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The Challenges and the Nature of Consociationalism in the 20th and 21st Centuries:

The Case of Belgium and the Netherlands

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SUMMARY

The phenomenon of populism has been a passionately debated topic of political science. Many among political thinkers, theorists and actual decision-makers have not only shared a common point of interest and concern, but they also have approached from a variety of different aspects. As can be witnessed in current times, the threat of the populist "awakening" has not exclusively been the experience of relatively recently democratized countries, but also of enduring and stable democracies. The present thesis is to serve as the introduction and comparison of two examples with consociational arrangement, from the latter category – namely, of Belgium and the Netherlands.

The core of my inquiry lies in the fundamental discrepancy between the traditional eagerness of conventional parties to cooperate and the populist parties with the intention to oppose the arrangement of the former. According to my supposition, the political activity of the *Vlaams Belang* in Belgium and the *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* in the Netherlands generates a tense relation to the consociational arrangement. Namely, these populist factions articulate an exclusive idea of the society – "the people" – which seems to oppose the inclusive nature of consociationalism. Also, their anti-establishment nature contrasts the cooperation and consensus of the elite, whom tend to react to this rather "antisocial" political behaviour with a sort of dissociation, the application of the so-called *cordon sanitaire*. The conclusion that I will endeavour to draw from the case studies of Belgium and the Netherlands in the last, concluding chapter, will hopefully be able to support the following hypothesis: the Flemish *Vlaams Belang* and the Dutch *Partij voor de Vrijheid* have been kept in a distance from actual power, however, their presence have resulted in the traditional parties borrowing elements from their agenda.

It is an unconcealed hope of the author that the thesis will eventually be able to demonstrate that as democracy itself can be viewed as a diverse system, populism by which it has been endangered by, might also be a varied and manifold phenomenon.

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Introduction

"…civil society in a democracy is both complex and pluralistic,
and both its complexities and pluralism
must be properly accommodated in and by the polity."[1]
(Daniel J. Elazar)

It may sound as a *cliché* – thus it is certainly true – that one could hardly point to a country as one lacking any social pluralism – as is equally true the turn-around of the worn-out commonplace: it is close to being certain that there is some type and amount of pluralism in almost every state. In some cases, however, the internal borders of the society have ossified into divisions. The appearance of the supranational besides – or above – the national level of politics, and the enlargement of the competences of the subnational at the expense of the national level in some cases, the general growth of mobility, the populous migrant communities in some Western European countries, and the braying of the right-wing radicals – all the above suggest the modification of the traditional roles – and limits – of the state. And that is why the analysis of the European political cultures becomes reasonable and valid. (*Table 1* shows the support for populist parties in the European Parliamentary elections in a ten-year period, between 2004 and 2014 – which seems rather appropriate, since in May 2019, European citizens will vote the EP representatives, again.)

The present thesis touches upon a tiny, still significant piece of the above – rather widely – described topic, insofar as it attempts to make sense of the political stability and the peaceful coexistence through the consociational approach, as the systems' socio-political "decoration". In order to challenge the contemporary role and strength of the consociational theory, we will investigate along the following question: to what extent have the populist parties of the Low Countries affected the traditionally cooperative political decision-making, and as such, the peaceful coexistence in recent years? We suggest that there is some degree of interconnectedness between the political establishment and its challengers, according to which they mutually affect the policies and rhetoric of each other. Having the above in mind, we would like to point to the nature of the challenges and threats that the consociational arrangement has had to face in contemporary times. In addressing these questions, the experiences and lessons of two multicultural European states will be of help. Although Belgium and the Netherlands – the countries that we reached out to for help – both are parts of the Low Countries

[1] Elazar, 1985, 33-34
In the context of our inquiry, the following words of Daniel J. Elazar are taken as authoritative.

and as such must have some common historical experience, their comparison can be explained elsehow, and thus, is less random than that. That is to say – as it is widely known –, both cases can serve as rich and instructive examples of social-political division: in Belgium, the Flemish-Walloon rivalry has been a lasting source of conflict[2], whereas the Netherlands, as a now depillarised society, has witnessed the articulation of two immigrant parties, which development might evoke some memories of the era of the "accommodation"[3], and thus may find its way back to the consociational instruments, again. While Belgium has the tradition of social tension in her own political history, which might well be relevant, still today, for the Netherlands, social tension might mean the renewed version of old social dynamics. In Belgium, as in the Netherlands, the party system has been able to model the developments of social division. On the following pages, we would like to shed light on the relation between the old parties of the political establishment and its relatively new anti-establishment opposition. Accordingly, we will investigate how the parties of the former has balanced between the increasing popularity of Belgian (Flemish, to be more precise) and Dutch right-wing and/or populist parties. We suggest that the consociational democracies – at least, in our two chosen cases, certainly – provide authentic instances of the rise of a new elite, regarding the fact that cooperation and coalition formation are in the core of the consociational arrangement. Putting the countries under question on the cover of consociationalism is worthwhile, should it seem desirable to nuance and modify, if necessary, the general beliefs about these two countries – all so, taking the political culture, the mentality embedded into it, and the overall spirit, into consideration. Bringing a perspective of longer run to the front, it is recommendable and, hopefully, useful to think and write about the features and possibilities of consociational states as a result of the fact that such an observation could function as a cure to societies divided by the cleavages of the segments of society.[4] As Wouter de Been confirms our belief, "consociationalism in its generic form of power sharing is still topical and relevant. The revolution in information and communication technology has changed the habitat in

[2] Capturing the nature of the lasting "frozen" tension between Flanders and Wallonia, Mnookin and Verbeke wrote an article under the following title, in 2009: Persistent Nonviolent Conflict With No Reconciliation: The Flemish and Walloons in Belgium. In: *Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 72 No. 2, pp. 151-186, 2009.

[3] We are here referring to the title of Arend Lijphart's already-appeared work.

[4] The consociational instruments are enumerated in a descriptive manner in the theoretical framework only; employing and implementing these will give the spine of the case studies, hence the focus of the Belgian and Dutch chapters, which discuss these instruments as embedded in the social and political practice.

which minorities exist."[5] Thus, the chapters below undertake the contemporary employment of Arend Lijphart's findings on "political accommodation."

The structure of the investigation below should reflect these intentions. Following the clarification of the thesis' theoretical framework – thus defining the phenomenon of divided societies and consociationalism –, the spine of the analysis will be lying on two case studies. Next, having laid down the relevance of an analysis on consociationalism in each of these countries, certain processes integral of the societal coexistence – in Belgium's case it is the process of federalisation, while in the Netherlands' it is the pillarisation and de-pillarisation – will be introduced. Introducing the two processes serves us thus we can point to a fundamental difference – exposed by de Been – between the two cases, with regard to the position of the segments. Belgium and the Netherlands, on the one hand, will exemplify the traditional system of consociationalism.[6] What is meant by this is to explore consociationalism as "a *modus vivendi* for established indigenous communities," which offered a set of pragmatic cure "for the political stalemate of religious and ideological segmentation."[7] In such a settlement, each segment is of indispensable importance – were any of them to secede (such as the *Vlaams Belang* has cherished the fantasy of Flemish secession and independence from Belgium), the national unity, as it is, would dissolve. On the other hand, our suggestion here is that there might be evolving the re-awakening of the "old" arrangement in contemporary Holland in a new type of multicultural setting with new social divisions. Additionally, since the importance and the determining role of political elites in consociational theory is hereby accepted, as a reflection to this, both case studies include some chapters relating the Belgian and the Dutch party system.[8] According to our supposition, the political activity of the *Vlaams Belang* in Belgium and the *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* in the Netherlands generates a tense relation to the consociational arrangement due, mainly, to two reasons. First, these – and certainly, other – populist factions articulate an exclusive idea of the society – "the people" – which seems to oppose the inclusive nature of consociationalism. Second, their anti-establishment nature contrasts the cooperation and consensus of the elite, whom tend to react to this rather

[5] de Been, 2012, 531
[6] In the former case, we presume that this assumption is still valid; whereas, as we are about to see, in the latter case, the depillarisation brought this sort of order to an end.
[7] de Been, 2012, 535
[8] Although hereby, with regard to reasons of space, we are not discussing them sufficiently: instead of an exhaustive review of the party families, the processes of party-formation will be presented in the focal point of the relevant chapters.

"anti-social" political behaviour with a sort of dissociation, the application of the so-called *cordon sanitaire*. Finally, the conclusion that we draw from the case studies of Belgium and the Netherlands in the last, concluding chapter, will hopefully be able to support the following hypothesis: the Flemish *Vlaams Belang* and the Dutch *Partij voor de Vrijheid* have been kept in a distance from actual power, however, their presence have resulted in the traditional parties borrowing elements from their agenda.

Although it can be taken as given that both of the countries above, at one point or other of their existence, were in possession of certain features of the consociational order, and turned to its instruments, they never became unanimous and identical due to their consociational character. Such an inquiry seems viable, assuming that there are imminent challenges posed both to Belgium and the Netherlands. Hence, all in all, it might be possible that these countries will be forced to redefine or clarify their roles, at one point, in a milieu where the political left-right dimension has lost of its relevance. However, before addressing these issues, it is important to note that although the thesis below leans heavily on the theoretical guidelines of consociationalism, it does not however in itself challenge the normative elements of the theory, as it also avoids the systematic enumeration of the justifications of why it has been criticized over time. Nor is it aimed at adding more elements to the line of already-existing criticism. It should also be noted already at the outset, that we had to define the concerned time span when structuring the two case studies. As the script was finalized on the 15th April in 2019, hereby, we will present April 2019 as the final point of our inquiry – in such a way, we will refrain from the assessment of the three-level – regional, federal and European-level – elections in Belgium, and the European-level elections in the Netherlands, all being held in May 2019.

	2004	2009	2014	Change in support (%): 2004-2014
The Netherlands	2.6	17	13.3	10.7
Belgium	17.1	11.2	6.4	-10.7

Table 1. Support for radical right parties at EP elections (2004-2014)[9]

[9] Goodwin, 2014, 24

1. Consociational democracy; the phenomenon of consociationalism

The fragmented society and the functioning democracy are two sides of the same coin, did the 'coin' here refer to the reality of Belgium's and the Netherlands' contemporary politics. The mere fact that they are simultaneous phenomena in itself makes their relationship tense and worth to be investigated. This, with good chance, could have been what led Arend Lijphart to analyse the political practices and structures in his country of origin, the Netherlands. In his *Politics of Accommodation*[10], he found that those given division(s) originating in the fragmentation of the society due to class and religion express themselves through a political channel were materialised in the Dutch party system. The issue of the volume was followed and awarded by significant success as a result of its achievement in capturing the nature of the "paradoxical case of strong social segmentation or pillarisation which was also marked by stability and democracy. That is, contrary to expectations, Holland is both stable and democratic despite its extensive social cleavages," concludes van Schendelen.[11] Although the expression itself was absent in his original 1968 book, Lijphart's inquiry grew over the borders of a case study; rather, it turned out to be the establishment of the theory of consociational democracy.[12]

In his *Thinking About Democracy*[13], Lijphart refers to Almond's classification of political systems, which "derives its theoretical significance from the relationship it establishes between political culture and social structure on the one hand and political stability on the other hand."[14] Reaching back to Almond's original 1956 article[15], first, he introduces two criteria – the role structure and political culture –, based on which he finds that it is possible to observe Western democratic political systems in a two-fold classification, instead of Almond's four-fold typology. Accordingly, the two rather broad categories would be the following, did we restrict our focus to the European scene: 1. the United Kingdom (the Anglo-Saxon sphere without the United Stated and the Commonwealth) along with Scandinavian countries, and 2. the remaining European democracies, with the Low Countries – Belgium and the Netherlands –, among others.

[10] Arend Lijphart (1968): The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands. University of California Press, California, 1968. The book was originally written in English; only later was it translated to Dutch.
[11] van Schendelen, 1983, 144
[12] Bogaards, 2000, 395
However, Lijphart admits that he "borrowed" the expression from David Apter. (Lijpharts, 2008, 3)
[13] Arend Lijphart (2008): Thinking About Democracy: Power-sharing and majority rule in theory and practice. Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group, London & New York, 2008
[14] Lijphart, 2008, 25
[15] Gabriel A. Almond (1956): Comparative Political Systems. In: The Journal of Politics, Vol. 18. No. 3, pp. 391-409, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1956

While the former has its roots in a homogeneous political culture, the latter typically has a more fragmented party landscape. These historically embedded patterns have resulted in the establishment of a two-party system in the former, whereas a multi-party system in the latter.[16] As for the dimension of the electoral system, the consociational concept itself – as is generally accepted in the relevant literature[17] – is a non-majoritarian or proportional form of democracy, whereas the Westminster system functions on majoritarian principles.[18] Consociationalism's non-majoritarian nature has been equally approved, however, it might be misleading, at the same time. On the one hand, it is true that none of the subnational units in themselves have the majority needed to form a government alone – that is exactly why elites have to reach out for alliances during the government formation negotiations. On the other hand, however, the thus-born coalitions themselves are aimed at constructing a majority. But here, we bump into the crucial distinction between the two main types of democratic systems. That is to acknowledge, that in the core of Lijphart's theory lies the principle of inclusiveness: the broader percentage of society political arrangements involve and include, the better – whereas in majoritarian democracies, potentially significant portions of the society are kept away as their choice, at the end of the day, will not be reflected in the government's composition.[19] This notion was perfectly captured by Elazar who made a distinction between simple majoritarianism and compound majoritarianism.[20] Based on the short – and supposedly imperfect – review of the features of consociationalism, it does not come as a surprise that consociational democracies are classified to belong to the latter category. According to this concept, majorities are aggregated "either from distinct territories (territorial democracy) or concurrent groups (consociationalism) rather than being counted through simple addition."[21] Hence, the elections will reflect and consider the underlying divisions without, however, renouncing the principle of majority. Second, he adds the behaviour of the elites to the two above-mentioned elements, and refers to this third one as something which is of fundamental significance, and which as such "can account for the stability of the consociational democracies."[22]

[16] Almond, 1956, 397
[17] See e.g.: Andeweg, 2000; Elazar, 1985; Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2014.
[18] Elazar, 1985, 19
[19] Lijphart, 2008, 89-93; Ganghof, 2010, 680
[20] Elazar, 1985, 19
[21] *Ibid*
[22] Lijphart, 2008, 28

As Lijphart himself admitted[23], after 1969, he preferred the usage of another terms: insisting on the vailidity of his findings, Lijphart broadened the concept, turning to different terminology. In the 1980s, consensual democracy began to seem more appropriate, while nowadays, since the 1990s, power-sharing has been the most frequently used expression – for a broader phenomenon.[24] Additionally, paralelly to the expansion of terminology, his geographical scope of analysis fundamentally broadened from the 1970s on; contrary to the fact that Lijphart's work was published at the end of the 1960s, which investigated the conditions of the Netherlands exclusively, the principles and hypotheses were applied and challenged in comparisons of a variety of countries.[25]

Van Schendelen's reminds us, one could ignore the importance of the concept: his fellow Dutchman stood up with his theory in the 1960s, thus in a period, he argues, when the survival of European democracies – contemplated with concern, we suggest – could have seemed questionable.[26] What is more, following Bogaards' reasoning, the cooperative attitude of the elites – according to Lijphart's account – is pictured as the hithertho unidentified link between the pluralist society and democracy along with its promise of peaceful societal relations.[27] To Lijphart, consociational democracy is a form of governance which is based on – and is dependent of – the cooperation of the political elites of a given society. In such a system, agreements are made and consensus is reached by political actors in order to develop their fragmented society into a stable democracy. It explains his considerable attention to the political elites during his research. To describe them, Lijphart drafted four criteria: these concerned the ability, on one hand, to harmonise and balance the segments' interests, and on the other hand, to rise above the differences to make joint efforts. To these, two more factors were added: beside owning the determination for stability and cohesion, it is also crucial that the leading politicians are aware of the dangers of fragmentation.[28] The certain groups have partial autonomy[29], and in their possession of self-rule, the pluralist nature of the state becomes institutionalised. Proportionality is also a precondition to the consociational

[23] *Ibid* 6
[24] van Schendelen, 1983, 174; Bogaards, 2000, 396-397
[25] van Schendelen, 1983, 151 (among others)
[26] *Ibid* 143
[27] Bogaards, 2014, 2
[28] Lijphart, 1975, 188
[29] That is to say, in terms of the Belgian segments, the literature discusses linguistic and ethnic segmental autonomy; as subsequent chapters will confirm. In the Netherlands, however, the pragmatic and task-centred decentralization has been aimed at municipalities.

settlement, whilst the mutual veto provided for minorities facilitates to indicate, were a certain group's interest about to be harmed.[30]

In addition to the four above-mentioned features, in his 1977 book[31], Lijphart – nuancing his theory and benefitting from its flexible contours – enumerated the characteristics and gave some more of them to the list. These favour the creation and the sustanence of consociational democracies – although they are, in fact, neither necessary, nor sufficient factors.[32] To the principle of balance of power – which if conditions are favourable do not materialise between two segments, or centralise in the hands of one segment only – two further parallel criteria are attached: beside the equilibrium, at least three separate segments are indispensable since these ensure that each "slice" of the society is in a minority position.[33] Elaborating the factor of the multi-party system, Lijphart turns to Giovanni Sartori's "calculations," which show that there is not one numerical confine which is equally efficient in every country; although, according to both theorists, for pluralist societies, a moderate multi-party system with three or four parties are likely to be the most favourable solution.[34] Yet, the most relevant principle might well be for the number of parties to comply with the number of segments of the divided society. In terms of the size of the country under examination, the category of the small state is in focus: due to the small size, the internal and external effects contribute – either directly or indirectly – to the success of the consociational order. In terms of the direct effect of being small (that of "smallness"), the elites themselves stand closer to each other, thus – knowing one another – their cooperation is supposed to be more or less effortless. The perception of an external threat is added here, as a direct external effect. To sum up the indirect experience of a small state: there are supposedly fewer interests to harmonize, whereas the direct impact relating the cross-border scene has its roots in rejecting the role to take part, in an active and assertive way, in forming foreign policy.[35]

One could apporach the characterisation of the cleavages – in line with Lijphart's way of thought – based on the following classifications: the number of cleavages; the extent of the fragmentation caused by them; the type of cleavages and the degree of overlapping; effect of "overarching loyalties," in terms of equalisation; finally, the

[30] *Ibid* 213-215
[31]Arend Lijphart (1977): Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration. Vail-Ballou Press, Binghamton, New York, 1977
[32] Lijphart, 1977, 54-55
[33] *Ibid* 56
[34] *Ibid* 63-64
[35] Lijphart, 1977, 55-70

interaction of the party system and social cleavages. In order to define the size of certain groups and the balance of power which materializes on the latter's basis, it is worth to differentiate between "crosscutting" and "overlapping cleavages".[36] Contrary to the latter point, the so-called "overarching loyalties" have an opposite impact: that is to say, while the cleavages themselves are to create and catalyze division, adherence to the segments lessens the potential for division.[37] In accordance with the criterion of representative party system, the parties have to represent the individual components of the population – in other words, it is the party system itself to cover the entire segmented society.[38] It thus seems logical to establish that political variability and instability increases in a directly proportional way with the fragmentation of the political system.[39] The last factor to mention here, may with good chance be the most particular among the above-mentioned: the traditions of the elites' accommodation encourages us to review the past of the given political culture. This might be explained by the supposition, according to which the application and validity of certain practices – which were introduced as the results of an organic evolution – are legitimized by the time since its articulation.[40]

Lijphart's theory has faced criticism and challengers since the 1980s, whom claimed to have discovered inaccuracy and deficiencies in connection with the conceptualization of the research, as with the varibles.[41] Even Bogaards hesitates if the order under question were to be recommended – if Lijphart's reasoning has been supported by the actual experience –, Lijphart's contribution to political science stands without any question.[42] In Lijphart's defence, the following could be claimed: if it is true that "consociationalism relates to the character of a regime,"[43] the Dutch theorist certainly made important steps in describing it. Following the structure of the theoretical

[36] Lijphart, 1977, 71-75
Thus, in the former case, cleavages weaken the impression of being separate, in the latter, they strengthen it.
[37] In the relevant English literature, the dichotomy of "division-cohesion" is used. (Lijphart, 1977, 81)
[38] With regard to the focus of subsequent chapters on the Belgian and Dutch party system, the principle of representativeness remains here with no further detail.
[39] Founded on this, the judgment of segmental separation offers two distinct approaches. According to the first, paralelly to the decrease of clearcut borderlines, decreases interaction – and the chance for conflict. On the contrary, the second approaches from a different angle: to this, interaction and inter-segmental communication means the tool for mutual understanding. (Lijphart, 1977, 87-89)
[40] The expression in quotation marks remain here in Lijphart's own words. (Lijphart, 1977, 71-103)
[41] To give some examples, the interpretation of political stability could indeed be more nuanced, since this factor has been viewed by Lijphart as the lack of revolts and revolutionary situations; nonetheless, according to van Schendelen, elites might fail if they cannot meet the demands of the society. (van Schendelen, 1983, 157) Another weakness of Lijphart's account was found by Daalder, who cautioned theorists to pay more attention to the features of the specifically Dutch political culture and to how the country's history has been reflected by its political system – just like early self-organization, the establishment of a pioneer European bureaucracy. (Daalder, 1989, 4; 12)
[42] Bogaards, 2010, 417
[43] Elazar, 1985, 17

framework-above, consociationalism refers to the totality of the instruments enabling the democratic coexistence of societal segments – and not as an ideal normative order which is sought after.[44]

[44] In de Been's account: "Consociationalism is not usually put forward as an ideal to strive for." (de Been, 2012, 535) Ours is a more pragmatic approach, similarly to de Been's: rather, it reflects the acknowledgement of a society's divisions, and a will to manage them deliberately.

1.1. Societal pluralism and division: The source of consociational democracy

Societal pluralism – which is a fundamental precondition of the subcategories of pluralism – is concerned with the acknowledgement of the segmentation, and as such, we suppose it to be found at any time in history. The more narrow definition of political pluralism – as Szabó, the Hungarian theorist reminds us – was the fruit of the post-Second World War period only; the experience of the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century as well as the example of the Weimar Republic[45] both contributed to the reduction of the definition's scope.[46] The latter personify a type of resentment towards the democratic order, according to which such a settlement might at the end of the day turn out be a fertile ground for tyranny.[47]

The realisation and the implementation of pluralism presumes a commitment and an aspiration – both made on a deliberate decision – to ensure the stability, the constancy and the integration of a society. This given, the pluralist political regimes possess the following characteristics: 1. private interests are expressed through the group; 2. the state dispose only of the usage of (lawful) coercion, and of the monopoly of legislation, provided that its impartiality is a compulsory condition, which ensures that no group has to experience negative and discriminative treatment; 3. political contention is open – both in terms of finances and objectives –, thus anyone has the opportunity to represent any case; 4. in pluralist theories the state itself does not appear as a monolythical centre of power: instead, it is rather about a continuous fluctuation of power between several malleable centres of power. 5. The final feature is far from being of less importance: the quality democratic political processes and the relevant political culture is fundamental – it is supposed to gain general acceptance, and whould be welcome unanimously.[48]

Although the theory of pluralist democracy was developed in Europe, its first actual realisation can be linked to the United States of America. Based on the American

[45] The Weimar Republic was a typical instance, first, of the attempts of democratization between the two World Wars; second, it exemplified the process which leads a country from dictatorship. The Republic was established following Germany's severe defeat after the First World War; from its beginning – except the consolidation between 1923-29 –, internal tensions were pressing the parliamentary system. With regard to the present thesis, it might be relevant that, that the fragmented multi-party system could have contributed to the collapse, since this has traditionally featured the Dutch party system, as well. (Mezey & Szente, 2003, 393-402; Klingelhöfer & Müller, 2015, 104)
[46] Szabó, 1997, 195
[47] *Ibid* 196-197
[48] *Ibid* 197-198

experience – and also, on those of European totalitarian regimes –, and being aware of the scientific articles of European theorists, it was eventually Robert A. Dahl who created the common (theoretical) subset of pluralist democracy and elite theory, under the name 'polyarchy'.[49] Under such a systems, he refers to

"a regime in which the right to participate is broadly extended and the institutional guarantees to oppositions are, by historical standards, comparatively strong and the-barriers to oppositions com- paratively low."[50]

His concept, as it is, a compromise: a settlement inspired by his approach, would realise the ideals of democracy according to and depending on the given sircumstances.[51]

1.2. Coalitions: An elit-given answer to fragmentation[52]

Regarding the fact that both case studies largely rely on the characterisation of its own political elites, it might be worth the attention to spare some time – although not more than is allowed hereby – attempting to explore the tradition of coalition-formation, and why ever turn to such a solution. One may refer to one of the fundamental features of democracies functioning within the frames of a consociational design, the electoral alliance of political parties.[53] Its importance comes without any doubt if we suppose that in such an arrangement, elites are responsible for the political cooperation of the segments – and if so, for the continuous consensus-seeking.

As long as consociational arrangements prevail – rather rhyming with Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg address[54] – the principle of "government of the people, by the people, for the people"[55], it is of no surprise, that in the heyday of the consociational order, governments tended to exceed the seats necessary to form a government.[56] Andeweg's observations seem to confirm the legitimacy of the relationship between political cooperation and formation of (grand) coalition: according to these, the relaxation and dissolution of the ties between pillars, the coalitions themselves did not cease to

[49] Robert A. Dahl (1972): Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1972
[50] Dahl, 1978, 197
[51] Lijphart, 1977, 4
[52] Hence in this chapter, the significance and extent of political actors' role will be underlined, it is to mention at the same time, that consociational democracies regularly apply the instrument of depoliticization: therefore, some competences of decision-making might be delegated to non-political actors. (Andeweg, 2008, 255)
[53] Lijphart, 1977; Klingelhöfer & Müller, 2015, 101-102
[54] The transcript of Abraham Lincoln's speech is available: voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu.
[55] Lijphart, 1999, 2
[56] Andeweg, 2008, 255

exist, yet the broader alliances were gradually replaced by partnerships that barely provided parliamentary majority.[57] Having discussed the coalition formation instrument of consociational cabinets, it is not without justification to introduce the opposition excluded from governing position. Andeweg, De Winter and Müller published an analysis about opposition in consociational democracies, in 2008: in this article, they point to the experience that these parties tend to be, regarding their nature, anti-establishment factions. Their character is well described, and to a certain degree, determined by the following condition: the fact that the parties representing the pillars of a society cover, more or less, the entirety of a society, results in the small size of the opposition. The thus-excluded parties – most of the time without a significant and reachable, stable electorate – have a tendency to pursue a forceful and compelling rhetoric, perhaps lacking any other effective tool in hand, or lacking anything to lose politically.[58]

In any event, their mere participation in the political competition in itself has affected the the rhetoric and the general way established politics traditionally work[59] – as we are about to see first, in the next chapter, and later in the case presentations. As will be unfolded on the subsequent pages, it might be worth investigating the behaviour and performance of the Belgian (in fact, Flemish) *Vlaams Belang* and the Dutch *Partij voor de Vrijheid* led by Geert Wilders, from this aspect.[60] In the course of the last century, parties representing the segments – in effect, traditional participants of political competition – have been sidelined. In the mirror of depillarisation, it is thus not to be held a surprising development, that the *Parti Socialiste* – traditionally popular in Wallonia – is not taking part in the incumbent federal government.[61] As well, the former Dutch government (that was, the Second Rutte cabinet) involved two parties only – the *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* and the *Partij van de Arbeid* –, excluding completely, denominational factions, among others.[62] Now that the 'old' appeal of consociationalism might be fading away, it seems viable to suggest that coalitions, today, are called into being according to different instinctives.[63]

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[57] *Ibid* 257-258
[58] Andeweg et al., 2008, 78
[59] Cammaerts, 2018, 14
[60] It is important to mention here, that in the PVV's case, we will focus on the anti-Islam agenda, however, we will not be discussing the same stream of Vlaams Belang; in the latter case, instead, we will restrict our attention to the VB's hostilities towards Wallonia.
[61] In the present thesis, in the Belgium-related chapters, we will concentrate exclusively on the results of the federal elections.
[62] For the coalition agreement of the current Belgian federal government, see: https://www.premier.be/fr/accord-de-gouvernement; for the coalition agreement of the former Dutch cabinet, see: https://www.houseofrepresentatives.nl/news/coalition-agreement-presented.
[63] Andeweg et al., 2008, 79

2. Defining populism

As a survey on the results of national elections in Europe, conducted by The Guardian, concluded: (predominantly) right-wing populist parties have tripled their electoral support in the last two decades, resulted by a consistent increase since 1998.[64] In this regard, the Low Countries are not exceptions – they are rather the rules. The dynamics between Flanders and Wallonia have been divergent – or centrifugal, as is usually the term of political science in the case of divided societes – recently, thus the gap between the Northern and Southern half of the country has been deepening.[65] The level of distrust that the Dutch population has in the political elite, has considerably increased, lately.[66] Meanwhile, both Belgium and the Netherlands have facing struggling with the adverse effects of the economic crisis.[67] Certainly, there is more to explore in the populists' "unorthodox appeal,"[68] these factors are yet believed to contribute to the salient electoral success of regionalist or populist parties.

Taking the considerably heightened emotions of contemporary populism into account, it is of no surprise that numerous theorists have up to our day tried to give a more or less comprehensive definition in order to grasp the character of the populist state of mind. In this vein of scholarly works, Müller's volume is a very sharp-eyed introduction. On the pages of his book – *What Is Populism?*, published in 2016 –, he interprets the relation between the people and the elite as a sharp clash between two fundamentally different, but in themselves monolithic camps. Their confrontation is of a principled and moral nature; at the same time, is based on an extremely simplified notion: in their concept, the self-interested and corrupt elite stands against "the people" – the "morally pure and fully unified" entity.[69] While the former supposedly lacks the crucial democratic legitimacy, the latter suffers from the absence of proper and sufficient representation. Not else than the liberal democratic order seems to be blamed for that, for the its institutional features tend to "undermine the proper implementation of the general will."[70] Acting in the name of popular will – thus giving the latter what it has an organic and undoubted right for –, that is what gives impetus to a populist politician

[64] Lew et al., 2018
[65] André & Depauw, 2015, 228
[66] Kemmers et al., 2015, 477; 481-487
[67] André & Depauw, 2015, 228
[68] Hartleb, 2015, 46
[69] The quotation is Müller's own. (Müller, 2016, 19; 25-27)
[70] Huber & Schimpf, 2017, 146

or movement. Concerning the people themselves to represent, the lines between the true and authentic people – whom deserve exclusive representation – and all the others apart from the former, are necessarily artificial – and not less importantly, potentially dangerous.[71] Ivan Krastev refers to the populist threat as the possibility "that society falls into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups."[72]

From the above-mentioned assumptions, three features can be drawn the simultaneous existence of which makes populist politics fundamentally different from the practices and principles of the mainstream political arrangements. These are, namely: antielitism, antipluralism and an overall aversion towards not less than the entire political establishment.[73] Through the lenses of populist politicians, people are seen as – according to Canovan's words – the one and only "rightful source of legitimate power"[74] – however, their definition of people is constructed, hence artificial. As well, their position is the following: they stand with the "forgotten mass of ordinary people,"[75] and against the political establishment, which is generally viewed as an elitist body of politicians, who have been in a distance from the 'true' citizens and their everyday problems.

As we have pointed it out earlier, populism might well be inherent to the current – predominantly representative – form of democracy, it seems arguable to devote some more thoughts to the nature of their contentious relation.[76] Müller organized the elements in which cases populism and democracy inevitably clash,[77] but concludes with an observation which will make his readers think that the "populist instinct"[78] goes against rationality. Namely, he finds that "[w]hat distinguishes democratic politicians from populists is that the former make representative claims in the form of something like hypotheses that can be empirically disproven on the basis of the actual results of regular procedures and institutions like elections." And since "their claim is of a moral and symbolic – not an empirical – nature, it cannot be disproven." Hence, populist politicians are likely to stick with their ideas, in the face of everything, no matter how it is attempted to refute their arguments.[79]

Concerning the ideological course, populism – again – does not prove to be a simple case. Although ending with an 'ism', populism is not similar to liberalism,

[71] Müller, 2016, 19; 25-27
[72] Krastev, 2007
[73] Müller, 2016, 19
[74] Canovan, 2004, 242
[75] *Ibid*
[76] Huber & Schimpf, 2017, 146
[77] Müller, 2016, 77-78
[78] The expression is Amichai Magen's own. (Magen, 2018, 122)
[79] Müller, 2016, 39

socialism or conservatism, since it lacks a systematic and consistent ideological framework. Ben Stanley in his 2008 article merely exempts the positioning of populism on the ideological spectrum which is taken as a basis of our political thinking, by raising that populism as it is "should be regarded as a distinct ideology," regarding the fact that it posseses "a particular way of construing" interactions.[80] Without bringing in the verdict here, we might conclude, that at best, there is no populism – instead, there are populisms. Arguing that the two populist movements under question are far from being uniform, we will return to the comparison of their circumstances and character in the Conclusion.[81]

[80] Stanley, 2008, 95

[81] It is important to call the attention to the following restriction: in the VB's case, we will exclusively discuss – hereby we will not touch upon the party's anti-immigrant rhetoric, although we are aware of the fact that the movement first gained momentum with its anti-integration and anti-Islam stances. However, we have to underline, that the main aim of the present thesis is not the comparison of the immigration policies of Belgium (or Flanders, we might add) and the Netherlands.

BELGIUM: LESSONS OF A CONSOCIONATIONAL FEDERATION

Introduction

"The recent decade marks a radicalisation in the dynamics of regionalised party competition, increasingly ending in stalemate."[82] This is the very first sentence in André and Depauw's account of the latest Belgian federal elections in 2014. In their article, the authors suggest that tensions did not seem to soften in the country which had been not only federalized by the 1990s, but also, the subnational level has since had a number of still broadening policy fields to take care of.

Indeed, what since has happened, could not disprove of it. In an interview given to the VRT television channel in January 2016, Liesbeth Homans – politician of the New Flemish Alliance (henceforward: N-VA) and the Vice-Minister-President of the Flemish government – stated that while she finds 2020 too close, she hopes Belgium to "cease to exist" by 2025.[83] On the following day, Bart de Wever, the party's leader commented Homans' words by saying: he would (rather) avoid to tie the developments to dates. It is important to regard the upcoming elections in May 2019[84] – the leaked extract of the interview could even be held to be campaign rhetoric (although, quite an early one). Hence, it will soon be time for the Belgian parties – and not only the Flemish, but also the Walloon political groupings – to finally take sides on how they see Belgium's administrational future: that is, whether they envision confederalization – the further expansion of the federational arrangement –, or the secession of Flanders which would bring with itself the dissolution of Belgium as a federation.[85]

It would not be surprising at all, if Homans were to give an early foretaste of the ideas of the N-VA. The Paris events in 2015[86] with no doubt intensified the sentiments of the Flemish separatists: namely, following the horrible attack in the French capital, the separatist rhetoric was complemented by a rather confident element. Jan

[82] André & Depauw, 2015, 228
[83] Cerulus, 2016
[84] That is, namely: the representatives of the subnational and federal level, and the delegates to the European Parliament will be elected on the same day.
[85] One factor against (any further) division – although the real degree of his influence is questionable – is the king himself, traditionally viewed as the symbol of the Belgian unity; Albert II followed his father on the thrown in 1993, who could thus be the monarch of a federal Belgium, and was succeeded by his son, by Philip in 2013. The current king reacted to the March events in a video, in which he expressed a commitment to stand up against the threats in unity. The video and the transcript is available: Dhnet.be.
[86] Again, later, on 22 March in 2016, Brussels was hit by suicide attacks.

Jambon, the Minister for Security and Internal Affairs in the current federal government[87] once referred to the success of the Flemish leadership in Antwerp – of which the Mayor is Bart De Wever himself – in handling the challenges in relation with the Jihadists.[88] His acknowledgment, certainly, should not lead us to far-reaching conclusions, however, his words could be understood as someone's completely convinced of the capability of the Flemish elite in showing the entire country how such situations should be managed.[89]

It may easily happen that the – now serial – failures in forming a central government are symptoms and expressions of a certain irreconcilable antagonism. It is notable, that having waited for a total of 737 days for the central Belgian government to come into office[90] in 2007-2008, first and later, in 2010-2011, the latest elections in 2014 were also followed by a four-month vacuum in the seats of the central executive power. Furthermore, with the widely-supported N-VA withdrawing from the federal executive coalition, the country has been conducted by a minority caretaker government since mid-December 2018 – and is, at the same time, at the brink of the upcoming elections.[91] The more and more obvious hardships of successful cooperation between the segments of society raises up some questions, one which could easily be the following: may it be possible, that the usage of the consociational tools is not more than a mere – Kris Deschouwer once put it – "institutional obligation"[92]? If so, might the essential will and eagerness of political elites to cooperate be fading away? At any rate, the fact that secessionist tensions have disturbed the peace and stability of a country which is generally seen as the capital of the European unity, definitely draws the attention to the Belgian democracy.[93]

The subsequent chapters of the paper undertake a dual task: on the hand, they review the process of devolution which – through the six constitutional reforms – led the Belgian unitary state to the Belgian Federation. (In fact, this is the core of the

[87] At the time of writing (April 2019), the federal government was not functioning anymore; Belgium was then led by a caretaker government. (Cerulus, 2018)
[88] Traynor, 2015
[89] Interestingly, however, the „slip of the tongue" in January 2016 is not without precedent or context: in December 2006, in a programme – in the making of which Belgian politicians, too, took part – on a Frenh-language channel in Belgium, viewers ear-witnessed a statement on Flanders' independence. The political hoax was followed by chaos and panic, which could only be eased by persistent comments and statements given for several weeks by journalists and politicians. (Bangó, 2009, 136)
[90] Cendrowicz, 2014; Caluwaerts & Reuchamps, 2015, 282
[91] As regards the N-VA's exit, they were not willing to provide their support for the United Nations' migration pact. (Cereulus, 2018)
[92] Deschouwer, 2006, 901
[93] Looking from one step further, taking the broader European context into consideration, we can conclude that the European subnational entities were given more latitude in the 1990s. Since this time, accordingly, they have had more channels – the Council of Ministers and the Committee of the Regions – to transmit their opinion about the European Union's continuous development. (Hooghe & Marks, 2000, 81)

underlying paradox of keeping the country together, as it is, and the ability of the segments' accommodation.) On the other hand, they introduce the Belgian political elite as the 'conductor' of the Walloon-Flemish coexistence – and of course, that of the federalization. The former analysis supposes the continual change of the central government's role, insofar as the subnational entities were gradually moving away. The latter aspect is discussed predominantly in two aspects. First, in terms of the role that each party or party family have played in the political scene, and which position these entities represented during the federalization process, besides how each of them has felt towards the Flemish-Walloon cooperation and coexistence. Second, regarding the role played by the right-wing populist Flemish Interest (abbreviation: VB). All the above, with strict regard to consociationalism being evermore the instrument of the balancing between diverse interests, the compromise and consensus between the pillars of the fragmented political system, and thus, as the mitigation of the tangible tension in the Belgian society. The relationship between the Dutch-speaking Northern and the French-speaking Southern part of the country has traditionally been charged with mutual hostility and strain. However, the new millennium had already added some more elements to the list which might lead to an even more taut situation.

I. Consociationalism in Belgium: The test of the Flemish-Walloon coexistence

Although the paper below focuses on the populist challenge in consociational contexts, in this case, provided that consociationalism gets a role in the context of the Flemish-Walloon coexistence, and that the developments of the 19th century lived on continuously in the practice of accommodation in the subsequent century, it is worth the attention to have a look at its beginnings.

Belgium is often perceived as a divided country due to the Flemish-Walloon conflict – it is however important to note that back at the time of gaining independence from the United Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1830, there was nothing of a hostility between the two constitutive units of the country.[94] Moreover, due both to the distrust towards the Northern Low Countries and to the "conviction of the Belgians' own national identity,"[95] during the 15 years of being forced to live under the Dutch king's command, a unified resistance was urged throughout the country.[96] The immediate aftermath of the revolution was characterized by the atmosphere of consociationalism: that was, the alliance of the traditional noblemen, the church, the industry and commerce, and finally, the intellectuals. It might have been the placating tone and the inclination for cooperation that Arend Lijphart sensed; he originates the Belgian consociationalism from the political practice of the early 19th century.[97] Notwithstanding, it shortly became obvious that as soon as the Dutch supremacy came to an end – predominantly and widely felt as oppression –, following a short period of peaceful interaction, the liberal-Catholic unity began to decay, and accordingly, the subsequent decades of the 19th century witnessed the unfolding political opposition of these once-allied groups.[98] During this period, the aspirations of the Flemish half of the country were the first to realize

[94] At least, it did not play a significant part (role?) in the newborn constitutional monarchy's politics. (Bardi, 2001, 175)
[95] Erdődy, 2010, 1
[96] That is to say, the strategic order of the Holy Alliance led Belgium to a monarchy common with the Netherlands, in 1815, given the necessity of a powerful neighbouring entity had France broken the rules laid in the discussions which followed the Napoleonic wars. William I as the then-monarch of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands intended to introduce the Dutch system in his land – an intention which was experienced as oppression by the Belgian population. (Szűcs, 2005, 37; Erdődy, 2010, 2)
[97] Arend Lijphart – agreeing with Val R. Lorwin – refers to the liberal-Catholic union as one of the purest, most typical instance of consociational democracy. (Lijphart, 1968, 212) Nonetheless, Kris Deschouwer in a 2006 article of his reached the following somewhat opposing conclusion: consociationalism was more revealing before the process of federalisation than after that, since deciding on federalising the country itself is the proof that the Flemish and the Walloon portions of society were willing to get further from each other. (Deschouwer, 2006, 896)
[98] Johancsik, 1994, 54

in a movement basically of Catholic character, organized to standardize their language and also to render it equal with French.[99] The organization of the Flemish side was at the same time, a key moment for the Walloons as well, since their movement in the South in the 1870s could be understood as a reaction to the articulating and gradually strengthening Flemish identity in the North. However, while the bond between the Flemish movement[100] and the Catholic Church was a shared and common element, potentially catalyzing the community's unity, the Walloons were lacking such a thing due to the anti-clerical and liberal features of the Walloon movement.[101] Again, the opposition of the Flemish and Walloon community, at first of cultural and linguistic character, began to materialize following the gaining of independence from the Dutch domination, and to deepen at the end of the 19th century.[102]

Consociationalism as the deliberately applied tool of conflict-resolution first appeared in 1918, in possession of the experience of the First World War.[103] The then-reigning Albert I succeeded in arranging the three traditional links of the political elite around one table, in the hope of finding a common solution for the obvious and tangible intersegmental tensions. The negotiations were finalized with the Loppem Agreements, which could well be contemplated as the zero point of the consociational order, considering that they secured the right for self-organization for the different sections of society.[104]

After one long century – and two world wars –, the Flemish movement gained momentum again: this time in the 1960s, the ambitions of the Flemish were underpinned by their significantly and vigorously developing economic performance. What is more, in possession of the universal suffrage, their demographic advantage also could materialize in political representation.[105] At the same time, it resulted in a widespread

[99] Following the First World War, the Flemish movement broadened its scope: after 1918 it aimed its activity at forming and establishing „an independent Flemish subnational identity". (Keszthelyi, 2009, 92-93)
[100] It is a curiosity that the expression 'Flemish' covered the habitants of the Low Lands, until the end of the 18th century. (Karsai, 1986, 47)
[101] Keszthelyi, 2009, 93-94
[102] Ignáth, 2002, 173
[103] In addition to the significant material losses, the warfare amplified the political tension: in that chaotic scenery, the Flemish envisioned the opportunity to gain their autonomy, hence they benefited from the Germans' help and with that, founded a Dutch-speaking university. Due to the unpleasant memory of the German assistance, however, the case of the Flemish independence settled for while. (Kossmann-Putto & Kossmann, 1998, 51)
[104] Deschouwer, 2012, 6
[105] In 1955, the Walloon industrial production was still ahead of the Flemish one – yet one decade later, the industrial productivity per capita was more prosperous in Flanders. (Barsi, 2001, 177) It is well-known that the World Wars caused serious destruction in Belgium. The country joined the European Coal and Steel Community negotiations in 1950; Belgium has traditionally been dependent of the heavy industry, and in the period following the Second World War, on the export of such products, as well. The country was the trading partner simultaneously of France and of Germany, and as such, Belgium potentially had the chance to lessen the tension between the two countries during the Cold War. There were signs of the difficulties of the increase and development of the Walloon

fear of a potential Flemish dominance within the Walloon community which was falling behind in economic efficiency, and which, at the same time, was a demographic minority.[106] In this frustrating atmosphere, the tension between the social segments manifested twice in the post-war period, until 1958: first, the return of the Belgian king to the thrown, and second, the again relevant school question, both preparing the fiasco around the Catholic University of Leuven.[107] Different reactions were given by the Flemish and the Walloon movement, and they approached the imminent federalism from diverse aspects, articulating different aspirations. While the Flemish group demanded linguistic and cultural autonomy, the Walloons insisted on the establishment of regions organized according to the territorial principle, and thus urged regional autonomy in which they foresaw the solution to the economic recession of the Southern parts of Belgium. To the former, the formation of communities, and to the latter, that of regions was the response, both within the process of federalization.[108]

Since the case study on Belgium basically focuses on the ethnical differences of the two societal segments, we will confine ourselves to give not more than a short outline of the Belgian pillar system founded on a denominational and ideological basis.[109] The essential feature of the Catholic pillar was a strict "Church-centrism," which owned a broad net of institutions with schools[110], nursery homes and hospitals in it. The socialist pillar relied heavily, first, on the movement of industrial workers, and later – having organized political representation – on the Socialist Party.[111] The liberals, however, did not participate in the political scene as a mass movement; the liberal trade union, the organizations of social security and their cultural associations were not absorbed into

economic competitivity already in the 1950s: here the mainstream concept of the industrial renewal was one based primarily on machines, which foreshadowed a more severe level of unemployment. In contrast, new, modern industries – such as the car industry, the chemical industry and the electronics – took roots in the Flemish territories. In addition, the Walloon economic fallback was stimulated by the fact that by the mid-20th century, Flanders had become more attractive to foreign investments. A key development in this period was that the economic dominance passed in the hands of Flanders. The declining Walloon economy thus could expect help not only from the Walloon investors, but also from the central government, but at the end of the day, neither of them turned out to be a source of help; the latter showed neither the capability, nor the inclination in making structural changes in the Southern part of the country. (Kossmann-Putto & Kossmann, 1998, 43-53; Swenden & Jans, 2006, 878; Ignáth, 2002, 183)

[106] Deschouwer, 2009, 561

[107] For more on these developments: see Chapter III.

[108] Swenden & Jans, 2006, 881

[109] Such inquiries have been encouraged by Andeweg, De Winter and Müller: in their point of view, Belgium – due to its dual division – is going through two parallel, somewhat opposing processes: while the social class and the religious pillar have been fading away, the cleavage around the linguistic segments of society has become even more significant – and it continues to do so. (Andeweg et al., 2008, 79)

[110] The state's participation in the financial support of the parochial schools was going to be a central element of the conflict between the socialists and the Catholics in the course of the 20th century – but for a more detailed introduction of this, see the upcoming chapters of the paper.

[111] At the dawn of the 20th century, the Belgian left-wing viewed the reformist principles as normative: as a representative of this did Emile Vandervelde function, who – in terms of his background – was a member of the left-wing liberal middle-class. (Arblaster, 2012, 192)

a well-organized system of institutions. Similarly, they did not run their own schools: they traditionally supported state schools instead of parochial ones.[112] In conclusion, the conflict which has divided Belgium for more than one and a half century is fed by two sources:[113] on the one hand, the regional economic disparities of the North and South, and on the other hand, the dominance of the French language.[114] The confrontation of the two Belgian segments is therefore to be comprehended in an economic and political dimension.

[112] Deschouwer, 2012, 7

[113] According to the available literature, one of the most crucial questions in connection with the conflict is to find out what happened between the Dutch- (Flemish-) and the French-speaking communities; another would focus on explaining and suggesting solutions to it. Regarding the zero point of the conflict, the theorists have approached the above-mentioned questions in two ways: certain believe that the development of the 1960s mean the beginning of rivalry, while others claim that what happened almost 60 years ago, was not more than the manifestation of a process originating in the 19th century. (Huyse, 1981, 107-108)

[114] The *lingua franca* of the small elite was, in fact, French (under Napoleon, the Southern part of the Low Lands witnessed a forceful Frenchification); however, according to the results of the first census in 1846, 57% of the country spoke Flemish (or any dialect of it) as a native language. (Johancsik, 1994, 57)

II. The way towards the federalized settlement

Originally, the 1831 constitution of the independent Belgium – the "charter of unionism"[115], coined by Erdődy – designed a unified, yet decentralized state. Although it could only remain so, as long as the political and social structures themselves were characterized by homogeneity.[116] Accordingly, in subsequent times, the social dynamics had driven the political elites representing the Flemish and Walloon segments of society by the mid-20th century, to step on the way of a slow and gradual process of federalization at the end of which Belgium stands before us as an asymmetric federation with a truly complicated structure.[117] In any event, without knowing if Belgium would actually transform into a confederation or whether it will eventually go on as a federation, it stands without any doubt that a clearer differentiation of the competences of the Communities and Regions should be made, perhaps following another (European) federal state's example. Doing so would ensure a more transparent organisation and a viable administration, so that there would be a way leading out of the "Belgian labyrinth."[118] As we are about to see, there are two distinct groups of the Belgian State Reforms: four reforms before and two reforms after the development of Belgium turning into a federal state.

According to the first constitutional reform of 1970, the hitherto unitary legislature was replaced by two legislative bodies, separated on the basis of language, both of which exercised power through decrees.[119] The State Reform divided the two linguistic communities on the level of the political elite, as well: accordingly, each elected member of the Parliament was obliged to represent exclusively the members his or her own community.[120] The constitutional reform, avoiding every form of discrimination, introduced certain measurements of minority protection[121], all of which are consociational

[115] The National Congress the Belgian constitution approved of in February 1831 was the outcome of the compromise of several groups of the society: namely, it could be claimed to be the compromise of the Catholics and liberals – thus, the Church and the state –, as well as that of the Flemish and Walloon population. The quoted expression is Gábor Erdődy's and was found in the author's 2010 article. (Erdődy, 2010, 9)
[116] Alen & Ergec, 1994, 5-11
[117] Swenden, 2002
[118] The Belgian poet Geert Van Istendael wrote his book under the estimated title 'The Belgian Labyrinth' in 1989, originally titled as: Het Belgisch labyrint: de schoonheid der wanstaltigheid.
[119] Belgian Federal Government, n. i.
[120] Although the representatives of the bilingual Bruxelles-Halle-Vilvoorde constituency were free to decide which group they intended to belong to. (Deschouwer, 2009, 902)
[121] Minorities were allowed to take part in "managing, administrative and consultative" processes. (Karsai, 1986, 153)

instruments: the double majority[122], the principle of parity[123] and – to prevent the French-speaking community from negative treatment – the 'alarm bell procedure'[124] were hereby the standards of legislation. For the purpose of the reached compromise, the Flemish (nationalists) were given the opportunity of cultural federalism, and – in turn – the foundations of the Regions were laid as requested by the Walloon population.[125] Also, the agreement organized regionalization on a territorial basis, as well as provided economic independence for the resulting constituent subnational units.[126] The second State Reform[127] – developed in 1980 – referred to the subnational units (hitherto cited as 'cultural communities') as Communities[128], which were provided by a legislative (the Council), and an executive body (community governments). The second amendment continued the regulation of the regional level of state: within its meaning, the Flemish and Walloon Regions were established, setting up Council and a government for both.[129]

While the 1980 Reform remained without any provision concerning the status of Brussels, the 1988 package of amendments dealt primarily with that: the third State Reform ensured the establishment of regional institutions (a Council – later, a Parliament – and a government) for Brussels. Accordingly, the capital carries out tasks in a regional and a metropolitan scope.[130] Besides, the competences of the Communities and Regions broadened.[131] One of the unprecedented developments of the Belgian devolution is that the subnational elements obtained the right to make international agreements in their competence. For the foreign policy guidelines and principles, the central government

[122] The principle determined a high treshold in terms of the constitutional reforms: on one hand, two-thirds of all the members of the Parliament, on the other hand, the majorities of every linguistic groups had to support in order for it to come into force. (Deschouwer, 2009, 902)
[123] Accordingly, the same number of either French- and Dutch-speaking representatives had to participate in the central government's work – not counting, however, the Prime Minister. (Swenden, 2002, 76)
[124] For the purpose of the instrument – applied in one case only, so far –, if at least 25% of the representatives of a linguistic group judges an initiative dangerous or harmful regardin his or her community, they have the right to "ring" the alarm bell. (Deschouwer, 2009, 902)
[125] Thirdly, the unionists were appeased by being told that these measurements meant no harm to Belgium's unity.
[126] De Winter & Baudewyns, 2009, 288
[127] A part of its background is that – having failed to reach an agreement in some cases (including the status of the capital), and that the cultural communities already were in entitled to decide not only on cultural issues, but also on those related with healthcare and social affairs – the debate on language usage and the constitutional quarrels accelerated already in that decade. (Karsai, 1986, 153)
[128] These are the following: the Flemish Community, the French-speaking Community and the German-speaking Community. (Ignáth, 2002, 174)
[129] The regional institutions of Flanders soon merged with those of the Flemish Community, thus since 1980, a common Council (later: Parliament) and government represented Flanders' interests. In spite of this, the French-speaking population never made such a decision: the institutions of the Walloon Region and those of the French-speaking Community have been separate up to now. (Keszthelyi, 2009, 97)
[130] Ignáth, 2002, 174
[131] According to the modification, the communal level is in charge of education, as well; the Regions obtained tasks concerning transportation and utilities. (Belgian Federal Government: n. i.)

was in charge.[132] The first phase of the State Reforms – that is, the federalizing one – came to an end with the fourth Reform – to be more precise, with the 1992 *Accord de la St. Michel*.[133] Hence, Belgium had developed into a federal state by 1993[134], fundamentally characterised by centrifugality, the bipolar nature and the greater significance of the territorial rather than the personal principle.[135] In the case of Belgium, a country traditionally divided by economic disparities, it is worth mentioning hereby the provision which regionalized international trade.[136] In addition, it is also a relevant development in terms of international participation, that their international competences were enumerated and fixed in the fourth State Reform.[137] One of the sources of the fifth State Reform was the Lambermont Agreement, the merit of which was the delegation of some additional competences – in the field of agriculture, fishing and foreign trade – to the Regions and Communities. Aditionally, more financial responsibility – along with a broader scope of competences – was handed over to the subnational units (e.g. Regions were in charge of tax collection).[138] The Reform also outlined some provisions concerning the funding of Communities.[139] The Lombard Agreement, as the other source of the 2001 amendment adjusted the Brussels institutions.[140]

Following rapid changes of government and some lengthy negotiations on forming the government[141], as the result of a political consensus, the sixth State reform was eventually drafted during the fall of 2011. The "Butterfly Agreement" (in Dutch: *Vlinderakkoord*; in French: *L'accord papillon*) – which was reached by eight parties, Elio Di Rupo being the Prime Minister at the time – is a groups of reformist provisions of a variety of scope.[142] As an undoubtedly momentous development, one of the neuralgic

[132] However, it is a feature of the Belgian practice that during international negotiations – to the "outside" – to represent a unified stand. (Keszthelyi, 2009, 97)
[133] As it were to approve of the state's federal structure, the central government has been referred to as federal since this development. (Alen & Ergec, 1994, 60)
[134] The first article of the constitution's original text declares that "Belgium is comprised of provinces" (The document is available on the following link: http://mjp.univ-perp.fr/constit/be1831.htm), whilst the same article of its 1994 version affirms, that "Belgium is a federal state, which is comprised of communities and regions." (Alen & Ergec, 1994, 64) Its subnational elements are the following: the Flemish, French-speaking and Dutch-speaking Communities, and beside those, Flanders, Wallonia and the Region of the capital Brussels. (Barsi, 2001, 181)
[135] Kőváriné Ignáth, 2009, 209
[136] Ignáth, 2002, 174
[137] Keszthelyi, 2009, 97
[138] Kőváriné Ignáth, 2009, 210-211
[139] Belgian Federal Government: n. i.
[140] According to this, the Brussels members of the Flemish Parliament are elected directly. Furthermore, the legislation of capital Brussels is bound to get a majority in both linguistic communities for the administrative provisions on the regional level. (Belgian Federal Government n. i.; Keszthelyi, 2009, 97)
[141] As is known, prior to the sixth State Reform, Belgium had a considerate difficulty in forming a government following the federal elections, first in 2007, and then in 2010.
[142] Verbeke, 2014, 124-125

cases in Belgian politics was achieved a solution to. Thus, above certain legal and administrative modifications, the crucial point of the sixth Reform was the division of the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde constituency into Flemish Brabant and Brussels comprising of 19 municipalities.[143] By the same token, some long-standing political taboos were touched upon for the first time – to the Walloons' greatest regret: the most significant of these was the decentralisation of certain areas of social security (i.e. family allowances).[144] The Agreement received altogether diverse reactions: some – including Goossens and Cannoot – argue that the sixth State Reform was rather a progress in the discussion on the (con)federal state structure – and as such, a potential step towards the seventh State Reform –, than the closure of such a debate.[145]

Concluding the above-introduced transformation, Maesschalk and Van de Walle note that federalization in Belgium was an energy-intensive process for the political elites of the two segments, due to which the chances for important reforms were hindered, which contributed to the unfolding of political dysfunctions. Perhaps more importantly, they point to the paradoxical result of the federalizing State Reforms: this "low incidence of shared policy competencies in the Belgian federation further increases the scope for policy divergence and experimentation." In such a context, "more regional autonomy is seen as the best solution to policy failure," while perhaps more advantageous and rather cost-efficient practices tend to be ignored.[146]

Before turning to the introduction of the actual elites involved in the federalization process, we would like to take a moment to overview the arch drawn by the series of State Reforms in the last roughly fifty years. Based on the chapter above, the two originally identified phases of State Reforms can be subdivided in the following way: while the first two called the subnational units into being, the subsequent agreements concerned the delegation of power and competences towards the subnational level. That is, whilst the third and fourth Reforms expanded their initial competences, the fifth one enlarged their financial latitude. All the above given, the sixth State Reform – as the latest actual development hitherto – finally disrupted the social security, formerly held to be the untouchable 'glue' of the more or less existing unity in Belgium. For those worried about this questionably functioning unity it might be a warning sign that the

[143] Simultaneously, the courts in Brussels were divided to separate French- and Dutch-speaking bars. (Goossens & Cannoot, 2015, 35)
[144] Goossens & Cannoot, 2015, 44; Béland, 2018
[145] Goossens & Cannoot, 2015, 49
[146] Maesschalck & Van de Walle, 2006, 1014-1015

Flemish Interest[147] set the "diving board" of Flemish separatism and independence in the division of this field into a separate Flemish and Walloon one in the beginning of the third millenium.[148] Yet, the case of an independent Flanders has since been on the agenda of a more moderate force on the political right, the New Flemish Alliance[149] – as will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

[147] The *Vlaams Blok* reorganized itself in 2004, and changed its name to *Vlaams Belang*. In the next chapter, we will outline these developments in more detail.
[148] Mudde, 2000, 105
[149] Boonen & Hooghe, 2014, 62

III. The 'conductor' of the Belgian federalisation: The party system in Belgium

Parties were established in the coming decades after the declaration of Belgian independence in 1830.[150] One feature of this period was the lack of sharp confrontations among different parties, neither were there any clashes between the aristocracy and the Church. Another was the participation of conservative forces in the independence movement.[151] Due to the determinant role of parties – namely, a specific system of clientele[152] was developed between the parties and the citizens, the former being the representatives of the "territorial identities"[153] – the Belgian political system is often referred to as a "partitocracy".[154]

The gradual extension of the right to vote in 1893[155], in 1919 and finally, in 1948[156] largely contributed for the wider involvement of the society in the political decision- and opinion-making. As a result of the voters' adherence, new parties have had a hard time in their breakthrough.[157] It is fundamental and unique of the Belgian party system – and is also a factor in the political culture – that it is bipolar[158] (or binary): since 1970s, there have not been a nation-wide or national, so-called Belgian, party. It is important to note, however, that the Labour Party (*Parti du travail de Belgique* and *Partij van de Arbeid van België* in French and in Dutch) in Belgium functions as a bilungual faction which refers to itself as national.[159] The flexibility and the (cap)ability to adapt to changes is proved by the fact that parties in general could keep their voters following their division along the ethnic-linguistic cleavages in the 1970s.[160] In addition, as was premised in an earlier chapter, coalitions characterize government formation, as none of the parties gained a sufficient majority.[161] Indeed,

[150] The liberals gathered into a political party in 1846, the Catholics did so in 1884, while one year later, the evolution of the industrial society brought with it the establishment of the Socialist party. (Csizmadia, 2004, 68)
[151] The constitutional monarchy gaining independence at the time, included both conservative and liberal elements. (Erdődy, 2010, 7-8)
[152] Johancsik, 1994, 54-57
[153] Keszthelyi, 2009, 92
[154] Although Lieven de Winter already used the expression in an article of his published in 2000. (Csizmadia, 2004, 72; De Winter, 2000)
[155] According to this development – which was due to the agreement between the workers and the Catholics –, every Belgian citizen above the age of 25 years was entitled to vote, while each constituent's votes were maximised in three. The introduction of compulsory voting was brought about also by the 1893 reform of the electoral system. (Johancsik, 1994, 55; Maurice Vauthier, 1894, 726)
[156] Kossmann-Putto & Kossmann, 1998, 51
[157] Johancsik, 1994, 57
[158] Swenden, 2002, 76
[159] Barsi, 2001, 190; Ignáth, 2002, 176; Marxistleninist.wordpress.com, 2010
[160] The Communist Party of Belgium is an exception to it, having lost most of its supporters by the 1958 elections. (Karsai, 1986, 170
[161] Reaching a compromise became an established instrument of conflict-resolution. (Johancsik, 1994, 55)

except for the Socialist administration, incumbent for a week, in March 1946, and the exclusively Christian-Democratic government between 1950 and 1954, Belgium was always led by multi-party coalitions, in the post-war period.[162] However, shadow cabinets – namely, the opposition forces which could put pressure on the government parties, and be potent to take over – have been absent.[163]

Considering the political developments of, and how the Belgian party system unfolded in the last century, the parties in Belgium might be classified into three distinct groups as follows: (1) traditional parties established on certain ideological waves; liberal and Christian (Catholic, predominantly), and – in the wake of the Walloon labour movement – the Socialist Party; (2) the so-called regionalist parties, which formerly functioned simultaneously, and subsequently, separate from the beginning of their existence; and (3) the ecological (or, green) parties which set up approximately three decades ago – also, separately organized by the Flemish and the Walloon side of the language boundary. The subchapter below, without regard to a detailed introduction, turns to the first two groups, in an attempt to make sense of the line which the federalism drew in the Belgian political culture, and which can be noticed in the different movements of traditional and denominational, and the cultural-linguistic division. The case of the latter mentioned parties carries notable importance, their rhetoric reflects a dichotomous idea of "a territorial community ('us') versus a dominant center ('them'),"[164] a concept which does not stand far from the populist interpretation of political reality.

III.1. The evolution of a bipolar political culture: The divergence of traditional parties and the rise of regionalist movements in Belgium

As regards Belgian parties, the Liberals were the first to be founded as a party, and as such, they held power between 1846 and 1884. Later, following the First World War, the Liberal Party cooperated with the Belgian Labour Party which simultaneously appeared with some new formations, promoting predominantly extremist views. The aims and agenda of the Liberals were subsequently represented – henceforward, in 'ethnic colours' – by the Flemish *Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang* (Party for Freedom and Progress) and the Walloon *Parti Réformateur Libéral* (Liberal Reformist Party) – Flemish and Walloon counterparts on the same ideological wave –, while the Socialist Party

[162] Csizmadia, 2004, 87
[163] Johancsik, 1994, 56
[164] van Haute et al., 2018

following its dissolution in 1978, was reorganised as the Flemish *Socialistische Partij* and the Walloon *Parti Socialiste*.[165] Within the Christian-Socialist or Christian-Democratic Party began to ferment quite early, in 1936, according to which the Flemish and the Walloon branch started to distance themselves from each other. The gap deepened in the 1960s while finally the events in 1968 turned out to be the final straw: then, following years of tension and hostility between the two communities, the French-speaking sections of the Catholic University of Leuven-Louvain were eventually separated.[166] The factions – as first among Belgian parties – called two parties into being: the *Parti Social Chrétien* (Christian Social Party), along with the *Christelijke Volkspartij* (Christian People's Party).[167] The recently organised Flemish Christian-Democratic Party announced the programme of "unionist federalism"[168] and, at the same time, objected to Brussels' emerging as an independent region – the latter in the course of the constitutional state reforms in the 1980s. The Walloon Christian-Socialists – reluctantly, though – supported these issues, and they furthermore advocated the unification of the Walloon Region.[169]

Finally, the articulation of the bipolar Belgian politics was complemented by the movements building on certain linguistic and cultural ends. The *Volksunie* (People's Union; henceforward: VU) – founded in 1954 – guarded the Flemish language itself, and promoted the federalization of the country into two linguistic communities as its political objective,[170] thus it can be concluded that the movement was fuelled by the oppression that had been experienced by the Flemish population in terms of language usage, and that it was a fundamental element of their spirit to view Brussels as an integral part of Flanders.[171] At the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, two additional Fleming parties appeared, both grounding its rhetoric on the Flemish national consciousness: the *Vlaams Nationale Partij* (Flemish Nationalist Party) – formerly a constituent element of

[165] Ignáth, 2002, 179
[166] The development was of symbolic importance – that is, the Flemish students and citizens of the city never could come to terms with the of a sizeable French-speaking bloc living in Flanders, not far from Brussels. In their eyes, the Walloon elements of the University "played the role of the Trojan horse." (Goossens, 2009, 191)
[167] The process of distancing developed into the final dissolution at an extraordinary congress in the following year. After that, the two parties kept the structures of coordination and the position of the president; nevertheless, the two parties elected two separate party leaders in 1972 – namely, Charles Ferdinand Nothomb and Wilfried Martens. (Csizmadia, 2004, 73-75; Deschouwer, 2012, 81)
[168] Ignáth, 2002, 177
[169] *Ibid*
[170] Deschouwer, 2009, 565
[171] The linguistic and cultural "denomination" of Brussels has proved to be a sensitive matter over time due to its paradoxical status: although it is situated in Flanders, it is fundamentally French-speaking. One of the principles of the State Reforms, the minority protection, is aiming at providing protection for the Flemish citizens in the capital. (Verbeke, 2014, 121-122)

the *Volksunie* –, and the *Vlaamse Volkspartij* (Flemish People's Party). The two groups allied with the elections of 1978 in sight: they thereby campaigned under the name *Vlaams Blok* (Flemish Block)[172], and at the first place on their agenda was the independent Flemish state with Brussels as capital, thus they openly represented fundamentally separatist sentiments.[173] During the 1980s, their causes were not represented by any other (Flemish) movement; these were – as Erk enumerates them –, "anticommunism, anti-abortion, pro-apartheid and pro-amnesty for the Nazi collaborators."[174] Following the end of the Cold War, besides the above-mentioned – and especially, being against the idea of a federation shared by the Walloon population –, the Block became infamous for its anti-immigration stances. In the subsequent two decades – from 1991 to 2010 –, the party's radicalism was considerably growing, perhaps due to the Islamist attacks in the early 2000s in both Europe and the United States.[175] Interestingly, this period coincided with their most significant electoral success, that is, from the 1990s until the early years of the new millennium.[176] Its radicalism was deepening despite the so-called *cordon sanitaire* which came into effect in 1992: accordingly, they were excluded from political alliances by all parties in the Parliament.[177] Akkerman and Rooduijn referred to the inclusion-moderation concept in their 2015 article. For its purpose, those originally radical parties who are involved in the democratic procedures, will be incited to soften their radicalism.[178] Nevertheless, as has been already mentioned, it was not to happen to the Interest. Instead, being excluded, it kept moving towards the right end of the spectrum. In November 2004, the Court of Cassation in Belgium concluded the "Vlaams Blok to be in breach of the law against racism"[179]; to be more exact, three associations in the halo of the party were convicted for violating a legislation against racist and xenophobic behaviour, generally known in Belgium as the Mouraux law of 1981. According to the Court's decision, the party had to dissolve itself, and make sure that if it ever chose re-establishment, it must be done in harmony

[172] Subsequently, two wings were articulated within the *Volksunie*: the traditional nationalist New Flemish Alliance *(Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie)*, and the more left-wing Spirit. (Adam & Deschouwer, 2016, 1290-1291)
[173] It is typical, that as the ethnic-linguistic controversies came to an end, thousands of its earlier voters turned away. Furthermore – given the party's more accommodating tone –, the young Flemish voters tended to support smaller and more radical parties, further from those of the establishment. Another tendency is that since the 1970s-1980s, the young voters inclined to choose extreme left-wing or the newly organised ecological parties at the ballots. (Karsai, 1986, 177-180)
[174] Erk, 2005, 496
[175] Akkerman & Rooduijn, 2015, 1149-1151
[176] de Cleen, 2013, 209
[177] Erk, 2005, 496
[178] However, their hypothesis was not approved in the end – due partly to the *Belang*'s case. (Akkerman & Rooduijn, 2015, 1140; 1148-1150)
[179] Erk, 2005, 493

with the federal legislation. Hence, the re-branded *Vlaams Belang* (Flemish Interest) was promptly called into being. Certain experts – Erk, among others – suppose that this turn was more than a mere change of name; rather, it has been seen as a deep and deliberate revision of the brand. One element of it was their economic policies leaning towards neoliberalism, including the fact that the xenophobic strand in their rhetoric has lessened.[180] Since its reorganization, it has functioned as a seemingly proper and democratic actor – however, not much of its foundations has ever changed, according to others. In de Been's conclusion: "[w]hile the VB presents itself as a democratic party, it attempts to enforce what it considers unquestionable nationalist, conservative and populist demands."[181] The VU was closed down at the dawn of the third millennium, opening the way before the *Blok*'s rival on the right. The *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* (New Flemish Alliance; henceforward: N-VA) viewed to be the VU's successor party decided to join hands with the Christian-Democrats, who hence returned as a governing party in the Flemish government. The Alliance initially articulated the confederal model to be its political goal.[182] The N-VA continues to engage voters with the promise of the subsequent federalisation of Belgium, and is widely held to be a secessionist movement.[183] For the first time, the N-VA became the most popular party not only in Flanders, but also nation-wide in 2010. Nowadays, it is led by the recognised and popular politician, Bart De Wever.[184]

Out of a worry due to the expected success of the Flemish movement – more precisely, mobilized by the resentment felt upon the language laws of 1962 and 1963[185] –, the ideologically plural *Front Démocratique Francophone* (henceforward: FDF) was set up. The *Front* was acting absolutely against the above-mentioned ideas: the concept of the capital belonging to Flanders met their complete rejection, regarding the fact that the majority of Brussels' habitants were French-speakers. Recently, the FDF's influence has been restrained to the local level; as such, it has not pursued a programme

[180] Erk, 2005, 493-495
[181] de Been, 2012, 217
[182] Beyens et al., 2013, 1112
[183] As written on the party's website: the politicians of the N-VA see confederalism as a fertile ground for "real democracy" and "good governance." (Source: the website of the N-VA, available: N-va.be.)
[184] As Belgium is approaching the federal, subnational and supranational (i.e. European Parliament) elections in May this year, Bart De Wever announced in January, that he would be ready to leave his office as Mayor of Antwerp, and to serve as the minister-president of Flanders, provided that his party performs well in May. (Bradshaw, 2019)
[185] There were two phenomena which affected the French-speaking community negatively: first, they found the fixation of the language border unacceptable, and second, the requirement that the public servants in Brussels had to be bilingual (as empiria had made it clear, that the Dutch-speakers were more likely to satisfy this criterion). (Deschouwer, 2009, 570-571)

exclusively focusing on language protection.[186] Finally, another French-speaking faction is worth being mentioned hereby: the Belgian *Front National* – following the example of its French counterpart – initially opposed to federalizing the country, however, after the fourth State Reform, took a different stance thus becoming the promoter of the provincial federalism.[187] Since 2016, the party has functioned under the name, *DéFI*, which carries the principles and values of the party, which are: democrat, federalist and independent. (It is also a play on words, as *défi* means challenge in French.)[188]

Evaluating the results of the regionalist parties' performance prior to the division of the party system into two, one can immediately see that their popularity peaked at the general elections of 1971.[189] Nevertheless, their importance quickly faded. For instance, Adam and Deschouwer attempted to explain the insignificance of the VU: in their point of view, it is exactly the language conflict which caused a drop in the number of its supporters. (Namely, their votes were subsequently given rather to the linguistically-separate traditional parties.)[190] Within the meaning of the fourth State Reform in 1993, Belgium developed into a federal state – simultaneously, as the subnational entities were provided with competences and proper political institutions, the success of the regionalist movements began to gain less significant success at subsequent polls; to the extent that some of them have disappeared completely.[191] However, De Wever's N-VA – as the present generation of nationalist parties –, has convinced a number of Flemish voters: that is how it became the most attractive party in the 2010s. And that is even to say, that according to the latest opinion polls (carried out on 11th February 2019), the N-VA is likely to gain the most seats in the Federal Parliament in May 2019.[192]

Based on the chapter above, one could conclude that the regionalist movement was organized following certain cultural-linguistic objectives and concepts, while that of

[186] The FDF was a member of Brussels' government between 1989 and 2004 – from 1993-on, in a coalition with the French-speaking Liberal Party. *(Ibid)*
[187] Delwit, 2007, 146
[188] Keszthelyi, 2009, 99-100; Cokelaere & van Dorpe, 2018
[189] In this year, the *Volksunie* ended up with 19% of the Flemish votes; the *Rassemblement Wallon* gathered 21% of the Walloon votes, and the FDF 28% in Brussels. (Deschouwer, 2009, 564)
[190] Adam & Deschouwer, 2016, 1293
[191] *Ibid* 559
[192] As a matter of fact, the results of latest federal elections in 2014 evidenced considerable divisions between Flanders and Wallonia: "[t]he centrifugal dynamic further reinforced existing social differences between the north and the south," conclude André and Depauw. (André & Depauw, 2015, 228)
As noted earlier, since the thesis is restricted to the developments until April 2019, we will not discuss the results of the regional, federal and European-level elections in Belgium. For these results, see the database of official results compiled by the Federal Public Services Home Affairs (available online: https://elections2019.belgium.be/en).

the Walloon community was basically a response to the former.[193] These incentives and reactions have expressed themselves in politics, as well: the cleavage has fundamentally run along the centre-periphery split, since the regionalist movements of both communities were mobilized against the centre behind which the Flemish and the Walloon equally feared the dominance of 'the other'.[194] The division of the party system presents itself on a North-South scale: it is only in Flanders where radical right-wing party – the Flemish Interest – once enjoying a relatively broad electoral support, visualises the establishment of an independent Flanders; its French-speaking counterpart does not exist. It is also observable, that the parties of the French-speaking side have less influence, regarding the small number of Walloons – relatively to that of the Flemish – who choose to turn to ethnic organisations.[195] Experience shows, that it was initially the VB to oppose the idea of the unitary state and added the idea of regional division on their political agenda – since, however, the more moderate nationalist N-VA has also prioritized the idea of an independent Flanders.[196] Maesschalck and Van de Walle point to an interesting phenomenon with regard to the VB's participation in the political competition (which is to be reduced to Flanders, according to the above-introduced process): their suggestion is that the *cordon sanitaire* "effectively reduced the levels of political competition by forcing all the other political parties (except for the Greens) into a grand coalition government."[197] Considering the 2004 turn of the *Blok/Belang* which in fact brought some ease to the political atmosphere, it might be understandable for the Flemish parties re-evaluate the collective isolation of the 'reborn' party.[198]

[193] As has been mentioned earlier, the real goal of the Flemish was the attainment of the cultural autonomy – which was far from being surprising owing to their experience of oppression in the shadow of the French language –, whereas the Walloon population was fighting for economic autonomy – although not yet succeeding in reaching it; they were in fact, in favour of federalization.

[194] Kris Deschouwer interprets the struggle of regionalist parties as a "classical center-periphery"-cleavage. (Deschouwer, 2009, 559-561) The author characterizes the Belgian state in terms of which one could not talk about center as such – instead, it is rather about two peripheries, both of which suppose that the other is more dominant. (Deschouwer, 2012, 249)

[195] Csizmadia, 2004, 126

[196] Adam & Deschouwer, 2016, 1300

[197] Maesschalck & Van de Walle, 2006, 1014
Nonetheless, it is important to note, that their observations were published in 2006, thus the degree of political competition or fragmentation in Flanders remains to be researched.

[198] Erk, 2005, 499
Akkerman and Rooduijn's analysis resulted in some fascinating and relevant observations; one of them concerns the phenomenon that those parties are likely to be surrounded by the *cordon*, which are perceived as extremist, and not necessarily the actually most radical movements: "*Cordon sanitaires* apparently are not so much directed at the most radical parties, but rather at those parties that are radical *and* have a reputation of extremism." (Akkerman & Rooduijn, 2015, 1152)

THE NETHERLANDS: A DECENTRALIZED PRAGMATIC STATE

Introduction

The general wave of populist tendencies – fed by hostility towards immigrants – have not left Western Europe intact, for which phenomenon the Netherlands stands as an excellent example. The contemporary Dutch populism has its evolution, and its recent developments fit in a general tendency of democratic recession and from this point of view, are at least worrying. On 15th of March 2017, national elections took place in the Netherlands – earlier, the Dutch society lived through an intriguing campaign period. The clash of the parties of political establishment and the radical and anti-establishment right-wing Freedom Party (in Dutch: *Partij voor de Vrijheid*; henceforward: PVV) led by the anti-immigrant and especially, anti-Islam populist politician, Geert Wilders was expected to be an interesting aspect of the 2017 elections.[199] Nevertheless, Wilder's party fell below the predictions of many analysts[200]; at the end of the day, his party turned out to be the second largest party in the *Binnenhof* with 20 seats, after the 33 seats of Prime Minister Mark Rutte's People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (in Dutch: *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie;* henceforward: VVD).[201] An historic development was the electoral success of the *Denk* (the word itself has meanings in two languages: in Dutch, it means "Think"; in Turkish, "Equal"): with 3 seats in the House of Representatives, this formation is the first representative of immigrants in the Netherlands.[202] Interestingly, the political left found itself in a disappointing position: albeit the second most powerful force with 38 seats in 2012 (after the VVD), it has virtually disappeared from the lower house of the legislation with not more than 9 seats at the latest polls.[203]

[199] Mudde, 2017

[200] The main target of the party leader was initially the presence of numerous Dutch immigrants – yet since, he has become a vehement critic of the European Union, as well. Thus, prior to the elections in 2017, he began to attract supporters in two dimensions. Wilder's promises – concludes a survey carried out in the summer of 2016 – gained considerable electoral support. According to its results, the PVV would have gained 35 seats, while the VVD would have gained not more than 24, had the elections been held in July 2015. (Kroet, 2016)

[201] For the results, see: https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2017/03/16/dutch-election-results.

[202] The Dutch-Surinamese Sylvana Simons – formerly a member of Denk – left the party in 2016, to found another immigrant party with the priorities of the representation of the LBGT-community and the fight against women's oppression. Her party was originally competing under the name *Artikel 1* (in English: Article 1), it was replaced later with BIJ1(Otjes & Krouwel, 2018, 7; Dutchnews.nl, 2018)

[203] For the results, see: https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2017/03/16/dutch-election-results.

Although populists, are not the members of the government, the altogether significant support for right-wing populism in the Netherlands, is, however, worth the attention. Recently, populist politics took a turn with a new personality having stepped on the scene: Thierry Baudet made his breakthrough at the provincial elections as the head of his freshly established party, the Forum for Democracy (in Dutch: *Forum voor Democratie*; henceforward: FvD).[204] Many of the PVV's voters have drifted towards the new Eurosceptic initiative, which openly would like to see a "Nexit" on the Dutch political agenda.[205]

Until the ides of the 1950s, the segments – or as we will refer to them subsequently: the pillars – served as a solution to the tense issues caused by pluralism. During the decades of the "accommodation", the Dutch citizens, who lived their lives in the complex institutional network in this period, turned to their own elites with considerable trust. However, the Netherlands, a depillarised society today, cannot with good chance avoid deciding on the immigrant masses coming in high numbers from Morocco and Turkey. With the establishment of two parties which build on migrants as members, and which aim to defend the interest of immigrant communities, the Netherlands might be witnessing the rise of a new religious and ethnic-cultural pillar.[206] The desired settlement touches upon the role of the state, potentially setting it a new challenge. The second case study of the thesis opens by enumerating the processes of pillarisation and depillarisation. Later, the features of the Dutch party system[207] and the relevant aspects of the political culture in the Netherlands will be observed – all this with particular regard to the peaceful – and successful – realization of consociationalism, as long as the cohabitation of the segments needed an institutionalized reconciliation. The closing chapter will weigh, as far as possible, the typical period of Dutch consociationalism between 1917 and 1955, besides looking at the present and future relevance of the consociationalist settlement. All the above in the case of the Netherlands

[204] As noted earlier, since the thesis is restricted to the developments until April 2019, we will not discuss the results of the European-level elections in the Netherlands. For the results, see the database of the European Parliament and Kantar (available online: https://europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/en/national-results/netherlands/2019-2024/).

[205] The party was established in 2016. (Schaart, 2019)
As for Geert Wilders, he did not admit to have failed at the elections: he saw the performance of his party as a step in a long process. As the elections for the European Parliament were approaching (the EP-elections took place from 23rd to 26th of May), Wilders continued to commit himself to expressing his anti-European Union and anti-immigrant views on the European level as well, ready to make an alliance with Orbán Viktor and Matteo Salvini. (Graham, 2017; Hvg.hu, 2018)

[206] As has been investigated earlier – among others – by Schrover and Andeweg & Irwin. (Schrover, 2010; Andeweg & Irwin, 2009)

[207] Similarly to the party system-related segments in the firsrt case study, we restrict ourselves to the exclusive discussion of relevant developments of political history in the Netherlands.

generally known for its tolerance, adaptability and a traditional liberal atmosphere, which in the second half of the 20th century became the stronghold of political correctness – and also, that of fields left untouched as taboos.[208]

IV. Pillars and multi-party system: The features of the Dutch political culture

Regarding the significant role of political elites in consociational democracies – since the state's unity is the result of the cooperation and consensus –, an analysis of the Netherlands' party system through its evolution in the 20th century seems unavoidable. Such an attempt is even more justified if we hold the following to be true, to which László Flamm, the Hungarian expert of foreign policy referred: the party system is the mirror of the evolution of Dutch history, which, at the same time, makes the inherent conflicts of the society divided[209] along confession or ideology, on the one hand, and social class, on the other – discernible.[210]

It is known, that in 1914 the Dutch elites had to test their willingness and capacity to cooperate: the debate on the broadening of the suffrage and on the status of religious schools had to be brought to an end at one point.[211] Thus, the broadly supported 'Pacification' leads the investigation towards to processes undoubtedly relevant when it comes to the social and political organization of the Netherlands. The following chapters of the thesis, will, first of all, concern the processes of the pillarisation and depillarisation, shedding light on how these relate to consociationalism in the chapter's conclusion. Here, we will also raise the possibility of a – hypothetical or actual – new era of pillarisation.

IV.1. Pillarisation

Between 1917 and 1950, the Netherlands' subcultures were organized vertically into pillars: in fact, each *zuil* displayed a certain subsegment. These elements build up the

[208] The Dutch sociologist, Herman Vuijsje in his book The Politically Correct Netherlands: Since the 1960s (original title: *Correct, weldenkend Nederland sinds de jaren zestig*) gives an exhaustive account on why certain topics were lift out from public discussion, besides enumerating its downsides.
This phenomenon survived right until the 1990s, when a Liberal politician Frits Bolkestein and the left-wing writer, Paul Scheffer. (Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 45-46)
[209] Lijphart, 1975, 16
A significant consequence of loyalty, which can be linked to the cleavages discussed earlier, is that they have the ability of reducing political extremes – for this more in detail, see the subsequent chapters of the thesis.
[210] Flamm, 2004, 303
[211] Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 10; Daadler & Irwin, 1989, 45

so-called system of pillarisation (*Verzuiling*), according to which the Dutch parties were established on the forefront, on the one hand, of the two confessional – namely, a Protestant and a Catholic –, and on the other hand, of non-confessional, or in other words, secular-ideological segments. As a consequence of their closedness[212], these are almost completely homogeneous, yet their entirety moves in the direction of the society's heterogeneity, since the divisions affect not only the political, but also every other aspect of life.[213]

The pillarisation, as a matter of fact, fixed the (three-fold) division of the society as an historic tradition in terms of political practice: certain theories date this concept back to the establishment of the Dutch state in the 16th century. In this regard, the importance of the independence[214] which the Dutch gained from Philipe II, the king of Catholic Spain, seems somehow significant: in this emancipatory war, the seeds of the subsequent discord between the Catholic and the Protestant community were sown. An additional consequence of this period was the fragmentation of the Protestant Church, to several distinct wings: it means, that – among others – an orthodox group of Calvinists rigidly practicing their faith appeared beside the central Reformed Church.[215]

In addition to the religious division, the class-cleavage was another line running across the society: its roots were deep rooted similarly to those of the Catholic-Protestant duality. The Dutch middle-class appeared uniquely early, by European standards: the bourgeoisie had owned a considerable position since the establishment of the Republic.[216] Lijphart observing the indicators and data of the 20th century concluded that although the economic inequality by large moderated, the inequalities in income remained noticeable in the 1950s. Alongside the economic hard data, it might be a viable step to measure also the members' loyalty towards their own class. Unfortunately, it is made more difficult by the fact that certain topics were banished from public discourses – and perhaps more regrettably, from the discussions of social sciences, too. After all, Lijphart tried to support his statement, and evoked the results of a UNESCO survey from 1948, from which he drew the following conclusions: firstly, Dutch citizens were aware of their own social status, and secondly, they were able to make correct estimations

[212] In their 2009 book, Andeweg and Irwin evoke the fictional examples of how ordinary Catholics and Protestants would have probably lived their whole lives in the complex institutional net of their own pillar. According to their introduction, denomination or ideological affiliation would determine the schools of their children, just like the hospitals, they chose to go, or the trade union they were members of. (Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 28-30) Schrover described this affiliation as a "cradle-to-grave embededdness." (Schrover, 2010, 332)
[213] Enyedi, 1993, 37
[214] Kossmann-Putto & Kossmann, 1998, 22-30
[215] Lijphart, 1975, 17
[216] de Jong, 2011, 47

concerning their fellow citizens' positions, and classify them into – working, middle- or upper- – classes.[217]

In the next sections, the pillars will be introduced individually – these units will be the organizing elements of the case study, just as they are of the Dutch society and politics, in accordance with the *Verzuiling* concept. Having them reviewed, the following subchapters will build the party system on such foundations.

[217] Lijphart, 1975, 18-20

IV.1.1. The Catholic pillar and the Protestant pillar(s)

Although Lijphart himself considers a three-fold division – whilst others, such as the Hungarian Enyedi, have a different interpretation[218] – concerning the pillar system, it is here not three (or four) subchapters to deal with the social and political base units. That is to say, in this case, it is more practical to discuss these in one segment.

As mentioned previously, the memory of the war of independence has had great importance and a lasting effect. Namely, in the period of the establishment of the Republic of the Seven Provinces – around 1600 –, Catholics experienced an oppression due to their faith, being deprived of the right of public practice: thus, Catholic citizens generally could practice their faith with limitations only, furthermore they were not allowed to undertake public offices.[219] Not surprisingly, the Southern provinces – Limburg and Brabant – with a predominantly Catholic population were ordered by the central power (without any precedent and with almost no counterpart yet in this period: the government) as conquered territories.[220] These disadvantageous measures albeit ended later, the experience of hostility remained: the Catholic segment continued to be cautious and began to organize themselves relatively later and rather half-heartedly.[221] By the end of pillarization, the Catholic bloc possessed the following characteristics: their geographical situation was clearly definable, moreover, their organizational structure was the most fully developed. (Although in general, they did not have much time for the organization, since not even the ecclesiastical hierarchy did exist until 1853.[222]) The division which characterised the Protestants was not the case with the Catholics, since parallel Catholic institutions were absent, and the only one in function was strictly subordinated to the Dutch Catholic clergy.[223]

The Protestants – typically diverse in ideological sense[224] –, however, suffered from oppression – not benefiting from the fruits of economy to the desired degree – from behalf of the Liberals. Their dissatisfaction thus resulted in an emancipatory movement.[225] However, it would be a mistake to ignore the simultaneous existence of different Protestant denominations at the time: in 1879, the 54,5% of the population

[218] Enyedi, 1993, 36-37
[219] Kossmann-Putto & Kossmann, 1998, 25
[220] Daalder, 2011, 201
[221] Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 57
[222] Enyedi, 1993, 38
[223] Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 37
[224] Bryant, 1981, 56
[225] Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 25

claimed themselves to be members of the Dutch Reformed Church, but certain Protestant wings left the mainstream Church (the so-called *Gereformeerd*) in two waves in the 19th century.[226] The construction of the Protestant pillar's institutions was due to Abraham Kuyper's newspaper-, party- and university-founding activity at the end of the 19th century.[227]

IV.1.2. The secular-ideological pillar

Next to the denominational or religious pillars, the secular dimension also has to be mentioned, and the latter was given by two further groups of the Dutch society – those are, the Liberals and the Social Democrats. Since in their case, one cannot talk about significant religiosity, a class-based interpretation seems to be the correct choice, instead. In addition, it is also important to be reminded of that as the membership in denominations was declining, although side by side with this, those who identified themselves as without "a religious faith" was vigorously growing.[228] The former belonged to an ideologically heterogeneous[229] and loosely organised faction with a wealthy upper-class membership. Their political and economic dominance at the time could be explained by the restricted suffrage of the 19th and the early 20th centuries.[230] However, as more and more – probably less well-off – citizens could make their voice heard at the polls, their support lessened. On the organization of the latter – the working class – the international labour movements had an impact, according to some[231], although it is to mention that while most European countries were undergoing industrialization which paved the way for workers to organize themselves into a mass movement, and when the concept of socialism arrived in the Netherlands through Germany, the country was still focusing predominantly on agriculture. By the time the Netherlands industrialised relatively late so that the workers' attempts could have become a reality, a substantial part of them had already been involved in the Catholic or Protestant organisations. In

[226] These gave first 3.5%, and then 8.2%; this proportion increased for a short time and fell back by 5% at the turn of the century. The rate of the mainstream had diminished below 50% by the end of the 19th century, in 1971 it was the half of the former (23.5%), but subsequent analyses have showed that it now hovers around 10%. (Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 25)

[227] Enyedi, 1993, 39; Kickert, 2003, 129

[228] According to a recent survey, two thirds of the Dutch society belongs here. (Dutchnews, 2016)

[229] One of the reasons why it is so difficult to find a common ideological ground in this segment is that its members would claim themselves to be "open to any conviction." (Enyedi, 1993, 36)

[230] It is an interesting, although a rather obvious attempt to draw a parallel hereby between Max Weber's invaluable work on Protestant ethic: the Dutch Protestants' who built their lives on accumulation and hard work – probably identifiable with the puritan mentality that Weber recorded – dissatisfaction seems understandable, reading Weber's thoughts. (Max Weber: The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Routledge, London & New York, 1992)

[231] Enyedi, 1993, 39

terms of its membership, lower middle-class and lower-classes were characteristic of the socialist pillar.[232]

Contrary to the fact that each pillar was – through their extensive institutional net – in a quasi-monopolistic situation, there were, of course, fields untouched by pillarisation: for instance, press was such a thing, which could never be fully pillarised.[233]

IV.2. Depillarisation

The system of pillars – which in Lijphart's words functioned as the arrangement of accommodation – was swept away by the decade of 1960. It would be, however, misguided to investigate the phenomenon of depillarisation isolated from the era's dominant intellectual and ideological streams. Secularization and individualization forging through the religious and civil dimensions of life in this period did have considerable impact on the way the Dutch society had been ordered in the first half of the 20th century; but first, it would be in our interest to enumerate background of the social demands and claims articulating these days.[234]

Following the Second World War – which might turn out to be the origin of the Dutch self-interpretation – two markedly differing approaches were competing for dominance, in relation with the reconstruction of the country torn and destructed equally by the war and the German occupation. First, closely coordinated cooperation of independent organizations was promoted by the more orthodox wings of Catholics and Protestants; and second, the establishment of a perpetual unity – thus, the idea of jointly created organizations – was advocated by politically speaking more left-wing Catholics alongside the remaining members of the Protestant communities.[235] The articulation of the desire for democratization, as well as the changes in the practice of religion were typical elements of the post-1945 period. It is first and foremost the observation of demography that during the post-war reconstruction, a steep rise in birth rate became spread in Europe – just as it reached the Netherlands: the so-called 'baby-boom' generation took over political power from its predecessors in the 1960s.[236]

[232] Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 59-60
[233] Interestingly, those spheres were left out of pillarization, which were available predominantly to educated intellectuals living within prosperous conditions – as observed by Enyedi Zsolt. (Enyedi, 1993, 38)
[234] van Dam, 2015, 291
[235] *Ibid* 293-294
[236] Their actvity and role – through the freezing of some socially and politically relevant topics – resulted in the birth of "political correctness" taken to the extremes. (Vuijsje, 2008, 137)

All things considered, in Arend Lijphart's point of view, the further presence, the survival of pillars was challenged by four phenomena from the mid-1960s.[237] First, the vertically structured blocks lost their significance and their impact on politics; partly, out of a dissatisfaction towards their own pillar, and partly, due to the urge of national unity, the individuals of each pillar began to look around and to connect with members from other segments. Second, the left-wingers – whom ideologically prevailed in this period – completely rejected the "game rules"[238] of consociationalism, and rearranged (or rather: refused?) the principles of the accommodation politics. Third, the growing curiosity in politics and the intensifying activism of the population introduced a new type of mentality and practices – such as protestation or the occupation of universities[239] – without any precedent. Finally, a general political instability became a phenomenon simultaneous to all the above-mentioned: this can be partly linked to the formerly discussed civil disobedience, the formation of nine cabinets between 1965 and 1974 was nevertheless and undoubtedly the sign of political changeability.[240]

Each pillar underwent and experienced the profound changes in a different way: in this wise did collapse the Catholic pillar led by a strong formal force, while the Protestant denominations employing mainly informal technics were capable of giving flexible reactions.[241]

[237] Grasso, 2016, 120
Bryant suggests that one of the factors allowing these "forces of modernism" to altogether succeed was the advantageous and prosperous economic conditions prevailing at the time in the Netherlands. (Bryant, 1981, 61)
[238] For these, see: Lijphart, 1975
[239] That is that the Netherlands, prior to the Second World War, used to be known as the most conservative and most religious country in Europe, being immensely loyal to power. (Vuijsje, 2008, 148)
[240] Lijphart, 1975, 197-201
[241] Enyedi, 1993, 39

V. (Re)Pillarisation in the consociational Netherlands

Having overviewed the processes which profoundly impacted the nature of Dutch politics, the opportunity to correlate these with the theory and practice of consociational democracy, presents itself. Specifically on Dutch consociationalism, Lijphart claims the period of 1914-17 to be the beginning of the consociational arrangement. In these days, two issues featured public debate, both putting considerable weight on the elites' shoulders – those were, the question of universal suffrage and the funding of religious schools by the state. While the Social Democrats made a point of the former, and the latter was in Christian Democrats' interests, the Liberals formed the opposition in both cases. In both situations, it could have gone without saying for one party to win over the other – just as in the theory of 'zero-sum game', where if one wins, the other necessarily loses. Nevertheless, the Netherlands – 'armed' with the consociational instruments – put an end to the controversies in a different way: both matters were solved by compromises[242], in which every group got some bits of its initial expectations.[243] With the yielding of the links between the population and the vertical units, in such a society where the hitherto fragmented society seemed to be fusing, the accommodation of the separate subcultures lost of its earlier importance, hence did the consociational instruments lose their validity. In contrast however – as mentions van Dam –, on the impression that "politics-making" was turned upside down by the generation of the sixties, the 1980s cast a doubt.

Since the beginning of the third millennium, however, new types of cleavages have generated or catalysed already existing divisions. Approximately five decades after the pillars have lost their actual sense, de Been reminded us in 2012: "consociationalism has many features that make it relevant for the cultural and religious divisions of the 21st century," as long as in the recent decades, "[t]he revolution in information and communication technology has changed the habitat in which minorities exist."[244] With the Netherlands in mind, the statement might have force as well as considerable relevance, if one has in mind that this country, although with a unique approach to immigrants perhaps due to more earlier experience with Muslims[245] – similarly to many

[242] The agreement, on the one hand, introduced the practice of proportional representation, and on the other hand, assured religious schools of a state protection. (van Parijs, 2013, 82) Another development linked to this year was the installation of male suffrage, through an amendment of the constitution. (Kossmann-Putto & Kossmann, 1998, 51)
[243] Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 34-35
[244] de Been, 2012, 531
[245] Cherribi, 2010, 64-65

other European examples –, have not triumphed in the integration of its populous immigrant communities.

It is a widely-known and frequently-repeated story, how the number of immigrants arriving to – predominantly, Western – Europe has expanded in the last decades: the first immigrants arrived in the continent since the 1960s – initially from North Africa –, either as guest workers or "through colonial ties."[246] By now, however, the Netherlands' Muslim community have undoubtedly grown out the category of temporary workers. Their presence is permanent, which can be described by the group's size of 900 000 people and the construction of about 450 mosques by the end of 2016. With regard to their composition, it is to lay that the two most significant minorities in the Netherlands are either of Moroccan or Turkish background, the majority of whom claim themselves to be Muslims.[247] It is crucial to note, that – as is already mentioned above – immigrants during these decades arrived to a country which had gone through the process of rapid and massive secularization – a process which resulted in a social arrangement, potentially incompatible with immigrants of a Muslim background.[248]

On the one hand, Koopmans and Statham gives a vague explanation to this unfortunate situation: the policies originally aimed at integrating the masses, resulted in an effect, opposing to what Dutch authorities initially had in mind. In short, these measurements often reinforced the discrepancies, thus they proved to be rather counter-productive.[249] On the other hand, de Been explains the Netherlands' failure in integrating its immigrants with two more specific reasons. First, as providers of a temporary solution, and if so, there was, in fact, not much sense to accommodate complete realities and commitments; second, the immigrant crowds were falsely identified as "indigenous, sub-state minorities" – furthermore, these groups were addressed policies to, according to the same principle, refers de Been to Kymlicka, the original owner of the thought.[250]

The core argument in de Been's article is that due to broad Internet availability, immigrants can be in direct and continuous contact with their original country, read the local newspapers or watch online version of television programmes.[251] Reading his line of reasoning, we may recall the newspapers, schools and television channels of the old

[246] Cherribi, 2010, 63-64
[247] Bayrakli & Hafez, 2016, 392
[248] Casanova, 2007, 61-63
Although it has to be mentioned, that the immigrant population is linguistically-, ethnically- and even religiously-speaking, (the latter, also eith regard to the several traditions of Islam) diverse and extremely plural. (Schover, 2010, 349-350)
[249] Cherribi, 2010, 63-64
[250] Kymlicka, 2009[2007] in: de Been, 2012, 533-534
[251] *Ibid* 534-536

pillars of the 20th century.[252] Similar are the observations of Schrover: the author comes up with the term "cultural freezing", which is suggested to be the result of decades of applying the multicultural approach. Also, multiculturalism is seen to allow ethnic minorities to act and behave "as groups".[253] Additionally, he presents a 'Muslim pillar' which is now in possession of the essential institutional background – and which built its organizational infrastructure following the Dutch example.[254] Andeweg and Irwin argue, however, that the new division that the Dutch society has witnessed, depends rather on how people approach and evaluate multiculturalism. Hence, they seem to refuse the idea of the emergence of a new ethnic pillarization with separate *autochtonen* (it means, native) and *allochtonen* (this expression used to serve to describe immigrants, but the Dutch government ceased this practice in 2016[255]) blocs.[256] Later, de Been goes as far as to envisage the articulation of a parallel society by assuming "the ability of marginal groups to construct alternative identities", at the same time, refusing the idea as optimal.[257] It is just as important to note, however, that none of the aforementioned authors saw the establishment of neither the *Denk*, nor the *BIJ1* – with this development – that is, organizing their own political elite –, as suggested here, might be understood as another step towards it.

Dutch mainstream politicians gave an altogether belated reaction. Traditionally committed to tolerance, no political decisions or measurements were taken for approximately three decades, the reason being that immigration and their integration used to be one of the taboos of the second half of the last century. Among politicians of established parties, Frits Bolkestein was the first to give voice to his worries, and to doubt if the Netherlands would find a solution to the problem – or to even recognize the problem of the "underpoliticized" treatment of immigrants.[258] Then, as we will see, populists took over the case of immigration. By recent years, the above have led mainstream Dutch politics to, sort of, fall into the other extreme: the Dutch requirements are believed to be one of to strictest in Europe. Besides, even Prime Minister Mark

[252] Indeed, as – among others – Cherribi puts it: "Although the uniquely Dutch form of social organization known as pillarization largely came to an end in the 1960s, the integration of Islamic and various other immigrant communities over the past thirty years has brought about what can be seen as the beginnings of repillarization." (Cherribi, 2010, 66)
[253] Schrover, 2010, 330-332
[254] *Ibid* 349-351
[255] Dutchnews.nl, 2016
[256] Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 49
[257] de Been, 2012, 539
[258] Vinocur, 2011

Rutte has had some scandalous comments.[259] Eelco Harteveld, the Dutch political scientist – without promoting nationalist sentiments, of course – analyzing the figure of Thierry Baudet to a Hungarian journalist, argued that an articulated and expressed Dutch identity could even help the integration of the immigrant communities, since not having such might lead – as it might already have led – to confusion in what concerns the immigrants' orientation.[260] However, one could mention that there is a well-contoured Dutch identity: one which defines itself as the protector of rights and liberal values, and as the promoter of tolerance.[261] Again – to point to how controversial the topic is –, one could remind the others: there have been populists to emphasise it.[262]

Some observers of the second half of the 20th century held it possible that the instruments and technics of cooperation never disappeared from political practice – rather, they were less salient during the seventies. Van Dam, already quoted hereby, – supporting this claim – refers to historical continuity. Indeed: it is striking to see that while in the 1960s some fundamental social dynamics – individualism and secularism, among others – provoked crucial changes in the nature of society, the 2000s have witnessed some impacts of globalism[263], as well as some developments of the latest chapter of modernisation (that is, in communication technology).[264] We may thus pose the following question (paraphrasing the law of energy conservation): consociationalism cannot be destroyed but changed from one form into another?[265]

[259] To bring one example, we mention here his "Act normal or leave!". One could hardly neglect the negative connotation of his words – even in spite of his defense. (Kroet, 2017)
[260] Bérczes, 2019
[261] Cammaerts, 2018, 9
[262] A number of Wilder's public statements would be worth to be mentioned. (Bot, 2017)
[263] Some believe that we should talk about a sort of double effect of globalism, considering that the very arrival of immigrants was one of the consequences of globalism. (Cherribi, 2010, 59)
[264] In de Been's words: "The revolution in information and communication technology has changed the habitat in which minorities exist." (de Been, 2012, 531)
[265] van Dam, 2015, 297

VI. The Dutch party families: Variations to the same theme?[266]

As we have mentioned earlier, a feature of the Dutch domestic politics in the 19th century was a clear liberal dominance: the liberal politicians induced two political conflicts in thirty years. These discords in effect contributed to the establishment of the traditional parliamentary parties. For the first time, in 1848 – in the heat of the constitutionalisation and democratisation, a vast global wave – the liberal camp wished to extend those rights to the practitioners of any religion which had been the exclusive privileges of Protestants.[267] Later, for the second time, the school question – which, compared to Belgium, was brought on the agenda earlier – gave incentives to the foundation of parties: within the liberal group – the government party at the time – an agreement was reached according to which the financial support of private schools would have been banned by law.[268] The dissolution first of the Christian-conservative, and then the liberal factions to different wings is also to be linked to the 19th century. By the turn of the century, the workers had awakened, and the divisions within this class had begun to move away along the issues as agricultural production of essential importance for the Netherlands and the attitudes towards the liberal trend and religious education.[269]

On the one hand, the 20th century brought with it the conciliation of the denominational parties and the liberals – what is more, they managed to reach a consensual cooperation. Their coalition remained in power until the end of the 1960s, Social Democrats occasionally joining them. On the other hand, due to a change in their image, the Labour Party grew into a people's party aspiring for the support of broader masses.[270] Following the Second World War – bearing the urge of the national unity's reconstruction in mind – the Dutch politics was leaning towards consensual democracy, again. In this light, the cooperation of the Catholic and Labour Party did not seem astonishing anymore. The considerable growth in the number of parties is a significant development of the post-war period, and was given an impetus to in the 1970s. The cathartic transformations – as discussed hereby in an earlier chapter – beginning in the mid-1950s, not only weakened the influence of denominational parties,

[266] Galen A. Andeweg and Rudy B. Irwin used this expression in their volume published in 2009 (Governance and Politics in the Netherlands, Macmillan, London, 2009), referring to the general pattern, according to which parties – or rather, party families – take core ideas and values as given, although their interpretations can be numerous and different, altogether, nuanced. (Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 56)

[267] Their draft did not meet the acceptance needed, thus as the consequence of the further growing conflict was the establishment of some new parties. (Flamm, 2004, 275)

[268] Andeweg & Irwin, 2014, 40

[269] Flamm, 2004, 276

[270] Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 60

but also affected the relationship between liberals and the left-wing camp. The former camp – as a result of ideological differences – confronted with the Social Democrats, whom had developped into the main left-wing power in the country. Following these developments, the Dutch governance could be featured by abrupt changes of government, by general instability lasting for two decades.[271]

An additional characteristic of the Dutch party system is that it provides room for lots of political groups to perform: accordingly, on certain broader ideological strands, a number of parties have been founded.[272] Furthermore, according to Sartori's typology the Dutch party system is to be classified as an "extreme multi-party" one.[273] Considering the fact that in the Netherlands candidates can be registrated without considerable difficulty, and that the treshold for the parliamentary seats, the number of parties making it into the legislation has typically hovered around ten, so far in the third millenium.[274] The 1990s brought with it an innovation in the establishment of the 'single issues' parties. A common feature of these is that they are founded on one topic, addressing exclusively one issue: the General Elderly Alliance (in Dutch: *Algemeen Ouderen Verbond*) and one advocating the rights of the animals (that is, Party for the Animals; in Dutch: *Partij voor de Dieren*) are instances of this characteristic, also elivening participants of the (thus) diverse Lower House.[275] The fact that the Dutch governance has been enriched by some historically settled traditions adds further nuances to the picture on may have of the Netherlands' political culture: besides the pragmatism and the tendency and willingness of consensus[276], another unique feature has been the involvement of non-governmental bodies in the decision-making.[277]

[271] Lijphart, 1975, 201
[272] Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 56
[273] Sartori, 1976, 196 *in:* Evans, 2002, 156; Peters, 1998, 215
[274] Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 56; 66-67
[275] It is well exemplified by the fact that before the latest national elections in 2017, there were five one-member formations in the lower house (the composition of which is available at: Houseofrepresentatives.nl). (Flamm, 2004, 285
[276] Although these have been discussed in the literature as separate features, it might by no chance be impossible that there is a noticeable and significant relation: that would be understandable if the intention of cooperation were in fact the precondition of practical decision-making in a divided society.
[277] Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 169

VI.1. Populist politics[278] and immigrant parties in the Netherlands

In an earlier passage, we have already stated the anti-establishment nature of the opposition in the states 'playing' the consociational instruments, as arised the supposition of a topical challenge of consociationalism in contemporary times (that we suggest to happen, the latest, in the future). In an attempt to the introduction of the parallel realisation of the above-mentioned phenomena, it is wortwhile in this section of the thesis to review the evolution of the Dutch radical right-wing, called into being by the wave of depillarisation. As Oudenampsen observes: "[t]he emergence of right-wing populism has occured in a crisis of a similar nature and magnitude as that of the 1960s, with almost the entire political field experiencing major instability."[279] Hence, such an intention is viable, provided the fact that this school emerged as the potential expression of the social division – hence, as the current challenge of consociationalism. Our attempt is perhaps even more valid, did we suppose that parties similar to the Party for Freedom in character and message – namely, Eurosceptism and anti-immigration – were simultaneously founded across the entire European continent – they offer themselves for analysis and comparison.[280]

In terms of the roots of populist trends, Pim Fortuyn's appearance can be taken as a milestone at the dawn of the 2000s. Initially, the politician was the leading candidate of Livable Netherlands' (in Dutch: *Leefbaar Nederland*) list drawn up for the 2002 elections, the group being a hostile opposite pole to the government, in fact, to the political establishment. After all, due to his extremist statements, his colleagues turned away. Following his expulsion from the organisation, Fortuyn framed a list under his own name (the *Lijst Pim Fortuyn*; henceforward: LPF), still, preparing for the

[278] Regarding the hardly tangible nature of populism – as already dealt with in the theoretical framework –, it is worth dwelling shortly on what exactly makes it viable to label Wilders – whose character is already difficult to classify – as populist. (Not even mentioning, that people usually have a hard time defining the term 'populist' itself.) Although 'populism' is frequently used as a synonym for the radical right, one should be cautious not to link Wilders – initially a liberal parliamentary representative – automatically to the right-wing's ideology. Basing on Eatwell and Andeweg & Irwin on the pages of this thesis the term under question is approached as a broad one – that is, we refer to it as a political actor who seems to detect and react to what the population wants in their rhetoric, but at the same time, as someone who can be less tied to traditional ideological schools. We suppose that such an approach is true in Geert Wilders' case. (Eatwell, 2004, 11; Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 66)

[279] Oudenampsen, 2013, 202

[280] Despite the fact that we – as already made clear – comprehend Geert Wilders fitting the above-described populist category, there are some aspects which make him a different case when compared with others contemporary populist politicians. One of these elements is that he has been supportive of Israel and the United States of America, the extent of importance he attaches to foreign policy. Another element of Wilders' "uniqueness" are his libertarian stances in moral issues: in connection with this, it is noticeable that the stressing of liberal values is contrasted with the Islam as culturally backward. (Vossen, 2011, 186-187; Oudenampsen, 2013, 204)

elections in 2002. After his death, his party made an excellent debut by achieving victory – so much so that the Christian Democrats and Liberals invited them to be a part of their government. Yet, as a governing force they were a failure, thus early elections became necessary, on which they did not even get close to victory. (Namely, they had lost approximately 12% of the earlier support.)[281] After the chaotic beginning of the new millenium – slowly approaching the contemporary period of domestic politics –, two more initiatives are worth of being mentioned here. Both Rita Verdonk's and Geert Wilders's independent political career commenced after their quit from the liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (in Dutch: *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie*; henceforward: VVD)[282]. The latter, infamous for his scandalous xenophobic statements concerning in particular Islam and Muslims, with the establishment of PVV in 2006 has been an eccentric personality in the Dutch political spectrum: not only does his party lack the organisational structure, he is also the only member in this party.[283] In xenophobia, Wilders went so far, that he was convicted in December 2016, due to his hate speech aimed at Muslim immigrants.[284] Authentically of a populist opinion leader, he turned to a rather typical populist tool by accusing the court of hindering the principle of the freedom of speech.[285] Not long after his appearance, in 2008, Wilders' rival arrived at the political starting line furthering an independent initiative: Rita Verdonk, one of Prime Minister Mark Rutte's critics has – standing up against the concept of cultural relativism – advocated the traditional Dutch values, and has promoted a set of altogether conservative values.[286] Wilders – although gaining the second most seats in 2017 – was not invited to be part of the governing coalition, the populist politician has been surrounded by a *cordon sanitaire*.[287]

At the end of the day, Geert Wilders is not the latest populist "ringleader": with Thierry Baudet on the scene, populist voters now have an alternative (although, still a populist one).[288] As it turned out in March 2019, Baudet's party – which is in fact a

[281] During the campaign, his colleagues could not keep up with him in terms of rhetoric, thus the competition soon became rather heated. The politician was shot in May of 2002. Beside his party's incapability in giverning properly another element for their poor performance might have been that the parties of the establishment began to consider some of the topics – these are, immigration and the integration of the immigrants – formerly exclusively touched upon by the LPF. (Harmsen, 2003, 2; Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 64)
[282] The VVD is a liberal party, the leader of which is Prime Minister Marc Rutte. The VVD has governed the country as part of a coalition next to the D66, the Christian Democratic Appeal and the Christian Union since October of 2017, following an unprecedently long series of coalition talks. (Henley, 2017)
[283] Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 66; Vossen, 2011, 179
[284] Darroch, 2016
[285] Cammaerts, 2018, 13
[286] Oudenampsen, 2013, 204
[287] Akkerman & Rooduijn, 2015, 1144; Teffer, 2017
[288] Schaart, 2019(1)

newcomer –, the Forum for Democracy (in Dutch: *Forum voor Democratie*; henceforward: FvD) gained a significant victory at the provincial elections, overtaking even Rutte's VVD and convincing some of PVV's supporters.[289] The author of news page Politico, Eline Schaart referred to him as "[a]s an intellectual Geer Wilders." Even if different in tone and manner, the main themes and stances are the same in core: among its priorities the FvD has anti-immigrant and strongly Eurosceptic stances. However – as Schaart calls our attention –, Baudet is part of specifically that political *élite* that Wilders – and populist globally – has mobilised his initiation against.[290]

Another significant development of recent years was the establishment of a party the membership of which is built up by immigrants. The *Denk* grew out of the Labour Party after leaving the latter in 2015. In social and economic terms, the party draws on its social democratic heritage and takes its decisions on left-wing stances – however, culturally-religiously and ethnically speaking, it claims to be plural, and thus forms an inclusive camp for immigrants.[291] With three seats in the present legislative power, the *Denk* has been the first to achieve such a success, since no earlier attempts of immigrant organisations had managed to make it to the House of Representatives before 2017.[292] It is known that the party rejects the idea of assimilation in which some worry their potential to create and support the survival of a parallel society of immigrants.[293] Should these suppositions turn out to be true, the worries of Wouter de Been would realise[294]: the professor of the Erasmus University Rotterdam concludes that contemporary immigrants do not have to actually break away from their countries of origin. Quite the contrary: taking the opportunities of modern communication technology – such as, the mass media, global Internet availability and online social networks –, the certain layers of immigrant population can virtually live a life as the would in their home country. Namely, they may build up the illusion of being surrounded by other members of the same ethnic-religious group, being aware of and taking sides in issues concerning countries of origin; in short – as if they have never left their original country.[295] Earlier, the party did not function as an exclusively Muslim party; instead, as we pointed to it,

[289] Schaart, 2019(2)
[290] Schaart, 2019(1)
[291] Otjes & Krouwel, 2018, 6
[292] *Ibid* 1
[293] Duke, 2017
[294] At the time of writing his article we are referring here (Wouter de Been (2012): Continuity or regime change in the Netherlands: Consociationalism in a deterritorialized and post-secular world. In: *Ethnicities*, Vol. 12, No. 5, pp. 231-555, 2012) – in 2012 –, de Been could not yet see the actual articulation and breakthrough of an immigrant-composed party.
[295] de Been, 2012, 535-536

it used to be a cross-ethnic or cross-religion initiative. This was exemplified for instance by the involvement of Sylvana Simons – a television presenter in the Netherlands –, since she is of Surinamese origin. Nonetheless, Simons organised her own immigrant party, the Article 1 in 2016, the name of which she changed to BIJ1 a year later. As a leader of this party, she focuses mainly on women's emancipation and the rights of the LGBT-community.[296]

What has passed by far in the third millenium has already held some lessons. Somewhat harmonizing with the already introduced, constant feature of Dutch political culture, nowadays even populist politics offers alternatives to the electorate – these can be referred to as, simply put, a more and a less sophisticated one. Similarly, with the quit of Sylvana Simons, there are now two parties founded by immigrants. Furthermore, the *Denk* – organised by former Turkish members[297] of the Labour Party – has attracted voters from the Labour Party which traditionally advocates social democratic policies.[298] It is a salient feature of the Dutch party system, which suggests that parties traditionally prone to cooperate or even enter into alliances with political forces from another pole more or less regardless of their ideological position – the latter, in the name of pragmatic policy-making, whereas within their own party family, even slight nuances of ideological difference might lead to fragmentation.[299] Moreover, based on the fact that both Verdonk and Wilders launched their own movements after they had quit their former well-functioning parliamentary parties, one might assume that it seems as if extremist views could not remain within parties. In a broader view, there is an exclusion altogether for parties founded on extremist grounds: namely – with the exception of Pim Fortuyn's initiative –, the parties of establishment have managed to keep them away from the governing position.

[296] Otjes & Krouwel, 2018, 7

[297] They are, more precisely: Tunahan Kuzu and Selçuk Öztürk. (Otjes & Krouwel, 2018, 6)

[298] According to certain streams, classifying ideologies in the left-right spectrum has become rather outdated by today, thus their recent losses of votes is a sign of a general shift. There are some who believe that the globalism-localism dichotomy makes more sense (like Yuval Noah Harari, 2018: 21 Lessons for the 21st Century. Jonathan Cape, London, 2018), while others – as Goodhart, eminently – see a distinction between 'Anywhere' and 'Somewhere' people as meaningful (that is, concretely, David Goodhart, 2017: The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics. C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., London, 2017); indeed, the terms in which contemporary authors think and write do no have much to do with the classical typology of ideologies.

[299] The so-called 'purple coalition' perfectly exemplifies the former, why the latter – as an inter-pillar feature – happened several times. (For example, such a thing happened with the Liberals: this bloc originally organised themselves in two parties following the Second World War, while these formations kept on fragmenting.)

Conclusion: Belgium and the Netherlands under the "populist threat"[300]

In the present thesis, it was our primary ambition to explore and explain the relation between the parties of the established and the populist factions, which appeared on the political scene as the anti-system challengers of the establishment. As well, in view of the above-written, we hope, that through the case studies, the line of evolution which manifested in the last century in Belgium and the Netherlands, has become apparent and comprehensible. Such an attempt was held to be of considerable relevance, as the different roots and incentives of the Belgian and Dutch lessons provide elements of the present and future validity the consociational arrangement in the countries under question.

Although many points of the thesis discuss political culture and traditions with regard to history, crises of government formation are, nonetheless, frequent phenomena of contemporary political developments, which happened in the Low Countries in recent years. It is known that both countries' political practice features that they turn to consociational tools only occasionally. This statement is exemplified by the school question being the confrontation of the denominations and liberals, which catalysed the establishment of parties, as well. However, the recent difficulty in forming a government encourages us to reconsider the applicability and relevance of consociationalism. As a matter of fact, a question may carry a new type of uncertainty concerning the essence of consociational instruments: are they made specifically for crisis management, or – to put it differently – could consociationalism ever manifest in situations lacking crises?

Following the structure of the theoretical framework – regarding the fact that the consociational arrangement requires significant contribution from behalf of political elites – we introduced the imprints of pillarisation left, first, on the Belgian, second, on the Dutch party system. The fermentation in, and the breakaway of the sections of traditional parties in Belgium were consequences of linguistic-cultural and ethnic differences –, similarly to the later organized regionalist movements. In the Netherlands, however, these were rather ideological nuances to lead to splits. Additionally, Belgium and the Netherlands share another attribute: lately, certain radical right-wing and populist forces rose in both countries. Politicians of such initiatives put the independent Flanders on the agenda in Belgium – in the Netherlands, they target their numerous immigrant masses, or the failure concerning the relevant policies. As indicated at the end of our definition of populism, both Belgium and the Netherlands provide distinct contexts for populist initiatives. Cammaerts's 2018 article observes specifically the features of

[300] The quoted expression is Galston's own. (Galston, 2018)

populism in the Low Countries.[301] In his recent study, he – among others – explores the main differences between the features of the Flemish and the Dutch populist course through the example of the Flemish Interest in Flanders and the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands. Following this comparison, we might devide the observed characteristics into three groups. First, there is a difference in the period of time when the VB and PVV emerged and attracted a large number of voters for the first time. While the former was a popular movement during the 1990s, the latter came along with the general rise of the extreme right-wing forces after a decade, in the 2000s. Second, the scope or extension of these initiatives is also different: in this case, the subnational nature of the VB contrasts the rather "civic nationalism"[302] in the PVV's representation. Finally, the actual theme or content of the VB differs from what the PVV is focused at: that is to say, in the centre of Flemish nationalism, cultural and ethnic motivations lie, whereas a fundamental respect for civic values provide the core of Dutch nationalism.[303]

It is clearly visible, that in the Netherlands as a unitary state the societal segments never distanced so dramatically, since here the idea of federalization never occurred – unlike in Belgium. Conversely, there was not any other way to keep the Belgian state – which ceased to be a unitary state long ago – together; hence the, to day, six state reforms have proven to be necessary conditions for the coexistence of subnational units. In a sense – in terms of managing segmentation – the counterpart of this process was pillarisation. We can observe that while in the core of the Belgian pillarisation, the concept of linguistic and ethnic emancipation stood, the same process of the Netherlands was induced and catalysed by a cleavage nurtured by religious-ideological or denominational-secular differences. It leads us to conclude that while Belgium is segmented horizontally – in an economic and ethnic aspect –, the Netherlands is an instance of vertical segmentation.[304]

Religion and ideology had different impacts on the segments' accommodation in the two cases under question. First, in Belgium – as an early-industrialized society – related to the Netherlands where industrialization went under somewhat later, the labour movement appeared at an earlier time. Although in Belgium's northern neighbour, denominations used to have more significance considering the fact that religious Dutch

[301] Bart Cammaerts (2018): The Mainstreaming of Extreme Right-Wing Populism in the Low Countries: What is to be Done? In: *Communication Culture & Critique*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 7-20, 2018
[302] Cammaerts, 2018, 9
[303] Cammaerts, 2018, 9-10
[304] Wintle, 2002, 107

workers had been included in these organizations – those were, under the political elites belonging to denominations –, before development of the proletariat's movement could become relevant and influential. To a certain extent, it seemingly contradicts the vertical closeness of the Dutch pillars, that they were not substantially separated in geographical terms – except for the two southern Catholic provinces, Limburg and Brabant. The experience of the Belgian geographical integration has witnessed its opposite: whereas Wallonia has traditionally been the stronghold of socialist streams, Flanders is typically the bastion of Christian Democracy and Catholicism; however, their segregation never was significant compared to the Dutch pillars.[305] It is noticeable that consociational features – since they get a different context, another nature in both countries – are far from making the these consociational democracies uniformed. Belgium and the Netherlands equally exemplify the consociational order in developed multicultural countries, however, their experience with consociationalism may encourage further countries – as it has already happened, among others, in Lebanon and Surinam[306] – having decided to, perhaps imminently, step on the way of democratization.

Above, we have found that our initial hypothesis was confirmed. First, the appearance of both the VB and the PVV has resulted in the mainstream parties borrowing items from the populist agenda. This way, today not only the VB is concerned with Flemish independence, as not only the PVV is the black sheep among Dutch politicians with its fierce anti-immigration rhetoric. In the Belgian case, the case of Flanders's independence is presented with great success by the N-VA, while in the Dutch one, recently the VVD has had firm statements concerning the immigrant population, which might remind us of the populist tone. At the same time, there has been a significant difference between Belgium and the Netherlands: while the Flemish VB was obliged to soften its xenophobic rhetoric according to a Belgian law, in 2004, PVV has not had such a turn, to day. (Also, we cannot talk about the Dutch counterpart of this particular law – even though, there was a legal reaction to Wilders's hate speech.) In conclusion, it is fair to say that populist parties have a Janus-faced, controversial impact on the politics of traditional parties. The second layer of the question concerned the attitudes of the consociational establishment. It is taken as given in Belgium as in the Netherlands that none of the competing parties can gain the majority of votes, so that they could form a government alone, without alliances. The consequent pressure of coalitions in an era which has left room for populist forces, seems to have the following effect: it is

[305] *Ibid* 107
[306] See: Lijphart, 1977

capable to keep the veritably radical elements away from a governing position, since the instrument of the *cordon sanitaire* is at the disposal of (more) moderate parties. Accordingly, it has become possible to leave out the unwanted parties as coalition partners. Hence, radical parties can be prevented from getting close to the parliamentary decisions-making. More concretely, that is to say, once a member of Parliament, they might disarrange the democratic framework, which possibility might potentially threaten the Netherlands, as there is not any worthwhile legal barrier for competing parties and lists in the country's electoral system. It somehow nuances the tool of government formation, that grand coalitions has been put out of both the Belgian and the Dutch practice, lately.[307] In the relevant chapters, we have seen the unstable electoral support of either the VB and the PVV. In the Belgian case, the Flemish party has been losing voters to the N-VA's favour, while in the Dutch one, Thierry Baudet, the new populist figure seems to be attracting former voters of Geert Wilders. Additionally, the peak of the Flemish VB took place earlier (2004), compared to the Dutch populist movements (the electoral success of PVV at the 2017 national elections, and the breakthrough of FvD at the 2019 provincial elections).

Whether Belgium, as the result of a 'forced marriage' – the marriage bureau of which was the community of European great powers – continues the path of further federalization, which would, sooner or later, turn the federation into a confederation, is still hard to tell. Also, if the Netherlands, as "an orchestra with no conductor,"[308] would ever find its way back to the pillarisation pattern and draw from its pragmatic and traditionally tolerant political culture, is yet unknown. The above thesis reflected the situation and conditions of April 2019 in both countries – the analysis of further developments will be the concern of subsequent studies. In any case, we suppose, that the findings of the introduced and compared cases are models of a comprehensive broader – European, or even global – dynamism. The Low Countries are believed not be isolated cases – hence, their lessons might have a much wider scope.

[307] Kickert, 2003, 136

[308] The expression was borrowed from Ken Gladdish in the already-quoted volume of Andeweg and Irwin. (Andeweg & Irwin, 2009, 190)

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DECLARAÇÃO DE HONRA

Eu, Anna Vajas abaixo assinada, aluna do Mestrado em Mestrado em "Governance, Leadership and Democracy Studies" do Instituto de Estudos Políticos, com nº 104517007, venho declarar por minha honra que a Dissertação de Mestrado que agora de apresenta: "The Challenges and the Nature of Consociationalism in the 20th and 21st Centuries: *The Case of Belgium and the Netherlands*", respeita os direitos de autor e não contém qualquer plágio. Por ser verdade e ter sido solicitada se apresenta esta declaração que vai por mim assinada.

Budapeste, 3 Março 2020

……..
Anna Vajas
(Aluna)

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The Case of Belgium and the Netherlands"

Orientador: Éva Kőváriné dr. Ignáth (Associate Professor, Corvinus University of Budapest)

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