



Might Belgium Split in Two?

Europe is in a long meltdown. The financial crisis is getting a great deal of the attention connected with this meltdown. Greece, Portugal, and Ireland have public debt ratios to GDP and to government revenues that are scaring off bond purchasers and pushing up the interest paid on government bonds. The selfishness of Europeans (and Americans) who are demanding that the government (i.e. hardworking taxpayers) fund huge packages of social welfare benefits and public employee pensions is a Ponzi scheme that had to fall someday, and that day appears now.



Muslims immigrating into Europe come in such numbers that they seem more like an invading force. The will of Europeans to resist this invasion is highly problematic. There are flickers of hope: Finland has just produced an electoral victory for the Finland First Party and men like Geert Wilders in the Netherlands are showing some stomach for asserting European values. The problem, of course, is that those values are anchored in nothing without Christian faith. The continent is full of “Christian Democrat” parties — Merkel’s coalition government in Germany is led by such a party — but Christian values seem like thin broth and social welfare, all too often, is the substitute for real Christianity.

Another cause of the collapse of Europe has been the fact that the statist dream of a “United States of Europe” has always based on utter misunderstanding of what makes the citizens of different nations happy. True peace has come, more often than not, from “Balkanization” and not unification. Germany is a good example. After the reunification of Germany more than 20 years ago, many thought that the Germans would enter into some golden age. The two nations united, however, are still very different places with people who have different ideas about many things. Austria, no longer part of Germany, does not have those tensions. The German Swiss, who are the predominant nationality in Switzerland, also do not have those tensions.

Putting peoples together in an artificial and synthetic nation does not create civil peace and harmony. Indeed, it has seldom worked in modern history. The Swiss system works because the Swiss Confederation is highly decentralized. Much more common is the brutal infighting of peoples within the old nation of Yugoslavia, the terrorism of Basques in northern Spain, the murderous violence in North Ireland, the Holodomor of the Ukrainian people by Stalin or the genocide in Tibet by Communist China.

The best case scenario for peoples forced to live in the same nation is the Velvet Divorce of the Czech and Slovak peoples. It is possible that we may see that in Belgium. This invented nation of Flemish and Walloon peoples has never been a happy land. During the Second World War there were even instances, during the German invasion of the Lowlands, of military units of these peoples shooting at each other. While the Belgians manifest their unhappiness in more peaceful ways most of the time, the political crisis in Belgium shows just how deep these grievances are in the small nation.

On [April 26, 2010](#), King Albert II, head of state of Belgium, accepted the resignation of the ruling



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government and, as a consequence, there was a general election on June 13, 2010. The system of multi-party parliamentary governments may seem odd to many Americans. The head of government is the leader of the strongest group in the largest chamber of national legislative assembly (House of Commons, Bundestag, Australian House of Representatives, etc.)

Sometimes — often, it seems these days — no party has an absolute majority in this chamber. David Cameron in Britain must rule with the Liberal Party. Angela Merkel must partner with the Free Democrat Party. Stephen Harper in Canada and his Conservative Party have not, in two general elections, been able to win a majority in the Canadian Parliament (even though its “first past the post” system — or “winner take all” in electoral districts favors majorities) and as a result Harper has ruled without a parliamentary majority coalition at all.

So the result in the Belgian election last June, which denied any party a majority, was not that odd. But in the year since King Albert accepted the resignation of the Belgian government, no new government has been formed in the aftermath of the general election in June. Six million Flemings and 4.5 million Walloons simply cannot work together politically any longer. The parties of Belgium have not been able to form a government for an entire year, and each new day sets a record for parliamentary nations without governments.

The king has a caretaker government with quasi-Premier Herman Van Rompuy, but the two biggest parties, the New Flemish Alliance of Flanders and Walloon Socialists simply cannot agree on much of anything, including forming a government. Bart De Wever of the New Flemish Alliance wants the dissolution of Belgium. There are no less than [ten political parties](#) in Belgium with significant political representative in the assembly.

The political configurations right now bear some resemblance to the last years of Weimar Germany. President Hindenburg, as head of state, was compelled to rule by decree without the pretense of support in the Reichstag. There are no Nazis in Belgium, but there is something like rule by power of the head of state, King Albert II, and not by the people.

European Union leaders have expressed concern that this crisis could endanger the economic situation in Belgium. The Union’s president, Herman Van Rompuy, is a past prime minister of Belgium. He has described the situation as “Extremely pitiful ... There is a real chance that in the eyes of the EU we will fall short.” Rompuy, of course, is thinking like the chief executive of a wholly artificial conglomeration of nations.

One solution that pundits seem not to seriously consider is to adopt the policy line proposed by Bart De Wever and his New Flemish Alliance. Why not allow those unhappy to be in the same nation with Francophone Walloons to form their own nation? Why not actively promote “Balkanization” rather than squeezing people into a continental union? Such a Flemish homeland would, undoubtedly, be peaceful, prosperous, and seek good relations with all its neighbors. And it could form a proper government — something that the polyglot Belgians have not been able to do for an entire year.

Map of Belgium:

Flemish-speaking areas in orange



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French-speaking areas in red

Flemish/French bilingual areas with crosshatch

German-speaking areas in green



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