fact, the strong international feature of Belgium, despite its size, is probably not without effects on its internal politics.

The first and foremost example of this interdependence certainly comes from Belgium's European commitment. Europe is no foreign country. Even within the Belgian debate is the European argument mobilized, but in diverging and sometimes opposed ways. Some consider that the federal level has become an 'empty shell' between the European level above it and the regional level, particularly the Flemish, below. Europe would in this way justify Belgium's disappearance. Others insist upon the fact that Europe, and particularly its Member States, would not accept Flanders inclinations towards independence in order to prevent creating a precedent which could path the way for Basques, Catalans, Scots, and even Corsicans or Bretons. Flanders is not Kosovo, and the Balkanization of a country at the heart of Europe, moreover a founder Member, would not necessarily be favourably welcomed by the European partners, particularly those who experience (and they are many) similar situations. The continuity of the EU membership of the new state's successors to Belgium or the continuity of a territorially modified Belgium would also need to be asked. Faced with this situation, Europe would prevent Belgium's disappearance. Finally, some scholars defend the idea that Europe comes to the rescue of federal Belgium by showing that European integration, on the one hand, fosters cooperation between the Regions, the Communities and the federal Authority and, on the other hand, reinforces centralization and thus prevents the disappearance of that level of government (Beyers and Bursens 2006). In this way, Europe would justify the survival of Belgium.

Given its size, its openness to the world and its engagement in the international scene, Belgium is especially sensitive to international factors. These seem to have multiple – sometimes paradoxical – effects on the Belgian system and political actors. Such dynamics will continue in the future. With elections at all levels, including European, 2024 will mark a new cycle in Belgian and European politics.

2024 onwards

The year of 2024 will see European, federal and regional elections on 9 June 2024 and local and provincial elections on 13 October 2024. No one can predict their outcomes and above all their political, social and economic consequences on the short and long run. What is for sure, though, is that national and international dynamics that have shaped the Belgian polity since it gained independence from the Kingdom of The Netherlands will continue to lastingly mould the political dynamics of Belgium that will celebrate its 200th anniversary in 2030.

References

- Baudewyns, Pierre, Marleen Brans, Min Reuchamps, Benoit Rihoux, and Virginie Van Ingelgom, eds. 2022. *The Winter of Democracy: Partitocracy in Belgium*. Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses universitaires de Louvain.
- Beyers, Jan, and Peter Bursens. 2006. "The European Rescue of the Federal State: How Europeanization Shapes the Belgian State." *West European Politics* 29 (5):1057-1078.

- Caluwaerts, Didier, and Min Reuchamps. 2020. "Still Consociational? Belgian Democracy, 50 Years After 'The Politics of Accommodation'." *Politics of the Low Countries* 2 (1):28-50.
- Dandoy, Régis, and Lorenzo Terrière. 2022. "Caretaker governments in Belgium: The new normal?" In *Belgian Exceptionalism: Belgian Politics between Realism and Surrealism*, edited by Didier Caluwaerts and Min Reuchamps, 123-137. Abingdon & New York: Routledge.
- Deschouwer, Kris. 2012. *The Politics of Belgium: Governing a Divided Society*. 2nd ed, *Comparative Government and Politics Series*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Deschouwer, Kris, and Min Reuchamps. 2013. "The Belgian Federation at a Crossroad." *Regional & Federal Studies* 23 (3):261-270. doi: 10.1080/13597566.2013.773896.
- Dodeigne, Jérémy, Christoph Niessen, Min Reuchamps, and Dave Sinardet. 2021. "The Effect of Institutional Affiliation and Career Patterns on (De)centralization Preferences in Advanced Multi-Level States: Parliamentarians' Support for (De)Centralization in Belgium." *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 51 (2):262-282. doi: 10.1093/publius/pjaa027.
- Lijphart, Arend, ed. 1981. *Conflict and coexistence in Belgium: the dynamics of a culturally divided society*. Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California.
- Niessen, Christoph, Pierre Baudewyns, Stefano Camatarri, Jérémy Dodeigne, André-Paul Frogier, Min Reuchamps, and Dave Sinardet. 2022. "Partitocracy and the future of Belgium: Revisiting Does Belgium (still) exist?" In *The Winter of Democracy: Partitocracy in Belgium*, edited by Pierre Baudewyns, Marleen Brans, Min Reuchamps, Benoit Rihoux and Virginie Van Ingelgom, 183-199. Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses universitaires de Louvain.
- Reuchamps, Min. 2013. "The Future of Belgian Federalism Through the Eyes of the Citizens." *Regional & Federal Studies* 23 (3):353-368. doi: 10.1080/13597566.2013.773893.
- Reuchamps, Min, ed. 2015. *Minority Nations in Multinational Federations: A comparative study of Quebec and Wallonia, Routledge Series in Federal Studies*. Abingdon & New York: Routledge.
- Reuchamps, Min, Pierre Baudewyns, Régis Dandoy, Marta Gallina, and Christoph Niessen. 2020. "From a green high tide to government participation: the successes of ECOLO and GROEN in the 2019 Belgian elections." *Environmental Politics* 29 (2):344-348. doi: 10.1080/09644016.2019.1686207.
- Reuchamps, Min, Hannelise Boerjan, Christoph Niessen, and François Randour. 2021. "More or less regional autonomy? A qualitative analysis of citizen arguments towards (de)centralization in Belgium." *Comparative European Politics* 19 (2):225-247. doi: 10.1057/s41295-020-00234-1.
- Swenden, Wilfried, and Maarten Theo Jans. 2006. "'Will it stay or will it go?' Federalism and the sustainability of Belgium." *West European Politics* 29 (5):877-894.
- Witte, Els, and Harry Van Velthoven. 2000. *Language and Politics. The Situation in Belgium in a Historical Perspective*. Brussels: VUB Press.
- Zolberg, Aristide R. 1974. "The Making of Flemings and Walloons: Belgium: 1830-1914." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 5 (2):179-235.