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**De-Consociational Transition: A Comparison of Three Consociational Democracies**

By

**Pelle Berends**

A Major Research Paper  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
through the Department of Political Science  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Arts  
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2020

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**De-Consociational Transition: A Comparison of Three Consociational Democracies**

by

**Pelle Berends**

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July 24, 2020

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## ABSTRACT

Consociational democracy is a system of government outlined by Arend Lijphart in response to the mystery of the stability of the democratic systems of several small Western-European states despite their intense societal divides. In the years since he outlined these states' consociational systems, much has changed. The question thus must be asked – is it possible to transition from a Consociational democracy with a focus on consensus-building to a more majoritarian political system that emphasizes competition between parties? This question will be addressed by a study of three states – the Netherlands, Belgium, and Lebanon. The Netherlands has transitioned successfully from a consociational democracy to a more competitive system, and Belgium and Lebanon have remained consociational. The political and social structures will be examined to determine what allowed for the Netherlands to transition and what stopped Belgium and Lebanon from doing so as well. Ultimately, it appears as if the Dutch divisions within society have successfully been mediated to such a degree that they no longer cause intense political tension, whereas this is not the case in Belgium and Lebanon.

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## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Scholars have long debated the impact deeply entrenched divisions have on democratic systems. Some argue that divisions are normal and do not hinder democratic consolidation, whereas others point to the difficulties they bring about. It is normal for there to be differences of opinion in a democracy, but in some societies these divisions go further. Sometimes a society is so divided by segmental cleavages – be they linguistic, regional, cultural, racial, ethnic, or ideological- that they cannot be dealt with on the basis of majority-rule. It is in these societies that a consociational democracy is established in order to mediate the differences between groups and to allow for a stable political system to emerge.

Consociationalism was first outlined by Arend Lijphart to explain how four deeply divided European states remained politically stable. He outlined several institutional and informal features that are crucial in a consociational democracy, such as the grand coalition cabinet, the mutual veto, the principle of proportionality, segmental autonomy, and prudent elite leadership<sup>1</sup>. These factors are designed to ensure that all societal segments are involved in the decision-making process in order to bring about a stable political system. Consociational democracy is not always permanent, however. It can be seen as a temporary measure designed to provide stable governance to societies that are deeply divided and to promote some form of common identity and a transition to a more competitive political system rather than one that relies on consensus-building.

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<sup>1</sup> Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 25



### 1.1.0 - Review of the Literature

When conducting research on consociational democracy, one must begin with Lijphart's considerable body of work. As the scholar who first outlined the model, his research is crucial as a foundation from which other studies on consociationalism can emerge. He first outlined the theory in his article in 1969, and then fully defined it in his book *Democracy in Plural Societies* (1977). This book is comparative in focus, and outlines how consociationalism was used in several European states to develop a stable political system despite their intense divisions. He expanded on his theories in his book *Patterns of Democracy* (2012) to compare thirty-six democracies on whether their political systems rely on majority-rule or consensus-building. Finally, he also conducted studies utilizing his consociational framework to analyze specific political systems, such as his study of India (1996). Ultimately, Lijphart's research is useful as it defines consociational democracy and works as a foundation from which further studies can emerge.

Once one has reviewed Lijphart's contributions, one can begin to study the applications of his theories and further analysis of consociational systems. It becomes clear that there is a strong focus on case-studies, as shown by scholars like Dekmejian (1978); Deschouwer (2006); Pennings and Keman (2008); Sinardet (2010); Reuchamps (2017); and Calfat (2018). This is fitting as this allows for a more detailed study of the system and the society it is found in. It is noteworthy that the majority of studies use a single case, however. Some studies are comparative; such as Jones (2017), Andeweg (2019), and Lijphart's 1977 book; but the majority only use a single case. This leads to few questions being resolved in a comparative manner. Furthermore, Lebanon is absent from comparative studies; which is a significant oversight.

One interesting aspect of consociationalism that scholars analyzed is the idea of de-consociational transition. This transition is usually understood as that of moving from a system of government that focuses on consensus-building to one that focuses more on competition between political parties and majority-rule practices. This was measured by Lijphart (1975) as he witnessed the Dutch transition from consociational politics to more competitive practices. This was followed by Andeweg (2008) who conducted a study years after the fact to measure whether the Netherlands truly underwent this transition. They outlined a number of institutional measures – such as the size of coalition governments and success of new parties – and informal measures – such as the actions of the elites – that provide strong evidence toward the conclusion that the Netherlands has undergone a de-consociational transition. Many of these factors were mentioned by Andeweg et al (2008) when they conducted a study of parliamentary opposition in former consociational states. Ultimately, these studies are useful as they outline what it means for a state to undergo this transition, but they generally focus on whether the transition can be proven, and not why it occurred. Bogaard et al. (2019) recently noted that the process of de-consociationalism is worthy of further study.

One aspect that all consociational scholars acknowledge as important is elite cooperation. Lijphart notes that the elites overcoming their differences and working together is necessary for the survival of the regime. Studying the elites is part of most consociational studies, but as Bogaard et al. (2019) point out, the question of leadership has not been fully explored. All research refers to its importance, but the focus is largely on institutional factors when considering the success of consociationalism. The role of leadership in consociational democracy and in the process of de-consociationalism has not been fully studied by scholars.

What becomes apparent after a review of the relevant literature is that there remain areas that require further study. Consociational studies largely use single-case studies, and the relatively few comparative studies always omit Lebanon. It is also clear that the question of de-consociational transition has not received as much attention as other questions regarding consociationalism, especially why it occurs. Finally, the institutions within consociational democracies received more attention at the cost of studies of elite leadership, despite scholars' acknowledgement of its importance. Thus, a study that fills these gaps in the literature would be worthwhile.

### **1.2.0 - Methodology**

After reviewing the literature, an interesting question emerges: what allows for a consociational democracy to undergo a de-consociational transition? The hypothesis of this study is that in order for a state to undergo a de-consociational transition it has to diminish the underlying reasons causing the consociational democracy, namely the divisions and tensions within society. Thus any factor that increases tensions and divisions in society, such as historical antagonisms, poor elite leadership, and loads on the system, work against the prospect of de-consociational transition.

This hypothesis will be proven through a comparative-case study using historiography, the tools outlined in the consociational literature, and elements of the structured-focused comparative approach outlined by Alexander George and Andrew Bennett. This approach involves two aspects: it is 'structured' in that it asks the same general questions of each case in order to standardize data collection and allow for comparisons, and it is 'focused' in that it only

focuses on certain aspects of the historical cases that are relevant<sup>2</sup>. The ‘focused’ aspect will be applied to the current study by isolating which aspects are important in a discussion of de-consociational transition. The ‘structured’ aspect will be applied by asking general questions regarding these factors of each case. This will allow for a standardized comparison of the cases.

The three cases that will be studied are the Netherlands, Belgium, and Lebanon. The Netherlands is the clearest example of a country that had a deeply engrained consociational tradition, but was able to undergo a de-consociational transition and emerge as a stable competitive democracy. Belgium and Lebanon are both countries that remain deeply divided and retain their consociational traditions. A comparison of these three cases will explain what leads to de-consociational transition and what hinders it. One may question the wisdom of including two European cases and one Middle-Eastern case, but it is necessary for the purposes of this study. As was mentioned above, Lebanon is frequently left out of comparative analyses of consociational systems, and thus the literature would benefit greatly from its inclusion. Also, the inclusion of a Middle Eastern case allows for the potential of the consociational model to be explored fully. Lebanon is more similar to the majority of the states in the rest of the world, whereas Europe is quite an outlier in its historical trajectory. It also makes sense to include both Lebanon and Belgium as this allows for a more detailed examination of what hinders a de-consociational transition. A simple explanation for Lebanon is that its location in a tense regional system entrenches divisions and forces it to stay consociational. Belgium is equally divided, yet it is located in a very stable regional system. Thus, there must be a more nuanced explanation.

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<sup>2</sup> Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 58.

The analysis of these cases will measure a number of independent variables – represented by the general questions as part of the structured focused approach. It will begin with an overall discussion of the consociational system of the three cases, showing that they indeed all fall under the classification and are thus comparable. The study will then look at a number of important variables that could differentiate the three cases and may contribute to a de-consociational transition. Finally, the study will look at the nature of de-consociational transition, how it did or did not emerge, and why this is the case.

The first variable is the nature of the divisions in the society and the consociational model. This will help define consociational democracy and show that the three cases are comparable. It will also determine whether the differences in the consociational systems themselves impacted the prospects for de-consociational transition. The general questions are: *What is the nature of the divisions in society? What are the origins of the system? What shape did the consociational system take?*

The next variable is the historical narratives of the various groups in society. This is drawn from Edward Azar's research (1978), as he notes that conflicts between identity groups can remain latent and lie beneath the surface of society, ready to ignite given the right trigger. The existence of these historical grievances between identity groups can contribute to the tensions and divisions in society, and thus must be measured when discussing what helps or hinders de-consociational transition. The question is: *Are there historical narratives among the segments of society, if so, are they antagonistic?*

The third variable is the overall leadership of the elites. The informal convention of elite cooperation is necessary for the consociational system to survive, so the ability of the elites to

work together prudently to lead the country needs to be measured. The degree to how effective the elites were at doing this may shed some light on the political culture within the system which could contribute to diminishing tensions and eventual de-consociational transition. The general question is: *Were the elites able to come together to rule prudently day-to-day?*

The fourth variable is the loads on the system. This is drawn from Lijphart's (1969) research. He notes that significant pressures on the system from controversial factors can strain the leadership abilities of the elites and lead to an increase in the divisions in society. The prevalence and severity of these loads can thus impact de-consociational transition as it can be difficult to achieve if the tensions within society are getting inflamed regularly by controversial factors. The general question is: *Were there loads on the system – internal or external – that put significant pressure on the system, and if so, how were they dealt with?*

The fifth variable that will be analysed is what happened to the divisions within the system. Because consociational democracies are created to mediate divisions, measuring whether they have diminished is an important factor when determining de-consociational transition. The general question is: *What happened to the divisions over time?*

Finally, the dependent variable will be measured by looking at the transition of each case to competitive political practices without destabilizing society. The general question is: *Were competitive political practices able to emerge smoothly in society?*

### **1.3.0 - Limitations**

Naturally, there will be limitations to this study. As it is a small-number case study, the findings are not as generalizable as more expansive studies, but through the inclusion of Lebanon its generalizability is improved. In this study, both Global North and Global South states are

represented, broadening the scope of the paper. One final limitation is the lack of strict causal links that can be proven. However, sufficient causality can be proven through a small-number case approach that this study will be worthwhile.

Ultimately, this paper will contribute significantly to the current body of literature on consociational democracies. As has been stated, the amount of comparative literature on these states is lacking, Lebanon is frequently excluded from comparative studies, and the process of de-consociational transition is understudied. Thus, this paper will be a valuable addition to consociational scholarship.

## **CHAPTER 2 – THE NATURE OF THE DIVISIONS AND THE CONSOCIATIONAL MODEL**

This chapter will outline how the three cases embody the consociational framework outlined by Lijphart. This is important because it will show that the states are comparable, and will allow for an evaluation of how well they fit the model.

### **2.1.0 - What is the nature of the divisions?**

#### **2.1.1 – The Netherlands**

The Dutch consociational period began in 1917 in order to accommodate the divisions that had existed within the country since independence from Habsburg Spain<sup>3</sup>. The primary division in the Netherlands is religious, with a secondary cleavage along socio-economic lines. The segments are the Roman Catholics; the Calvinists, which are a collection of numerous protestant churches of varying orthodoxy; and the Secular bloc, which is composed of those who

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<sup>3</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, “Consociationalism in the Low Countries: Comparing the Dutch and Belgian Experience,” *Swiss Political Science Review* 25, no. 4 (2019): 409-410.

are part of very minor churches or have no religious affiliation. The religious blocs have geographical strong-holds, with the Catholics being dominant in the south, the Calvinists in the southwest and center, and the Secular bloc being dominant in the west and north<sup>4</sup>. They are not regional identities, however. One must not conflate regional demographic strength with regional identities.

The second division is based on class – which is the division between the working, middle, and upper-classes. These divisions cut across the religious blocs: each group has its share of members from each class. One group is not generally perceived to be richer than the others. The class division is especially important to note for the Secular bloc, however, as they do not have the cohesion provided by common religious doctrine and are thus more divided along class lines. They split into two separate blocs along the class lines: the Socialists – representing the lower-middle and working classes – and the Liberals – representing the middle and upper-classes<sup>5</sup>. In practice, there were four segments in Dutch society: the Catholics, the Calvinists, the Socialists, and the Liberals.

### **2.1.2 – Belgium**

Initially, in Belgium, the divisions were similar to those found in the Netherlands. From 1918-1961, the divisions were along religious and class lines. It was a predominantly Catholic country, and thus the divisions only fell between the Catholic bloc and the Secular bloc. Like the Netherlands, Belgium also had class divisions that crosscut these two blocs, causing the Secular

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<sup>4</sup> Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 16-18.

<sup>5</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, “Coalition Politics in the Netherlands: From Accommodation to Politicization,” *Acta Politica* 43, no. 2-3 (2008), 255.



bloc to split into the Socialists and the Liberals. Thus, there were three segments: the Catholics, the Socialists, and the Liberals<sup>6</sup>.

After 1970 however, there was a realignment of the consociational system. The ethno-linguistic divisions between the Dutch-speaking Flemish and the French-speaking Walloons came to dominate the system. These divisions had been part of Belgian society since its inception in 1830<sup>7</sup>, however, they were latent and the religious-class divisions dominated. From 1961-1970, the religious/class divisions decreased, allowing for the ethno-linguistic tensions to heighten and dominate the system. These identities developed strong nationalist tendencies – especially within Flanders. Further complicating matters, there is a third region as well – the Brussels-Capital region – which is geographically located within Flanders, but is predominantly French-speaking; and there is a small German-speaking population in Wallonia. Initially, Belgium was similar to the Netherlands, but now Belgium is deeply divided along the ethno-linguistic cleavage.

### **2.1.3 – Lebanon**

Lebanon is an incredibly divided country with 18 identity groups recognized in government. The divisions fall largely along religious lines, with some ethnic differences, like the small Armenian population. The divisions can largely be categorized as between the Christian and Muslim communities, but it is important to note that these groups are not homogenous blocs and there are further divisions within these groups<sup>8</sup>. The three identity groups that have played the most significant role in Lebanon are the Maronite Christians and the Sunni

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<sup>6</sup> Kris Deschouwer, “And the Peace Goes On? Consociational Democracy and Belgian Politics in the Twenty-First Century,” *West European Politics* 29, no. 5 (2006): 897.

<sup>7</sup> Antoon van de Braembussche, “The Silence of Belgium: Taboo and Trauma in Belgian Memory,” *Yale French Studies* 102 (2002), 35.

<sup>8</sup> Barry Rubin, “Dealing with Communalism,” *Journal of Democracy* 17, no. 1 (2006), 58-59

and Shia Muslims. Together they make up the overwhelming majority of the population<sup>9</sup>. These religious groups have regional strongholds, such as the Maronites in the Mount Lebanon region and the Shia in the Beqaa valley, but, like the Netherlands regional identities did not emerge<sup>10</sup>.

Finally, in Lebanon there are no divisions along class lines. Like all countries, there are tensions based on class, but this never translated itself into becoming a set of identities. Some communities were perceived to be poorer than the others – such as the Shia Muslims - and thus the class issues fuelled the already divided religious tensions; just like the regional tensions were translated in religious issues<sup>11</sup>. All tensions in the system were translated into issues along the religious divisions.

#### **2.1.4 – Comparison**

Ultimately, when one looks at the three cases, some similarities emerge. All three of the countries have divisions based on religion, two of the three have divisions based on class, and all have regional strongholds for certain identity groups. All of these similarities differ by degree, however. Lebanon clearly has the strongest religious divisions due to their 18 different recognized identity groups, and what is interesting is that these divisions are what completely dominate the country. No other issues seem strong enough to supplant religion. In the Netherlands and Belgium the economic divisions were able to emerge strongly enough to split the secular bloc into separate identity groups, and in Belgium the ethno-linguistic identities were able to dominate the political system in the latter half of its consociational life. In Lebanon, however, none of the religious communities split along the class line. This could be attributed to

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<sup>9</sup> Danilo Di Mauro, “The Consociational Democracy at Stake: Four Approaches to Explain Lebanon Past and Present,” *Acta Politica* 43, no. 4 (2008), 453-454.

<sup>10</sup> Cyrus Schayegh, “1958 Reconsidered: State Formation and the Cold War in the Early Postcolonial Arab Middle East,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45, no. 3 (2013), 422

<sup>11</sup> Richard H. Dekmejian, “Consociational Democracy in Crisis: The Case of Lebanon,” *Comparative Politics* 10, no. 2 (1978), 260.

the fact that there was no secular bloc in Lebanon, and thus all communities are strongly bound by religious ties like the Dutch and Belgian Catholic/Calvinist blocs. This speaks to the strength of the religious identities that it absorbs the class and regional tensions and translates them into an extension of the religious conflict.

It is also noteworthy that out of the three cases, Belgium is the only state to have that third level of division – the ethno-linguistic division. In both the Netherlands and Lebanon, there were regional strongholds for each of the segments of the population, but this did not translate into regional identities. It merely became another factor in the identity and tensions of the existing blocs. In Belgium, due to the unique ethno-linguistic divisions between the regions, this created a third level of divisions that would further complicate the political life of the country.

## **2.2.0 - What is the origin of the consociational system?**

### **2.2.1 – The Netherlands**

The Dutch consociational system began in 1917 when two things of note occurred; first was the outbreak of World War 1. Although the Netherlands was technically neutral during this period, it was being fought just south of their borders in Belgium and France. This would increase the tension and fear within the country as they were worried that the conflict would spill over their borders. The second was the peak of two deeply divisive issues – state funding for denominational schools and universal suffrage - that were splitting the country apart. These issues divided the system to such an extent that the government had to deal with them in a consociational manner, by organizing summit meetings with leaders from all the segments. They came to an agreement to solve both issues with proportionality. The state would fund all schools

based on the proportion of their enrolment, and universal suffrage would be implemented with a strict proportional representation electoral system<sup>12</sup>.

This marked the beginning of the consociational tradition in the Netherlands as the issues that deeply divided the segments of society were solved using the consociational methods of the grand coalition, the principle of proportionality, and segmental autonomy. This tradition would continue through the entire consociational period of the Netherlands.

### **2.2.2 – Belgium**

The Belgian consociational system officially began in 1918 with the Pact of Loppem. This was a result of the First World War and the necessity to unite and rebuild the country. The war had brought the ethno-linguistic issue to the forefront, and the Socialist bloc – at this point never having allowed into cabinet – was pushing for universal suffrage. Fearing the social unrest that this could bring, the three major parties met and concluded this pact, introducing universal male suffrage<sup>13</sup>. This created a three-party grand coalition government, and began the tradition of using these summit meetings between the party elites to solve controversial issues.

Belgian consociationalism can be broken into two periods. The first period, from 1918-1961 dealt with the Catholic-Socialist-Liberal division, but these divisions were diminished significantly by 1961<sup>14</sup>. Between 1961 and 1970, the ethno-linguistic division began to take prominence. This largely had to do with the switch in economic strengths in the country.

Wallonia had long been the economic power of the country, but in this period their industry began to stagnate and the service sector of Flanders proliferated. Flanders was also the more

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<sup>12</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, “Consociationalism in the Low Countries: Comparing the Dutch and Belgian Experience,” 413.

<sup>13</sup> Kris Deschouwer, “And the Peace Goes On? Consociational Democracy and Belgian Politics in the Twenty-First Century,” 898-899.

<sup>14</sup> B. Guy Peters, “Consociationalism, Corruption and Chocolate: Belgian Exceptionalism,” *West European Politics* 29, no. 5 (2006), 1082.

populous region and had undergone a strong nation-building project, so they began to flex their economic and demographic muscle in government. This worried the Walloons, and thus tensions increased. Ultimately, this led to the meeting between the political elites and the establishment of the constitutional reforms of 1970, which instituted a number of consociational measures to protect the minority groups<sup>15</sup>. This consociational resolution to the tensions of the 60s can thus be seen as the beginning of the second consociational period of Belgium where the ethno-linguistic cleavage became dominant.

### **2.2.3 – Lebanon**

The Lebanese consociational system has a long history. The Mount Lebanon region was ruled using power-sharing measures between the Maronites and the Druze since the Ottoman era. Then, during the French Mandate era, this region was expanded to include predominantly Muslim areas like Beirut, Tripoli, and the Beqaa Valley to create the modern state of Lebanon. The 1926 constitution solidified a power-sharing structure between the Christians and Muslims and forced government to consist of members of both communities. Finally, in 1943 with the threat of the French colonial power leaving the country and the possible power vacuum that could emerge as a result, the leading elite from the Maronite community – Bishara al-Khoury – and the Sunni community – Riad al-Solh – came together and created the National Pact. This was a gentlemen’s agreement that stated that power would be shared along identity lines, and posts in government would be awarded based on religious identity and their respective demographic strengths – based on the census from 1932<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Wilfried Swenden and Maarten Theo Jans, “‘Will It Stay or Will It Go?’ Federalism and the Sustainability of Belgium,” *West European Politics* 29, no. 5 (2006), 878-880

<sup>16</sup> Tom Najem, *Lebanon: The Politics of a Penetrated Society* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 6-14.

This period of consociationalism lasted until 1975 and the onset of the Lebanese civil war. The civil war lasted for 15 years, ending in 1990 with the Ta'if Accord<sup>17</sup>. This marked the beginning of Lebanon's second consociational experience, although little was changed. The institutions and power-sharing measures remained the same, based on the National Pact, but the powers between the top three officials were balanced and there was parity of Muslims and Christians in the legislature<sup>18</sup>. Ultimately, the consociational system looked the same with the same identity groups represented, but the day-to-day practice of politics changed due to the shifting of powers.

#### 2.2.4 – Comparison

One noteworthy similarity among all cases is something that Lijphart remarked as conducive to the establishment of a consociational democracy –the existence of an external threat forcing the elites to come together and rule in a consociational fashion<sup>19</sup>. In the Netherlands, it was the First World War raging south of their borders and the internal threat of the school and suffrage issue. For Belgium it was the aftermath of the First World War and the threat of the ethno-linguistic division and the suffrage issue that forced the elites to come together. Finally, for Lebanon, it was the threat of the French leaving and the question of what would become of Lebanon that forced the Maronite and Sunni elite to come together.

An interesting difference is that two of the three cases saw a second consociational period emerge as a result of a new crisis. For Belgium, their initial divisions lessened to the point where it was no longer politically salient, but there was the growing tension and division along the ethno-linguistic cleavage which forced a new consociational arrangement to emerge. For

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<sup>17</sup> Natalia Nahas Calfat, "The Frailties of Lebanese Democracy: Outcomes and Limits of the Confessional Framework," *Contexto Internacional* 40, no. 2 (2018), 275.

<sup>18</sup> Danilo Di Mauro, "The Consociational Democracy at Stake: Four Approaches to Explain Lebanon Past and Present," 461

<sup>19</sup> Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," *World Politics* 21, no. 2 (1969), 217.

Lebanon, it was the desire to end the civil war that caused a new consociational period to emerge. In the Netherlands, they simply saw the diminishing of divisions and a gradual de-consociational transition. No new crisis emerged that forced a new consociational system.

### **2.3.0 - What shape did the consociational system take?**

#### **2.3.1 – The Netherlands**

The segments of Dutch society were represented through five political parties – the Catholic People’s Party (KVP), the Labour Party (PvdA), the Liberal Party/People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), and the two Calvinist parties – the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP) and the Christian Historical Union (CHU), which were split due to differing levels of orthodoxy<sup>20</sup>. These parties were the dominant actors throughout the consociational period, and got largely the same amount of support during the entire period as there were low levels of electoral volatility<sup>21</sup>. There were other, smaller, parties but they did not have much electoral success and never entered a governing coalition during the consociational period.

The Dutch consociational system clearly followed the format outlined by Lijphart (1977). It embodied each of the four elements of consociationalism that he noted to be essential to its survival. The first is the grand coalition cabinet. He noted that this is the primary mechanism for elite cooperation in a consociational democracy<sup>22</sup>. It is where all the important leaders of the segments can come together to make decisions and come to a consensus. In the Netherlands, while the governing cabinets were not true grand coalitions – as one of the five major parties was usually in opposition - they were all major winning coalitions, which meant that they included

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<sup>20</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, “Coalition Politics in the Netherlands: From Accommodation to Politicization,” 255

<sup>21</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, Lieven De Winter and Wolfgang C. Muller, “Parliamentary Opposition in Post-Consociational Democracies: Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands,” *Journal of Legislative Studies* 14, no 1/2 (2008), 91.

<sup>22</sup> Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 25

more parties than necessary for a simple majority<sup>23</sup>. In fact, until the end of the 1950s, they almost always represented about 75% of the seats in parliament<sup>24</sup>. There are other instances where the grand coalition was embodied, such as ad hoc grand councils organized to solve controversial issues and through parliamentary committees. The committees provided parties that were not part of the governing coalition the ability to engage in policy discussions and let their segments views be heard in policy<sup>25</sup>. In the Netherlands, chief among these is the Social and Economic Council.

The Social and Economic Council is an advisory body in the Dutch government that is incredibly influential. It is composed of 45 members, 15 appointed from the labour unions, 15 from the employer's associations, and 15 by the government. Each segment of society has their own organizational bodies, such as labour unions and employer's associations, thus the members appointed to this council are largely seen as representatives of the segments of society<sup>26</sup>. This council has the mandate to offer advice on all proposed social and economic measures, and decisions made by the council are reached by consensus. This council may technically be an advisory body, but the advice it gives is tantamount to future government policy. This is because the decisions reached by the council are essentially the results of the compromises of the segments of society, so for government to contravene what it advises would be highly inflammatory<sup>27</sup>. This leads government to following the decisions of the Council quite faithfully. Ultimately, despite the grand coalition not being fully embodied in the physical

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<sup>23</sup> Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 80.

<sup>24</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, Lieven De Winter and Wolfgang C. Muller, "Parliamentary Opposition in Post-Consociational Democracies: Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands," 90

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 93

<sup>26</sup> Ank Michels, "Theories and core principles of Dutch democracy," *European Governance Papers (EUROGOV)* no. C-07-01 (2007), 15.

<sup>27</sup> Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, 112-114



cabinet, the representatives of the segments have ample opportunity to meet and contribute to the decision-making process.

The second element of consociational democracy is the mutual veto. This refers to the measures provided to minorities to protect their interests against the tyranny of the majority<sup>28</sup>. The Netherlands had no institutional measures for the minority veto; it relied on convention. All of the segments were minorities, so it would have been difficult to push through controversial legislation without the dissenting segments being able to put up significant resistance. The Netherlands also had an informal understanding among all the segments that it was detrimental to the political system to force policy decisions that any segment did not agree with. Thus government consulted all of the groups about major policy decisions<sup>29</sup>. Despite the absence of institutional measures to protect minority interests, the Dutch consociational system operated by the convention that compromise was crucial and minority rights should be protected.

The third element of consociationalism is the principle of proportionality. This refers to using proportional allocation as the principle by which many government decisions are made – such as civil service appointments and funding for certain programs<sup>30</sup>. This is crucial, as it takes decisions that could be potentially divisive and political – such as how much money to provide to segmental organizations – and reduces them to a mathematic logic that the segments would struggle to argue with. This principle was widely used in the Dutch consociational system, as

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<sup>28</sup> Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, 36.

<sup>29</sup> Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, 103-104.

<sup>30</sup> Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, 38.

shown in 1917 with the solutions to the school and suffrage issues, and it continued to be a defining feature of the Dutch consociational system<sup>31</sup>.

The final element of consociationalism is segmental autonomy. This refers to the devolution of certain powers to the different segments so that they can live largely autonomous lives. The idea is that by leaving cross-segment interaction to the elites and allowing the segments to live insular lives, there are fewer opportunities for antagonisms to emerge between the groups<sup>32</sup>. The Netherlands embodied this principle through “pillarization”. This is where each identity group had expansive organizations associated strictly along identity lines<sup>33</sup>. These organizations included news media, education systems, labour unions, employer’s associations, and more<sup>34</sup>. This created a country where the segments lived largely autonomous lives and rarely interacted with those of another segment, as shown by the low levels of intermarriage<sup>35</sup>. Clearly, the Netherlands embodies the consociational model quite well.

### 2.3.2 – Belgium

In the first consociational period, there were three major parties – the Catholic Party, the Socialist Party, and the Liberal Party. These three parties were national and represented both Flanders and Wallonia. They formed government exclusively with little input from smaller splinter parties. In the second consociational period, this changed. Due to the increasing tensions around the linguistic cleavage, between the 60s and 70s all three major parties split along the linguistic line, creating separate parties – i.e. a Dutch Catholic party and a French

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<sup>31</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, Lieven De Winter and Wolfgang C. Muller, “Parliamentary Opposition in Post-Consociational Democracies: Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands,” 93

<sup>32</sup> Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, 41-42

<sup>33</sup> Marlou Schrover, “Pillarization, Multiculturalism and Cultural Freezing,” *Low Countries Historical Review* 125, no. 2-3 (2010), 332

<sup>34</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, Lieven De Winter and Wolfgang C. Muller, “Parliamentary Opposition in Post-Consociational Democracies: Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands,” 103-104

<sup>35</sup> Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, 36-58.

Catholic party. This eventually led to the creation of two separate party systems in each region with a proliferation of new parties. There are now only regional parties<sup>36</sup>. This creates difficulties as they need to come together in a national legislature and work together despite the exclusively regional focus of the parties. It is also important to note that in Flanders, nationalist and separatist parties have become very powerful.

In terms of the grand coalition, Belgium is much like the Netherlands, because a full grand coalition cabinet was rarely established. Government was usually composed of a coalition of two parties with the other being in opposition – the Catholics usually played the pivot role<sup>37</sup>. Belgium is different than the Netherlands however as they had few alternative measures to act as a grand coalition – such as the Dutch Social and Economic Council. The most significant were the ad hoc summit meetings of the leaders of the key parties whenever a crisis emerged that had to be dealt with<sup>38</sup>. The second period functioned in a similar fashion<sup>39</sup>. There is one compromise that does follow the logic of the grand coalition, however - the linguistic parity of French and Dutch in Belgian cabinets<sup>40</sup>. As the ethno-linguistic cleavage was always present in the Belgian system, it became a rule that there should be an equal balance of Dutch and French-speaking cabinet members.

Belgium formally entrenched the mutual veto in its consociational system. As the tensions between the ethno-linguistic groups got worse during the 60s, a minority protection clause was included in the constitutional reforms of 1970. The first is that any law affecting

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<sup>36</sup> Erik Jones, “The Decline and Fall of Three Hegemonic Parties in Europe,” 79-80.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>38</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, Lieven De Winter and Wolfgang C. Muller, “Parliamentary Opposition in Post-Consociational Democracies: Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands,” 81

<sup>39</sup> Kris Deschouwer, “And the Peace Goes On? Consociational Democracy and Belgian Politics in the Twenty-First Century,” 898.

<sup>40</sup> Dave Sinardet, “From Consociational Consciousness to Majoritarian Myth: Consociational Democracy, Multi-Level Politics, and the Belgian Case of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde,” *Acta Politica* 45, no. 3 (2010), 355

cultural and educational interest of the language group can only be passed through majority votes of both the Dutch and French-speaking representatives<sup>41</sup>. The second is the “alarm bell procedure”. This is an extreme protection measure, whereby if  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a segment vote to ‘ring the alarm bell’ in parliament in response to a policy issue, all discussion on the issue must stop and the executive – which has linguistic parity – has 60 days to resolve the issue. If they fail to do so, it generally leads to the dissolution of parliament and a new election<sup>42</sup>. Due to the increased tensions in Belgian politics, minority protection measures have been institutionalized in order to provide strong protections to the groups.

Belgium also utilizes the principle of proportionality. Its electoral system is one of proportional representation, like the Netherlands<sup>43</sup>. What is interesting in Belgium, however, is that proportionality is not always strictly followed. They use it for the allocation of funds but also ignore it for key appointments<sup>44</sup>. The most obvious example of this is the linguistic parity that can be found in the cabinet. Technically, based on the principle of proportionality, there should be more Dutch-speaking cabinet ministers, but, due to the sharp divisions, the cabinet must have linguistic parity in order to appease the segments. This shows that although proportionality can make some difficult decisions easier, not everything can be reduced to simple mathematical logic. Sometimes counter-proportional decisions must be made for the stability of society.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 354.

<sup>42</sup> Dave Sinardet, “Belgian Federalism Put to the Test: The 2007 Belgian Federal Elections and their Aftermath,” *West European Politics* 31, no. 5 (2008), 1019

<sup>43</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, Lieven De Winter and Wolfgang C. Muller, “Parliamentary Opposition in Post-Consociational Democracies: Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands,” 93

<sup>44</sup> Kris Deschouwer, “And the Peace Goes On? Consociational Democracy and Belgian Politics in the Twenty-First Century,” 897.

Finally, the last consociational device that Belgium uses is segmental autonomy, and this is fully embodied in both of Belgium's consociational periods. During the first period, like the Netherlands, Belgium utilized pillarization with the segments having their own organizations, like labour unions and news media, which allowed them to live largely separate lives<sup>45</sup>. As of 1958, the state also funded each segment's education system<sup>46</sup>. However, Belgium entered a new consociational period after the constitutional amendments of 1970<sup>47</sup>. These amendments marked the beginning of Belgium's transition to a federal system, which would be completed in 1993<sup>48</sup>. This created a complicated system with three levels to reflect the sharp ethno-linguistic divisions within the Belgian system. The federal government is in charge of national issues, and as tensions and issues emerged, more of its powers were devolved to the regions. It also created the regional level with three regions – Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels-Capital. Finally, it created the community level to provide governance powers to the Dutch, French, and German-language communities<sup>49</sup>. The separation between the regional and community jurisdictions was done to protect the minority populations living in another region, and to protect the French-speaking region of Brussels-Capital who - despite being French-speaking - have a different culture than Wallonia. The Flemish combined the regional and community jurisdictions to create one Dutch-Flemish legislature because they had undergone a nation-building project.

Federalism is the ultimate example of segmental autonomy. It allows for the segments to live completely independent lives as they have extensive powers to legislate on issues that

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<sup>45</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, Lieven De Winter and Wolfgang C. Muller, "Parliamentary Opposition in Post-Consociational Democracies: Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands," 103

<sup>46</sup> Maureen Covell, "Agreeing to Disagree: Elite Bargaining and the Revision of the Belgian Constitution," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 15, no. 3 (1982), 454

<sup>47</sup> B. Guy Peters, "Consociationalism, Corruption and Chocolate: Belgian Exceptionalism," 1082-1083.

<sup>48</sup> Wilfried Swenden, Marleen Brans, and Lieven De Winter, "The Politics of Belgium: Institutions and Policy Under Bipolar and Centrifugal Federalism," *West European Politics* 29, no. 5 (2006), 864.

<sup>49</sup> Wilfried Swenden and Maarten Theo Jans, "'Will It Stay or Will It Go?' Federalism and the Sustainability of Belgium," 882-885.

impact their day-to-day lives. Currently, Belgium is quite de-centralized as the regions and communities have considerable powers<sup>50</sup>. They segments live almost entirely separate lives, to the point where the rates of working in and interaction with another region are quite low<sup>51</sup>. Out of all the consociational tools that Belgium utilized, segmental autonomy is the one they rely on the most to keep stability in the current system.

### 2.3.3 – Lebanon

The political actors within the Lebanese consociational system are slightly different than that of the Netherlands and Belgium. In those countries, political parties dominate and the elites work within the parties to make decisions. This role is reversed in Lebanon with the elites – known as *zu'ama* (singular *zaim*) - being the dominant actor and the political parties acting as vehicles for their rule. These are traditionally powerful families, be it feudal land-owners or other dominant figures within communities, who rule through patron-client networks. They get support from their religious community, and they then represent them in government and provide them with funds, job opportunities, etc<sup>52</sup>. In the second consociational period after the civil war, this was largely unchanged. The militias that emerged during the civil war period created similar patron-client relationships with their respective communities and provided social services and jobs. These militias – such as the Amal Movement, Hezbollah, and the Lebanese Forces - then entered the political establishment, and many of the traditional families lost power and influence to these new *zu'ama*. This period also saw the emergence of new families who took power from

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 885-886.

<sup>51</sup> Jaak Billiet, Bart Maddens, and Andre Paul Frogner, “Does Belgium (Still) Exist? Differences in Political Culture between Flemings and Walloons,” 917.

<sup>52</sup> Dan Naor, “In the Arena of the Zu’ama – Reviewing Hizballah’s Role in Lebanon,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2014), 9.

traditional *zu'ama*, such as the Hariri dynasty becoming dominant in the Sunni community. These new groups act in the same manner as the *zu'ama* of the initial consociational period.<sup>53</sup>

An important note regarding the Lebanese elite is that in the modern era, due to the regional system it finds itself in, they have created a set of alliances which aligns with their desire for international allegiance. It was born out of the experience of the country after the civil war. The Ta'if Accord allowed Syria to dominate and control the country, leading to significant grievances among many of the communities – primarily among the Maronites and Sunnis<sup>54</sup>. It culminated with large demonstrations in March 2005 after Syria seemingly assassinated the Sunni leader Rafic Hariri. On March 8, citizens staged large demonstrations calling for Syria to stay in the country, whereas on March 14 citizens protested demanding Syria leave<sup>55</sup>. Syria left a little while later, and the elites of the country then divided themselves between the March 8 – pro-Syria and Iran - and March 14 – pro-west and Saudi Arabia – alliances<sup>56</sup>. All elites are now split within the Lebanese political system between these alliances, further complicating the consociational picture.

The Lebanese consociational system also embodies the four elements of consociationalism outlined by Lijphart. The Grand Coalition is embodied by including political actors from all communities within cabinet<sup>57</sup>. This leads to cabinet formations taking an incredibly long time, and in periods where they fail to include all actors there is serious domestic strife. There is a tendency by the elites to isolate certain powerful actors to weaken them, but

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 14-15.

<sup>54</sup> Ohannes Geukjian, "Political Instability and Conflict After the Syrian Withdrawal from Lebanon," *The Middle East Journal* 68, no. 4 (2014), 523

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 526-527.

<sup>56</sup> Stephen Deets and Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss, "Jumping out of the 'Hobbesian Fishbowl' and into the Fire: Lebanon, Elections, and Chronic Crisis," *Demokratizatsiya* 24, no. 4 (2016), 519.

<sup>57</sup> Richard H. Dekmejian, "Consociational Democracy in Crisis: The Case of Lebanon," *Comparative Politics* 10, no. 2 (1978), 253.

this often leads to crisis<sup>58</sup>. For example, before the civil war, the *zu'ama* tried to keep dominant Druze leaders – such as Kamal Jumblatt - out of cabinet, increasing domestic tensions<sup>59</sup>. In the modern era, there were actions taken against Hezbollah, and this caused an 18 month crisis that ended with the Doha Accord, which entrenched the rule that even opposition members should be included in government<sup>60</sup>. These large cabinets are often very fragmented and struggle to agree on policy decisions.

There is another method that Lebanon uses as a form of grand coalition – by reserving political seats for the certain identity groups. The top three positions in Lebanon's government are reserved for members of the three dominant identity groups – the president must be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister must be Sunni, and the speaker of parliament must be Shia<sup>61</sup>. This ensures that the three most significant communities are represented in the top government positions and in the decision-making process. During the first consociational period, however, the president was clearly the dominant actor, which caused tensions with the other communities. This was changed in the Taif Accord, which *de facto* balanced the powers among the top three actors<sup>62</sup>. This shows that the grand coalition was established by the Lebanese elite, but it was not always perfectly implemented as some key actors were purposely left out at times, leading to crisis.

Lebanon also embodies the minority veto. This provision was only mildly institutionalized in the first consociational period as this system was dominated by the president

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<sup>58</sup> Natalia Nahas Calfat, "The Frailties of Lebanese Democracy: Outcomes and Limits of the Confessional Framework," 283.

<sup>59</sup> Danilo Di Mauro, "The Consociational Democracy at Stake: Four Approaches to Explain Lebanon Past and Present," 43

<sup>60</sup> Ohannes Geukjian, "Political Instability and Conflict After the Syrian Withdrawal from Lebanon," 534-535.

<sup>61</sup> Tamirace Fakhoury, "Do Power-Sharing Systems Behave Differently amid Regional Uprisings? Lebanon in the Arab Protest Wave," *Middle East Journal* 68, no. 4 (2014), 508.

<sup>62</sup> Ohannes Geukjian, "Political Instability and Conflict After the Syrian Withdrawal from Lebanon," 527.



– and thus the Maronite community had a veto over the political system. The other communities had a minor veto, as decisions by cabinet had to be passed by a 2/3 vote<sup>63</sup>. Thus there was not a perfect minority veto implemented institutionally, but unofficially there was an understanding that the communities had to work together for the common good, and any majoritarian policies were met with fierce resistance from the other communities. In the second consociational period, however, the minority veto has been applied more equally as the top three positions have their own unique powers giving them a veto over the political process<sup>64</sup>. Issues do emerge as the elites are a bit too willing to use their veto, stalemating the system. Overall, however, in the current consociational system, the minority veto is more evenly applied.

The third element is proportionality, and it is here that Lebanon faces the gravest criticism. There are two choices one can make with proportionality: one can either use it strictly, and allocations and appointments are done purely based on percentage of the population; or one can utilize parity and elevate minority groups to an equal standing with the majority group to ensure that the tyranny of the majority does not occur. Lebanon attempted to do both and has missed the mark. They attempted proportionality by pegging the seat and government appointments to proportional representation. They utilized the 1932 census for this, in which the Maronites had a plurality, thus giving them the most seats and most powerful position. Overall, the Christians outnumbered the Muslims, thus the seats were allocated on a basis of 6 Christians for every 5 Muslims. The problem is that a proportional system requires constant change to remain accurate due to demographic changes. Lebanon never had another census, due to its

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 521.

<sup>64</sup> Paul Salem, "Lebanon," in *The Middle East*, 14<sup>th</sup> ed., ed. Ellen Lust (Thousand Oaks: CQ Press, 2017), 598-599.

sensitive political nature, and thus the seat and power allocations did not change<sup>65</sup>. This eventually grew to irritate the other communities, primarily the Muslims who were seen to be overtaking the Christians in population, and yet remained under-represented in government. Eventually, after the civil war, it was changed so there is an equal 50-50 split in parliament between Christians and Muslims. This may appear to fit the parity model, but not quite. Within the Muslim and Christian camps, the seats are still divided ‘proportionally’, but they are distorted. The Shia segment gets the same amount as the Sunni population, despite most estimates saying that they are the most populous community in the country<sup>66</sup>. Thus, on closer inspection, it reflects neither parity nor strict proportional representation.

Finally, the last element of consociational government is segmental autonomy. Due to the nature of the Lebanese political system – with the *zu'ama* playing a dominant role in the provision of social services and funding - there is an incredible degree of segmental autonomy. The Lebanese state is actually quite weak with the communities having control over countless aspects of daily life, such as marriage, child custody, inheritance, and education<sup>67</sup>. The *zu'ama* are in charge of petitioning the state for the funds to provide these services and how they are implemented within the community. This did not change with the second consociational system after the civil war; what changed was which actor played the role of *zaim*. In the case of Hezbollah, they have become the dominant force in providing services to the Shia community, and sometimes this expands to other communities as well. They are now seen as the largest

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<sup>65</sup> Danilo Di Mauro, “The Consociational Democracy at Stake: Four Approaches to Explain Lebanon Past and Present,” 459.

<sup>66</sup> Stephen Deets and Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss, “Jumping out of the ‘Hobbesian Fishbowl’ and into the Fire: Lebanon, Elections, and Chronic Crisis,” 527.

<sup>67</sup> Danilo Di Mauro, “The Consociational Democracy at Stake: Four Approaches to Explain Lebanon Past and Present,” 458-459.

provider of services in the entire country<sup>68</sup>. This shows that the state has taken a hands-off approach to the daily lives of its citizens, allowing the communities to run themselves instead.

#### **2.3.4 – Comparison**

Ultimately, when one looks at the consociational systems of the three states as a whole, there are significant similarities that allow a comparative study such as this to be conducted. All three states have divisions based on religion with two having a socio-economic division as well. All three states have broadly similar origins of their consociational system with an external threat and internal divisions forcing the elites to come together in a consociational fashion. This tradition would then last throughout the consociational periods of the countries.

Finally, in terms of the actual consociational model, the three countries exemplify the sheer diversity of interpretations possible. All three states adhere to the four consociational elements, although there is some variation on the degree of success. The Netherlands stands out as adhering, overall, the best to the consociational model. They have a strong grand coalition tradition, adequate minority vetoes – even if it is by convention rather than formal rule – strong adherence to proportionality, and a strong model of segmental autonomy. The Belgian model falters in its adherence to the grand coalition and there is a stronger tendency to majoritarian policies. Lebanon also struggled with aspects of the grand coalition and when implementing the principle of proportionality.

In terms of the discussion regarding de-consociational transition and comparability, this shows that these states are comparable as they all embody the principles that Lijphart outlines. Thus a comparative study of the three cases to determine what contributes to a de-consociational transition is possible. On the other hand, this chapter also shows that the adherence to the

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<sup>68</sup> Bryan R. Early, “‘Larger than a Party, Yet Smaller than a State’: Locating Hezbollah’s Place within Lebanon’s State and Society,” *World Affairs* 168, no. 3 (2006), 115.

characteristics of the model is not what sets these states apart. Despite the differences in success in certain areas, the differences are not significant enough to contribute to the difference in de-consociational transition. It is important to note that the Netherlands embodied the model the best, but the other states' deficiencies are not noteworthy enough to explain the difference in outcome.

### CHAPTER 3 – HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

The idea of historical narratives and its role in consociational democracy is an adaptation of the research done by Edward Azar. Throughout his career, he created and refined the theory of Protracted Social Conflict. This is a theory that posits a form of conflict between identity groups that is different from overt violent conflicts. Azar argued that it is possible for there to be conflict between identity groups over perceived grievances in areas like economic or political participation or a lack of recognition<sup>69</sup>. These grievances take the form of latent antagonisms between groups that are carried on through their distinct historical narratives. His theory is useful for a study of consociational systems because it focuses on the state as a crucial actor in the satisfaction or frustration of these community needs. It is useful to measure whether the identity groups in a consociational system have grievances against one another or with the state and whether the state is doing an adequate job of dealing with these issues. Also, it is important to measure the antagonistic narratives in deeply divided societies, as they could be detrimental to the diminishing of divisions and tensions in society, impacting the prospects for de-consociational transition. Antagonistic historical narratives pit segments against one another,

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<sup>69</sup> Oliver Ramsbotham, "The Analysis of Protracted Social Conflict: A Tribute to Edward Azar," *Review of International Studies* 31, no. 1 (2005), 112-113.

contributing to tensions within society; so, a consociational democracy where these narratives exist would face a greater challenge in diminishing tensions and divisions than a democracy that does not have them. This would thus contribute to a difference in de-consociational transition. Thus, this is an important factor to measure when discussing differences in de-consociational transitions.

### **3.1.0 - Are there historical narratives among the segments of society, and if so, are they antagonistic?**

#### **3.1.1 – The Netherlands**

There were historical narratives within the segments of Dutch society, but they were not largely antagonistic. Each segment emerged during the fight for independence from Spain, and it was here that their narratives were born. The war of independence was one of political independence, but it was also a war over religion as they were fighting the Spanish imposition of Roman Catholicism. Thus, the Calvinists were a driving force during this conflict as they fought this infringement on their religion. The secular bloc also had strong national ties to this period as they had Calvinist origins and gained patriotic sentiment as they fought against religious “tyranny”. The Catholic segment had a much different experience as they were in a difficult position, because the war was against Catholic Spain. They were prohibited from holding public office and their services were banned. Furthermore, when the two southern Catholic provinces were conquered by the Netherlands and included in the Republic, they were treated more as colonies and exploited economically<sup>70</sup>.

When one hears this, one would assume that there would be antagonistic narratives between the segments, especially the Catholics. Luckily, this did not come to pass for a couple of reasons. Ultimately, the prohibition of Catholicism was not as bad as it seemed. Once

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<sup>70</sup> Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, 79-80.

independence was achieved, being Catholic was not a crime, and private worship and services were tolerated. By and large the Netherlands was tolerant of different religions. Slowly, through political battles the Catholics won their political and religious freedoms. The primary reasons why the Catholics did not become estranged from the greater Dutch nation was due to the interdependence of the South and the rest of the country economically. More importantly, the Catholic elite at the time were clergymen, and Church doctrine did not condone revolution or secession. This stopped tensions from becoming truly antagonistic<sup>71</sup>. The elites within society made it so that the grievances did not get to be too entrenched.

One final aspect can be looked at to explain the lack of antagonistic historical narratives in the Netherlands. Throughout their history, the Dutch political actors fostered a tradition of compromise and acceptance of disagreement and diversity<sup>72</sup>. This would contribute to the acceptance of different religious views and would contribute to the segments of Dutch society never becoming wholly antagonistic. They had their differences and lived separate lives, but did not outright hate each other.

Despite the existence of these separate identities and narratives, there were some unifying aspects to Dutch identity as well. They had a common struggle against Spanish imposition, a common monarch, and a common language that all played unifying roles in Dutch society<sup>73</sup>. The monarch is a strong unifying symbol when times are good, but when controversy arises around the monarchy, it has the potential to destabilize society. During the consociational period, this nationalism should not be over-stated, but it cannot be ignored either. Ultimately then, the

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 80-82

<sup>72</sup> Ank Michels, "Theories and core principles of Dutch Democracy," *European Governance Papers (EUROGOV)*, 6

<sup>73</sup> Marlou Schrover, "Pillarization, Multiculturalism and Cultural Freezing," 352.

historical narratives of each segment exist, but they are not antagonistic of each other. They mark different identities, but not negative ones.

### 3.1.2 – Belgium

In the Belgian case there are no distinct historical narratives along the divisions in the initial period of consociationalism, but there are significant antagonistic narratives along the ethno-linguistic cleavage. This identity is perfect for an application of Azar's theory, as it was present but latent during the initial consociational period, and then it was brought to the forefront due to the political tensions of the 60s. The reason this identity came to the forefront as strongly as it did is because of the historical narratives and grievances that the communities had. Belgium was *de facto* monolingual for many years, with French being the dominant language in business and government, despite the significant Dutch-speaking population and official freedom of language under the constitution. Eventually, this would be rectified and the country would officially be made bilingual federally<sup>74</sup>. This was done to allow both groups representation in their language, and to protect linguistic rights. Due to the dominant role French had played in Belgium to this point and the fact that French-speaking Wallonia was the economic heart of the country, many Flemings had serious grievances with the system and with the Walloons; there is a famous story of Flemish foot soldiers fighting under officers who did not speak their language, symbolizing the Flemish grievances that they were second-class to the French-speakers<sup>75</sup>. The long time it took for Dutch to be recognized within the state further emphasized this point and played a large role in developing the Flemish identity<sup>76</sup>.

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<sup>74</sup> Piet van de Craen, "What, if Anything, Is a Belgian?" *Yale French Studies* 102 (2002), 26.

<sup>75</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, "Consociationalism in the Low Countries: Comparing the Dutch and Belgian Experience," 410.

<sup>76</sup> Wilfried Swenden and Maarten Theo Jans, "Will It Stay or Will It Go?" *Federalism and the Sustainability of Belgium*, 878.

These grievances led to the Flemish creating a distinct Flemish identity and culture<sup>77</sup>. Ultimately, when economic circumstances came to be reversed and Flanders became the dominant economic power- not to mention the majority population - they found themselves in a position where they became the dominant player after years of being second-class. Thus, they began to flex their muscle in government<sup>78</sup>. This scared the Walloons, and led to the 1970 reforms. The historical narratives and divisions between the two groups are clearly seen in the negotiation process of the reforms of 1970. The negotiations quickly became zero-sum discussions, with a victory for one side being a loss for the other<sup>79</sup>. These zero-sum relationships last to this day whenever controversial crises pop up. This is born out of the vast differences between the two and the fact that their narratives have made them take hard stances against each other. Clearly, there are strong historical narratives among the Flemish. Through their history, they have seen themselves as second-class citizens, and this forced them to create a national identity that sets them apart from the rest of the country, and when they finally did reach a dominant position, this led them to take actions that would further put them on top. The Walloons are aware of this antagonism, and thus they become worried about Flemish retribution when they act in a majoritarian fashion. This makes for a tense society and political system.

In the case of the French-speakers, the narratives are not as strong. Possibly due to their previous status as the dominant power, they did not embark on the same nation-building project that the Flemish did. The other reason for this is that the French-speakers are split between two regions and despite their similar language, have different cultures. Wallonia was the industrial heart of the country and frequently voted for the Socialist party, whereas the Brussels-Capital

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<sup>77</sup> Jaak Billiet, Bart Maddens, and Andre-Paul Frogner, "Does Belgium (Still) Exist? Differences in Political Culture between Flemings and Walloons," 915.

<sup>78</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, "Consociationalism in the Low Countries: Comparing the Dutch and Belgian Experience," 417

<sup>79</sup> Maureen Covell, "Agreeing to Disagree: Elite Bargaining and the Revision of the Belgian Constitution," 457.



region was a government and business centre that voted for the Liberals. Thus, despite their common French-language, they do not share a completely similar culture, leading to the French nation-building project not being as successful as the Flemish<sup>80</sup>.

There are some symbols that help unify Belgium, such as the monarchy, but just as in the Netherlands this plays a dangerous role, as when controversy arises it has the potential to destabilize society. Other aspects, such as success at the Olympics or when the Belgian national soccer team does well provides some form of unifying force as well<sup>81</sup>. As has become abundantly clear, unlike the Netherlands, they are not united along linguistic lines and clearly this has become the biggest cleavage in the Belgian system. Unfortunately, unlike the Netherlands, there are not as many unifying aspects in Belgian society, although one should not underestimate those that do exist.

Ultimately, the Belgian case is not as optimistic as the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, the narratives did not pit the identity groups against one another. In Belgium, one group has a strong narrative of being second class citizens, and this has pushed their identity to evolve the way it has – with Flemish nationalist parties calling for secession being very successful. The French narrative may not be as cohesive as that of the Flemish, but they still react strongly to the perceived encroachment of the Flemish on their identity rights, and this causes tension in the political system. This antagonism between the identity groups is not something the Dutch had to contend with in their political system.

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<sup>80</sup> Jaak Billiet, Bart Maddens, and Andre-Paul Frogner, “Does Belgium (Still) Exist? Differences in Political Culture between Flemings and Walloons,” 915

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 918.

### 3.1.3 – Lebanon

Lebanon presents another clear case of a country with deeply engrained antagonistic historical narratives among the identity groups. As mentioned, this is a deeply divided society and there is no one national identity. The primordial religious identities are stronger. This is born from the arguably arbitrary creation of Lebanon. It was initially part of the Greater Syrian province within the Ottoman Empire. When this empire was dissolved after World War 1, the British and French gained control over its former territories. The idea was that, under the Mandate system, they would help guide them to eventual independence<sup>82</sup>. Through this system, the French granted their long-time allies – the Maronites – the nation-state that they had desired for many years. Unfortunately, to make it a viable entity, they included a number of predominantly Muslim areas, leaving the Maronites as a minority in their own state<sup>83</sup>. The desire for an independent state was unique to the Maronites, as the others desired different arrangements, such as the Sunni desire to be part of a pan-Arab or Greater Syrian state as they would be the majority population in such an entity<sup>84</sup>. Ultimately, the Lebanese state was a Maronite project that the other communities rejected to varying degrees.

This would play significantly into the creation of distinct historical narratives within Lebanon. From the outset, the segments had opposing ideas about the shape that the state should take. Then, when the Maronites continued to play a dominant role within the political system, the narratives of the other communities came to reflect the feeling of being second-class citizens<sup>85</sup>. This was also compounded by the emergence of Arab Nationalism as a driving force in Middle Eastern politics. This ideology opposed the arbitrary nature of the borders drawn by

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<sup>82</sup> Paul Salem, "Lebanon," 592.

<sup>83</sup> Ayse T. Fildis, "The Troubles in Syria: Spawned by French Divide and Rule," *Middle East Policy* 18, no. 4 (2011), 133.

<sup>84</sup> Tom Najem, *Lebanon: The Politics of a Penetrated Society*, 8.

<sup>85</sup> Cyrus Schayegh, "1958 Reconsidered: State Formation and the Cold War in the Early Postcolonial Arab Middle East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45, no. 3 (2013), 432.

the western powers, and called for a unified Arab state<sup>86</sup>. This found considerable traction among the disenfranchised communities within Lebanon and further strengthened their narratives. The Muslims, primarily Sunni, rejected the Lebanese state and wished for its dissolution into something else, and the Maronites desperately desired to cling to power.

These narratives would play a large role in the onset of the civil war and its longevity. Ultimately, when the civil war ended, the experiences before and during the conflict further entrenched these historical narratives pitting the identity groups of Lebanon against one another<sup>87</sup>. These historical narratives have incredible power to this day and push the segments to protect their status at all costs. Unfortunately, in Lebanon there is a lack of unifying symbols that may pull the disparate groups together. These separate and antagonistic identities make working together difficult and contribute significantly to an unstable and tense society.

### **3.1.4 – Comparison**

As can be seen, there is a disparity in the historical narratives of the three consociational states. In the Netherlands, the narratives create separate segments, but they are not antagonistic and do not pit the groups against one another. No one has a lasting narrative of being disenfranchised and needing to fight to maintain status. This is not the case in the other two states. In both Belgium and Lebanon, there are communities – the Flemish and the Muslims– who have formative experiences where they were perceived to be treated as second-class citizens who needed to fight for equal treatment in areas like political representation or economic development. These experiences paint the historical narratives of the group in an antagonistic light, thus making cooperation more difficult and increasing tensions in society.

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<sup>86</sup> Efraim Karsh and Inari Karsh, “Reflections on Arab Nationalism,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 4 (1996), 367.

<sup>87</sup> Kail C. Ellis, “Lebanon: The Struggle of a Small Country in a Regional Context,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1999), 10-16

This is a noteworthy difference between the cases that can contribute to de-consociational transition. For a de-consociational transition to take place, the underlying reasons for a consociational democracy – the tensions and divisions within a society - need to be dealt with. These antagonisms can significantly increase the tensions in the society, and thus hinders the prospects for de-consociational transition. It is thus noteworthy that the one state that did transition from a consociational democracy – the Netherlands – did not have these historical antagonisms.

The case of Belgium warrants further discussion as well. As was mentioned, Belgium had two consociational periods. The first dealt with the religious/socio-economic division and the second dealt with the ethno-linguistic division. The first division did not have strong historical narratives – like the Netherlands – and it saw a transition away from a consociational system along these lines to a new system. This shows that consociational systems centred on divisions that do not have antagonistic narratives have an easier chance of transitioning. Unfortunately, the ethno-linguistic division was latent and came to the forefront, forcing a new consociational system. Ultimately, it is clear that antagonistic narratives impact the de-consociational prospects of a state.

#### **CHAPTER 4 – OVERALL ELITE LEADERSHIP**

Lijphart notes that as important as the institutional measures to facilitate consociational democracy are, it is the conscious decision of the elites to work together and overcome their differences for the good of society that keeps consociational democracy going. The elites need

to be aware of the dangers of the divisions and treat politics as a serious business, rather than a game to be played between rivals.

Lijphart noted that there are three conditions that are conducive to the maintenance of elite cooperation. The first is the existence of external threats which motivate the elite cartel to work together to resolve the crisis<sup>88</sup>. It was noted in Chapter 2 that all three states in this study faced some form of external threat which motivated the elites to come together and govern in a consociational fashion. The second condition Lijphart notes as contributing to elite cooperation is a multiple balance of power among the subcultures<sup>89</sup>. This refers to all segments of the population being minorities and no one group being able to overpower the others. This will be discussed in more depth in this chapter and its implication on elite leadership. The final condition that Lijphart noted that contributes to the ability of the elites to cooperate is there being relatively few loads on the system that could strain relations among the elites<sup>90</sup>. This will be discussed in depth in the next chapter.

In order for a state to achieve de-consociational transition, the underlying divisions and tensions need to be dealt with. The prudent leadership of the elites is the primary way in which issues are dealt with, compromise is reached, and peace is maintained between the groups. If one group is seen to be acting in a self-serving or majoritarian manner, or if one segment is isolated outright, that will have dire consequences on the tensions in society, thus impacting the prospect of de-consociational transition. This means that the prudent leadership of the elites must be studied to understand why some states transition while others do not.

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<sup>88</sup> Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," 217.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 217-218.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 218-219.

#### 4.1.0 - Were the elites able to come together to rule prudently day-to-day?

##### 4.1.1 – The Netherlands

Overall, the Dutch elite were excellent at coming together to rule prudently, which was helped in part by the multiple balance of power. The Dutch consociational system was a system of minority segments<sup>91</sup>. This translated into the political system with the Catholic Party and Labour parties each receiving around 30% of the vote, and the Liberal and Calvinist parties each receiving around 10%<sup>92</sup>. This forced the parties to work together as they could not rely on majoritarian tactics to make decisions. In practice, the Dutch governing strategy was largely influenced by the pillarization of society. In the Netherlands, each segment had their own party and organizations, and due to the significant overlap between the two, the elites often represented their segments both in civil society and in parliament<sup>93</sup>. This allowed the elites to rule largely through non-transparent, backdoor deals with one another. Due to the deference of the Dutch population, this did not come across as anti-democratic<sup>94</sup>. This gave the elites significant freedom to deal with one another and compromise in order to maintain stability in the system, with little popular interference.

The principles of consensus and pragmatism/prudence were crucial during the Dutch consociational system<sup>95</sup>. Due to this, there was a significant lack of temptation by the elites to use majoritarian tactics while ruling<sup>96</sup>. They were capable of reflecting the interests of their segment and were able to overcome their differences and work together. The Dutch elite realized that there was a significant danger in isolating and ignoring certain segments of the

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<sup>91</sup> Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, 16

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

<sup>93</sup> Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, 59-61

<sup>94</sup> Erik Jones, "The Decline and Fall of Three Hegemonic Parties in Europe," 79.

<sup>95</sup> Ank Michels, "Theories and core principles of Dutch democracy," 13.

<sup>96</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, "Consociationalism in the Low Countries: Comparing the Dutch and Belgian Experience," 415

population, so they made efforts to include all important groups in the decision-making process and ensured that it was as prudent as possible. The first and most obvious example of this is the formation of the coalition governments. As was mentioned, coalition governments were necessary to rule and the Dutch coalitions were massive. They were almost all surplus-majority, and they often represented 75% of the seats in parliament<sup>97</sup>. This was a conscious decision by the elites to include as many parties in the government as possible in order to rule effectively and achieve the desired goal of consensus.

Prudence is reflected in the technocratic nature of Dutch coalitions. In Dutch governments, cabinet members are not allowed to also sit in the legislature as MPs, and thus if an MP were to want to be a cabinet minister, they would have to resign from parliament. Dutch cabinets have thus generally been composed of individuals from outside parliament with expertise over their assigned portfolio. They are members of the party in practice, but not always in name<sup>98</sup>. This provided a significant separation from parliament and allowed the cabinet to rule prudently on important issues. This separation, however, did cause some tension between parliamentary leaders and their respective cabinet ministers, leading to some cabinet crises such as in 1951 and 1960.

Such large coalitions still reduce certain key parties to opposition status, and this could be a recipe for disaster. Luckily, there were various opportunities for the opposition to take part in the decision-making process. As was mentioned earlier, the decision-making process was highly impacted by the pillarization of Dutch society and the backroom deals that this entails. These deals among rival elites were not limited solely to the parties that were in government. It

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<sup>97</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, Lieven De Winter and Wolfgang C. Muller, "Parliamentary Opposition in Post-Consociational Democracies: Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands," 90.

<sup>98</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, "Executive-Legislative Relations in the Netherlands: Consecutive and Coexisting Patterns," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 17, no. 2 (1992), 165-166

frequently involved members of the opposition, as they were still respected parliamentarians with their own expertise. Policy-making often took the shape of a market of ideas, with government going to various actors, exchanging ideas, and making deals. This led to a remarkably low number of amendments to bills once they were drafted, and most opposition members voted in favour of drafted bills<sup>99</sup>. The Dutch elite prioritized hearing all views on a policy issue and ensured that all segments were involved in the policy-making process rather than winning political battles over rivals.

There is one final area where opposition groups can impact the decision-making process – through the use of committees. Committees have been organized to allow for all segments to be represented, regardless of government status, and impact the policy-process. Chief among these, as was mentioned, is the Social and Economic Council. As an advisory panel, it may seem relatively inconsequential, but there is an important informal measure that must be stressed. Despite it being merely an advisory council, government treated its decisions as future policy. This is because this is a body that is composed of representatives of the segments and make decisions through consensus. For government to ignore this would be to ignore the consensus reached by the segments. In practice, this council's power is comparable to that of cabinet or parliament<sup>100</sup>. This is an important measure in the prudent leadership of the elites. Despite the fact that some segments may not be represented in government, they are represented in the various committees, thus providing them with influential access to the decision-making process.

Clearly, the Netherlands excelled in the area of elite leadership. The elites recognized the danger of isolating certain segments from the decision making process and thus there are various

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<sup>99</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, Lieven De Winter and Wolfgang C. Muller, "Parliamentary Opposition in Post-Consociational Democracies: Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands," 98.

<sup>100</sup> Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, 113-115.



informal measures in place that allow elites that are reduced to opposition status to impact the decision-making progress and make the desires of their segment heard.

#### **4.1.2 – Belgium**

When compared to the Netherlands, the day-to-day leadership of the Belgian elite is not quite as prudent. There is a stronger tendency to using majoritarian strategies to push segmental objectives and then using consociational measures to solve the crisis that this causes<sup>101</sup>. These tendencies may be exacerbated by Belgium's less favourable balance of power. During the first consociational period, the three segments were not evenly powerful. The Catholics had a natural majority as they were dominant in the more populous Flanders region and had some support in the rest of the country, while the other two were popular in the less populous regions. Thus, the Catholics had a dominant position in parliament that they took advantage of at times. This was usually followed by civil unrest<sup>102</sup>.

Belgium's second consociational period is equally problematic as the linguistic divisions are exacerbated by the difference in power between the two groups. Initially, Wallonia was the economic power of the country, but this changed in the 60s<sup>103</sup>. Flanders became dominant both economically and demographically, leading to there being no multiple balance of power in the current system. The one saving grace is that due to the incredible fragmentation of the Belgian party system, no single party comes close to a governing majority<sup>104</sup>. Even elites from the same

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<sup>101</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, "Consociationalism in the Low Countries: Comparing the Dutch and Belgian Experience," 414

<sup>102</sup> Erik Jones, "The Decline and Fall of Three Hegemonic Parties in Europe," 76

<sup>103</sup> Wilfried Swenden and Maarten Theo Jans, "Will It Stay or Will It Go? Federalism and the Sustainability of Belgium," 878-879.

<sup>104</sup> Jaak Billiet, Bart Maddens and Andre-Paul Frogner, "Does Belgium (Still) Exist? Differences in Political Culture between Flemings and Walloons," 913.

linguistic community frequently find themselves divided on issues<sup>105</sup>. This hinders the ability of the groups to act in a majoritarian fashion, but when the disparate elements of the segments find themselves in agreement over certain issues – like linguistic or cultural rights – then the majoritarian tendency emerges again. Clearly, Belgium’s tendency towards majoritarian, anti-consociational practices emerge partly due to this lack of a multiple balance of power in both periods.

One interesting difference between the Netherlands and Belgium is the level of pillarization. In the Netherlands there was overlap between civil society and the political establishment, allowing for back-room deals between the representatives. In Belgium, however, the pillars were less institutionalized, so there was less overlap. This meant that the pillars did not play a large role in the decision-making process<sup>106</sup>. Then, as of the 1960s, de-pillarization occurred, and the populace began to associate less with the pillar organizations, weakening their position even further<sup>107</sup>. Thus, the political elites are the primary deal-makers in the Belgian political system, with the pillars playing a smaller role than in the Netherlands.

This paints the Belgian system in a dire light, but there are a number of conventions by which the elites operate which allowed for prudent decision-making. One of the most important tools is the cabinet. Unlike the Netherlands, Belgian cabinets are a lot less likely to be surplus-majority, although their use increased as the linguistic division deepened. It never reached the

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<sup>105</sup> Dave Sinardet, “From Consociational Consciousness to Majoritarian Myth: Consociational Democracy, Multi-Level Politics and the Belgian Case of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde,” 352-353

<sup>106</sup> Kris Deschouwer, “And the Peace Goes On? Consociational Democracy and Belgian Politics in the Twenty-First Century,” 896-897.

<sup>107</sup> Jaak Billiet, Bart Maddens and Andre-Paul Frogner, “Does Belgium (Still) Exist? Differences in Political Culture between Flemings and Walloons,” 913.

same levels as that of the Netherlands, however<sup>108</sup>. There are other features of the Belgian cabinets that show prudent leadership, such as the linguistic parity and the decision-making process. Due to the clearly divisive issue that language plays in the Belgian system, the elites agreed to have Dutch and French-speakers equally represented in the Belgian cabinet. The decision-making structure is also important, as decisions in cabinet are made through consensus instead of majority-votes<sup>109</sup>. Thus, like the Social and Economic Council in the Netherlands, this representation of the major divisions and the use of consensus leads to the decisions made by cabinet acting as the reflection of the compromises made by the segments of Belgian society. For this reason, the Belgian executive tends to dominate over the legislature<sup>110</sup>. This dominance does not mean that the government is unchallenged, however. The Belgian legislature is more likely to challenge and vote against bills than in the Netherlands, with many more being passed along partisan lines. This has also increased with the deepening divisions along the linguistic line<sup>111</sup>. This could be seen as a reaction to the lack of all segments being fully represented in the cabinet decision-making process, as the cabinets never reached true grand coalition status. Thus, despite the prudent attempts at including as many actors as possible, there is still more opposition and tension within the Belgian legislative process than in the Netherlands.

In the modern era, attempts at finding compromise between the two ethno-linguistic groups have decreased. As has been mentioned, the deepening of the ethno-linguistic division led to the adoption of constitutional reforms, and this would set the pattern for how crises are resolved. Whenever tensions between the two groups get high, it tends to result in a crisis which

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<sup>108</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, Lieven De Winter and Wolfgang C. Muller, "Parliamentary Opposition in Post-Consociational Democracies: Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands," 90.

<sup>109</sup> Dave Sinardet, "From Consociational Consciousness to Majoritarian Myth: Consociational Democracy, Multi-Level Politics and the Belgian Case of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde," 355.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, 355.

<sup>111</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, Lieven De Winter and Wolfgang C. Muller, "Parliamentary Opposition in Post-Consociational Democracies: Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands," 99-100

is usually resolved by devolving more powers to the regions<sup>112</sup>. The Belgian elite more frequently resort to devolving powers to the regions whenever tensions get too high rather than finding other forms of compromise to deal with the issue at hand.

The most significant impact on the overall prudent leadership of the Belgian elite is their tendency toward majoritarian tactics and the crises it leads to. The specific crises that they led to will be discussed more in the next chapter, but suffice it to say that what happened was the majoritarian tactics of the elite exacerbated controversial issues, caused crises, and forced consociational measures to be used to alleviate tensions<sup>113</sup>. This has led to scholars noting that Belgium's consociational practices seemed to come in waves. There are periods of consociational practices, followed by periods of majoritarian practices resulting in a crisis, which is then solved with consociational practices again. The cycle then starts anew. Thus, in terms of overall prudent leadership, Belgium is not as effective as the Netherlands.

#### **4.1.3 – Lebanon**

As with Belgium, the overall leadership in Lebanon is not as optimistic as that of the Netherlands, despite the existence of a multiple balance of power. As was mentioned, Lebanon recognizes 18 distinct communities, all with confessional representation in government. None of the communities are a majority<sup>114</sup>. Unfortunately for Lebanon, this multiple balance of power did not translate perfectly to the political system as certain groups were guaranteed more powerful positions than others. In the first consociational period, the president was clearly the most powerful actor in the Lebanese political system, thus giving the Maronite community the

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<sup>112</sup> Kris Deschouwer, "And the Peace Goes On? Consociational Democracy and Belgian Politics in the Twenty-First Century," 903.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 897-898.

<sup>114</sup> Danilo Di Mauro, "The Consociational Democracy at Stake: Four Approaches to Explain Lebanon Past and Present," 456.

ability to exert greater power than their demographic standing would allow<sup>115</sup>. In the second consociational period, the powers were equalized, essentially providing the top three communities veto power due to the powerful positions allotted to them<sup>116</sup>. This more closely represents the multiple balance of power, as these three communities together represent the overwhelming majority of the population. However, given the significant power of these positions, there is a greater tendency to using them to stalemate the system in order for the community to get their way. Thus, although the balance of power is better exemplified in the second period, it is not perfect.

As with Belgium, despite the dire prospects for prudent leadership, there were still clear examples of the elites coming together and compromising. Like the Netherlands and Belgium, there was clear pillarization in Lebanon. The Lebanese state has been kept purposely weak in order to provide greater autonomy to the communities over various aspects of their life<sup>117</sup>. This has led to the eminent position of the elite-class within the Lebanese political system. Like in the Netherlands, these elites are the dominant actors within their respective communities' hierarchy and they represent their communities in government. Unlike the Netherlands, the patron/client relationship between the elites and the communities is much more pronounced. The elites utilized the system to gain resources which they then redistributed to their communities for support. Thus, there are few state institutions that provide services to the communities; the elites play this role. Some elites, such as Hezbollah, have become some of the largest service

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<sup>115</sup> Richard H. Dekmejian, "Consociational Democracy in Crisis: The Case of Lebanon," 254

<sup>116</sup> Danilo Di Mauro, "The Consociational Democracy at Stake: Four Approaches to Explain Lebanon Past and Present," 461

<sup>117</sup> Richard H. Dekmejian, "Consociational Democracy in Crisis: The Case of Lebanon," 257.

providers in the country<sup>118</sup>. This has become one of the primary ways through which deals are made within the Lebanese state, through fighting and compromising over resources.

As with the prior cases, the primary area where elite cooperation happens is through the cabinet. These cabinets are large coalitions often bringing in leaders from all major communities, and after the election of President Chehab, the idea of “no victor, no vanquished” became crucial<sup>119</sup>. This idea reflects the need for large coalitions ruling largely based on consensus in order to keep stability within the Lebanese state. There cannot be a perception that some segments are victors and some are losers when a decision has to be made. Important cabinet decisions had to be made with at least a 2/3 vote<sup>120</sup>. This, combined with the growing number of actors being included in cabinet in order to keep the peace – from 9 in the first cabinet to 22 in the last cabinet before the civil war – led to it becoming unwieldy and made decision-making difficult, as shown by Chehab’s bypassing the cabinet to make decisions with the help of aides<sup>121</sup>. In the second consociational era, due to the increased divisions between the March 8 and 14 Alliances, cabinets became even larger – the 2009 cabinet had 30 members<sup>122</sup>. The Lebanese elite recognized the need for large coalition cabinets operating on a near-consensus basis in order to keep the peace.

This strategy worked as the elites were able to keep the peace in a significantly turbulent and tense region. They recognized that they needed to work together. Informal rules drove elite relations in the Lebanese system more than formal rules, and this kept the regime stable for longer than one would think based on its internal divisions and external pressures. The regime

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<sup>118</sup> Dan Naor, “In the Arena of the Zu’ama – Reviewing Hizballah’s Role in Lebanon,” 9-10

<sup>119</sup> Richard H. Dekmejian, “Consociational Democracy in Crisis: The Case of Lebanon,” 253.

<sup>120</sup> Ohannes Geukjian, “Political Instability and Conflict After the Syrian Withdrawal from Lebanon,” 521

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 253-254.

<sup>122</sup> Stephen Deets and Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss, “Jumping out of the ‘Hobbesian Fishbowl’ and into the Fire: Lebanon, Elections, and Chronic Crisis,” 519

did collapse in 1975, but it is hard to imagine any way that the elites would have been able to save it. In the second consociational era, there are problems with elite leadership as well, but they managed to weather significant regional issues well without collapsing<sup>123</sup>. It is important to note that this is an incredibly divided country in a very turbulent regional system. The elites did a commendable job at maintaining stability as well as they did<sup>124</sup>.

That being said, it is still important to note that there were deficiencies in the prudent leadership of the Lebanese elite, as their incredible power led to majoritarian and self-serving practices. The elites utilized the regime as a piggy-bank for their respective communities; as they maintained their own power and positions through patron/client networks. This led to the elite stamping down emerging rivals from within their own communities; alienating them and the people that they represented<sup>125</sup>. In the second consociational period, this became even worse, as the top three communities were given powerful positions through which they can essentially rule their communities as fiefs. This has promoted more corruption, as they primarily seek rents from the system instead of increased cooperation between communities<sup>126</sup>.

As the divisions between March 8 and March 14 deepened, there was an increase in stalemates and cabinet crises because the powerful positions are captured by members of different alliances – March 14 frequently captures the prime minister, March 8 always captures the speaker, and the president has come from both camps. Thus, instead of compromising and working together, the elites frequently utilize the veto and try to force their agenda. This has led to cabinets being very unstable and taking long times to form. It has also led to significant

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<sup>123</sup> Tamirace Fakhoury, “Do Power-Sharing Systems Behave Differently amid Regional Uprisings? Lebanon in the Arab Protest Wave,” 505-506

<sup>124</sup> Richard H. Dekmejian, “Consociational Democracy in Crisis: The Case of Lebanon,” 257.

<sup>125</sup> Ohannes Geukjian, “Political Instability and Conflict After the Syrian Withdrawal from Lebanon,” 522

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 527.

domestic instability, such as the two year political deadlock that had to be resolved by the 2008 Doha Accord<sup>127</sup>.

These imprudent actions by the elites are causing problems in the current era as well. The state has become the financier of the communities, and has failed to rise above the divisions and become a true national government<sup>128</sup>. The patronage has gone too far and is now perceived as corruption by large portions of the population, leading to significant mistrust of government<sup>129</sup>. This is clearly seen in 2020 as there are widespread demonstrations rocking Lebanon calling for a technocratic government as people are tired of the perceived corruption and mismanagement of the country by the elites<sup>130</sup>. These demonstrations led to resignations like that of Prime Minister Saad Hariri, but at the time of this writing, little has truly changed. Clearly, despite the existence of measures designed to promote the prudent leadership of elites and evidence of prudent leadership throughout Lebanon's history, there are serious deficiencies, especially in the modern era.

#### 4.1.4 – Comparison

It has become clear that there are some crucial differences between the cases in terms of prudent elite leadership. The Netherlands has the best track record, while Belgium and Lebanon have more mixed experiences. Both have elements of prudent elite leadership, but they are not perfect.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 533-535.

<sup>128</sup> Stephen Deets and Jennifer Skulte-Ouais, "Jumping out of the 'Hobbesian Fishbowl' and into the Fire: Lebanon, Elections, and Chronic Crisis," 519-520

<sup>129</sup> Natalia Nahas Calfat, "The Frailties of Lebanese Democracy: Outcomes and Limits of the Confessional Framework," 283.

<sup>130</sup> Victoria Gatenby, "Lebanon protests turn violent over failing economy," *Aljazeera*, April 28, 2020. Accessed May 7, 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/lebanon-protests-turn-violent-failing-economy-200428060704954.html>



The first area where the differences are noteworthy is in the multiple balance of power. The Netherlands exemplifies the best-case-scenario, with a clear multiple balance of power. No one segment can claim a majority status and thus there is no possibility for them to attempt majoritarian practices. Lebanon also has a multiple balance of power, but unfortunately the way in which the political institutions are organized give significant power to certain communities allowing them to act in more majoritarian and self-serving ways. Belgium is the only state where there is no multiple balance of power. The Catholics in the first period and the Flemish in the second are demographically dominant which allows for the possibility of majoritarian practices to emerge within government. The issues that Lebanon and Belgium have with a multiple balance of power go a long way to explaining their tendencies toward majoritarian and self-serving practices.

The ways in which the elites cooperate and work together is also important. The Netherlands had many conventions which led to government seeking consensus and pragmatism in the decision-making process. From large coalitions to the ample opportunities afforded to the opposition allowed for all important actors to take part in the decision-making process. Luckily, it was understood by the elites that all viewpoints must be listened to and consensus be reached for the stability of society. This was not always the case in Belgium and Lebanon. Both have noteworthy measures that were utilized to allow the elites to rule prudently, such as through large coalitions, but unfortunately both their elites have tendencies to be more self-serving and seek to further their own interests. Ultimately, this has negative repercussions on the decision-making process and leads to significant political instability. Crises emerged and were exacerbated by the majoritarian tendencies of the elites, further dividing society.

The issue of prudent elite leadership and the differences between the cases goes a long way to explaining the phenomena of de-consociational transition. Again, in order for a state to undergo this transition, the underlying reasons for consociationalism need to be dealt with. The divisions and tensions within society must be mediated by the elites. Thus, if the system is marked by poor cooperation, the political system and society as a whole can be destabilized. This has negative repercussions on the prospects for de-consociational transition as shown by the experiences of the three cases. The Netherlands had a positive experience with elites who ruled prudently and managed to come together and compromise with rivals from other segments. This led to a very stable political system with few major crises in government. They saw divisions diminish, and experienced a de-consociational transition. The other two cases had more problems; their elites ruled prudently at times, but they also had tended to use majoritarian strategies more frequently, which destabilized society. Their societies remained divided, and they did not undergo a de-consociational transition.

Ultimately, all three states showed prudent leadership, but to varying degrees. The Netherlands stands out as the one of the clearest example of how elites should operate, while both Belgium and Lebanon have significant deficiencies which hindered their own stability. This contributes to the differences in de-consociational transition.

## **CHAPTER 5 – LOADS ON THE SYSTEM**

As has been mentioned, there are three factors that contribute to the elites' ability to come together and rule prudently. This chapter will deal with the factor that stands the biggest chance at disrupting the whole consociational experience – the existence of loads on the system.

Lijphart stated that although an external threat can help mobilize the elites to cooperate in a

consociational fashion, too much threat destabilizes the system. When the threats become too dire, it makes it much more difficult for the elites to work together<sup>131</sup>. Because elites have to be able to meet the interests of their segment, when the segments are very divided by controversial issues, it becomes difficult for the elites to reflect this and compromise with one another.<sup>132</sup> This can seriously impact the stability of society. Thus, as it is necessary to deal with the underlying divisions and tensions in order to undergo a de-consociational transition, it is important to discuss these loads. They, by their very nature of being controversial, increase the tensions and divisions in society, thereby impacting the prospects for de-consociational transition.

### **5.1.0 - Were there loads on the system, and if so, how were they dealt with?**

#### **5.1.1 – The Netherlands**

One of the most noteworthy characteristics of the Dutch consociational period is its stability. There were periods with tense political issues, but by and large there were few loads on their system. As was mentioned earlier, tensions arose due to the distance between parliament and cabinet, and when these crises did occur, it happened between the parliamentary party and its representative in cabinet. There was more *intraparty* conflict than *interparty* conflict during the consociational period<sup>133</sup>. There was interparty conflict within the coalition cabinets, but this frequently took the form of intense policy deliberation over key issues and lasted an average of a month and a half<sup>134</sup>. Tensions emerged between parties, but they were not strenuous loads.

There is one instance where a controversial issue divided society quite significantly – the question of Princess Irene’s conversion to Catholicism. As was mentioned earlier, the Dutch royal family is a strong unifying symbol, but when controversies arise it can cause problems. In

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<sup>131</sup> Arend Lijphart, “Consociational Democracy,” 218-219

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, 216.

<sup>133</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, “Executive-Legislative Relations in the Netherlands: Consecutive and Coexisting Patterns,” 165-166

<sup>134</sup> Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, 75-76

1964, Princess Irene, who was second in line for the throne, converted to Roman Catholicism to marry a Spanish nobleman. This starkly divided the blocs because until this point the royal family had been Calvinist. Now, a royal who is second in line for the throne has become Catholic, possibly changing the royal family's religious orientation were she to become queen. Predictably, the Catholic bloc was overwhelmingly in favour of this, and the Calvinists were against it<sup>135</sup>. In order to deal with the crisis, an ad hoc council - the Irene Quartet - was instituted. It consisted of four cabinet ministers representing the four parties in government. The Labour party was not included as they were in opposition, but informally, the quartet was in close touch with the Labour leadership<sup>136</sup>. This shows the prudent leadership of the elites as they recognized the dangers that this issue posed, and they utilized the grand coalition to deal with it.

The solution they came up with was a result of compromise and cooperation. According to the Dutch constitution, all royal engagements have to be approved by parliament, or else they lose their royal status and place in the line of succession. Thus, parliament declined to give approval to this marriage, taking Irene out of the line of succession. They claimed it was because of the Spanish prince's involvement in Spanish politics, which was deemed inappropriate for the consort of a possible queen of the Netherlands who is to remain apolitical<sup>137</sup>. This dealt with the issue in a political manner without drawing attention to the religious aspect of the conflict. Ultimately, helped by the incredible deference of the Dutch populace, the issue was dealt with and society stabilized.

Ultimately, the Netherlands has not had to deal with any significant loads. They naturally had to deal with governmental tensions and the Irene issue – but this was dealt with quickly and

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 126-127.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 85.

competently - but other than that, the Dutch experience was remarkably stable. The Netherlands clearly has had luck on its side; unfortunately, the same cannot be said of Belgium and Lebanon.

### **5.1.2 – Belgium**

Belgium has had a number of loads that significantly strained the system and divided society. As it borders the Netherlands, it shares their luck in that it resides in a very stable regional system post-World War 2, but there were more domestic controversies that strained the system.

The first major issue was the Royal Question. The crisis lasted from 1944-1950, with it coming to a head in the last year. It started with the Nazi occupation of Belgium during World War 2 when King Leopold III decided to stay in the country and form a government under German occupation and was accused of being too friendly with the Nazis<sup>138</sup>. When Belgium was liberated, the King had been taken by German forces and his brother became regent. The Catholics defended the return of the king, while the Liberals and Socialists did not. The Catholics, who formed government with a single-party majority, decided to use a referendum to decide, winning an absolute majority of 57%. However, regionally, there was only a majority in Flanders – which is decidedly Catholic – and not in Brussels and Wallonia. When the king returned, there were street demonstrations leading to the deaths of three people<sup>139</sup>. Eventually, a summit of the three parties was created and a compromise was decided suggesting that the king abdicate the throne in favour of his son Baudouin<sup>140</sup>. The plan was followed, reducing tensions.

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<sup>138</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, “Consociationalism in the Low Countries: Comparing the Dutch and Belgian Experience,” 414-415.

<sup>139</sup> Kris Deschouwer, “And the Peace Goes On? Consociational Democracy and Belgian Politics in the Twenty-First Century,” 898-899.

<sup>140</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, “Consociationalism in the Low Countries: Comparing the Dutch and Belgian Experience,” 414-415.

What this crisis shows is that there are stronger tendencies toward majoritarian strategies in Belgian democracy – through the formation of a single-party government and the referendum result only being majority in favour in one of the three regions - and this inflamed an already tense societal issue. The elites' inability to deal with it in a prudent, consociational manner from the outset inflamed those tensions.

The next major issue that divided Belgium was the School War, which occurred from 1954-1958. In countries divided by religion, the ability to attend denominational schools is very important. This issue had always been a tense point in Belgian consociationalism and came to a head during this period. Right after the Catholics lost their parliamentary majority, a government was formed with the Liberals and Socialists united in their desire to protect the public school system from Catholic schools by boosting their funding. This led to a large mobilisation of the Catholic pillar against these measures. Again, this was resolved by a three-party summit utilizing proportionality; they instituted a proportional distribution of finances between the two school systems and a three-party commission to monitor future educational policy<sup>141</sup>. This shows once again the tensions that arise when majoritarian actions are taken against a segment. In this case, the secular parties combined forces to act in a manner that the Catholics did not agree with, creating significant tensions within the system. Had they resolved to use consociational manners to deal with this issue from the outset, there may not have been a tense four year period.

When the consociational system shifted to reflect the ethno-linguistic divide, there were many mini-crises<sup>142</sup>. Most of them were resolved by devolving more powers to the regions.

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<sup>141</sup> Kris Deschouwer, "And the Peace Goes On? Consociational Democracy and Belgian Politics in the Twenty-First Century," 898.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 907

There is one issue, however, which exemplifies the intense divisions and relatively poor ability of the elites to deal with controversial loads – the case of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde (BHV), which dominated Belgian politics from 2002-2012.

BHV was a unique electoral district in Belgium. Most districts have their language decided based on the region it is in – in Flanders it is Dutch, and Wallonia it is French. BHV was bilingual, in order to represent the bilingual nature of Brussels. This means that whichever candidate is elected chose which language to represent<sup>143</sup>. This district was composed of 19 municipalities of the bilingual Brussels-Capital region, and 35 municipalities of Flemish-Brabant<sup>144</sup>. This was very controversial, as the Flemish disliked the perceived “Frenchification” of possibly having French candidates elected from their region. They would prefer the two to be split and Halle-Vilvoorde be a Flemish district, but the French community did not want to lose the French minority living there<sup>145</sup>. This had been a source of friction since the constitutional reforms of 1970, and in 2002 the Supreme Court ruled that parliament needed to solve the problem<sup>146</sup>. It was not resolved until 2012.

This dominated Belgian politics for so long because the elites were unable to come together and compromise to solve the issue. After the Supreme Court decision, the Flemish wanted to use majoritarian strategies in order to split BHV, but the Alarm Bell procedure was threatened. This led them to hold off on discussions on the issue until after the 2007 election<sup>147</sup>.

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<sup>143</sup> Dave Sinardet, “Belgian Federalism Put to the Test: The 2007 Belgian Federal Elections and their Aftermath,” 1018-1019.

<sup>144</sup> Jurgen Goossens and Pieter Cannoot, “Belgian Federalism after the Sixth State Reform,” *Perspectives on Federalism* 7, no. 2 (2015), 35

<sup>145</sup> Dave Sinardet, “Belgian Federalism Put to the Test: The 2007 Belgian Federal Elections and their Aftermath,” 1018-1019.

<sup>146</sup> Jurgen Goossens and Pieter Cannoot, “Belgian Federalism after the Sixth State Reform,” *Perspectives on Federalism* 7, no. 2 (2015), 35

<sup>147</sup> Dave Sinardet, “From Consociational Consciousness to Majoritarian Myth: Consociational Democracy, Multi-Level Politics and the Belgian Case of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde,” 357-359.

This would prove to be a mistake, as after this election, it took 194 days for government to be formed, a record at the time. Even then, no solution was found<sup>148</sup>. It took until after the elections in 2011 for it to be resolved, but it took 541 days for government to be formed and the compromise to be reached<sup>149</sup>. It required a massive reform of the Belgian state in order to satisfy all parties in the compromise. This agreement turned BHV into two separate districts with Halle-Vilvoorde being included in the Flemish-Brabant electoral district and the creation of a separate Brussels-Capital district<sup>150</sup>. This solution finally solved the crisis which had been present in Belgian politics in some form or another since 1970 and was especially tense for a decade.

Clearly, this crisis is one that was largely aggravated by elites. Throughout the entire process, parties on both sides made compromise difficult. Part of this was because the elites were much more extreme in their views on federal reform than their constituents<sup>151</sup>. This led to them attempting majoritarian tactics to try and get their way. The unwillingness to compromise is shown by the record for longest government formation being broken twice during the process. This issue had been divisive in Belgian politics for a long time, but the failure of the elites to deal with it prudently made it significantly more difficult to solve.

It is clear that Belgium has faced many loads during its years as a consociational democracy. As controversial as these loads were, the elites made the situation worse by failing to compromise and attempting majoritarian practices, causing significant tensions in society.

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<sup>148</sup> Dave Sinardet, "Belgian Federalism Put to the Test: The 2007 Belgian Federal Elections and their Aftermath," 1025-1026.

<sup>149</sup> Jurgen Goossens and Pieter Cannoot, "Belgian Federalism after the Sixth State Reform," *Perspectives on Federalism* 7, no. 2 (2015), 31.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-36.

<sup>151</sup> Min Reuchamps, Dave Sinardet, J   Dodeigne, and Didier Caluwaerts, "Reforming Belgium's Federalism: Comparing the Views of MPs and Voters," *Government and Opposition* 52, no. 3 (2017), 478-479



### 5.1.3 – Lebanon

Out of the three cases, Lebanon has had to deal with the most extreme loads. What is unique about the Lebanese loads is that they were largely inflamed by external pressures.

Lebanon is located in a tense regional system, and many of these regional tensions fall along ideological and ethno-religious lines. Thus, Lebanon is the perfect battleground for those conflicts. This inflames the divisions already present within Lebanese society, leading to significant domestic conflict and has negative repercussions for de-consociational transition.

As was mentioned earlier, there was no consensus in Lebanon on what shape the state should take, with some arguing for it to be part of a Greater Syrian or Pan-Arab state. This latter position was what was promised and advocated by the Arab Nationalist movement under the leadership of Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt. He argued that the Arab world was united by a common language and historical experience of colonization by the west. He argued that the Arab world should unite under one entity<sup>152</sup>. This was an incredibly powerful movement in the Middle East until the end of the 1960s, and it caused existential crises for states as many regimes fell to the Arab Nationalist cause.

Due to Lebanon's domestic divisions, this movement found fertile ground. As was outlined, the Lebanese state was a largely Maronite project, so many of the other communities saw the Arab Nationalist movement as an ideal alternative to Maronite hegemony. Some of the largest proponents of this were the Sunni Muslims as they played a secondary position in Lebanon but would be the majority in a greater Arab state. At this time, there was also a significant wealth disparity between the wealthy urban areas and the poorer rural communities that were perceived to be ignored by the elites. Unfortunately, this tension was also religious

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<sup>152</sup> Efraim Karsh and Inari Karsh, "Reflections on Arab Nationalism," 367.

with the Maronites being widely perceived as the wealthy groups and the Muslims as more disadvantaged<sup>153</sup>. These two tensions ultimately came to a head in 1958 with a brief civil war that required American troops to create peace between the communities<sup>154</sup>.

What this crisis showed is that these loads were difficult for the Lebanese elite to deal with, but they also highlight weaknesses in elite leadership. The state was purposely kept weak to give power to the elites but this came at the cost of the ability of the state to solve these economic issues<sup>155</sup>. This caused further grievances that would be exploited by the Arab Nationalist movement. Also, as the elites were divided on this controversial issue, it halted the decision-making process as they could not come up with a solution. These weaknesses were recognized, and part of the resolution of the 1958 crisis was the ascendancy of General Fuad Chehab to the presidency. This was the first time someone not of the elite class took this position, and his tenure marked a significant shift towards more pragmatic leadership as they focused on social programs in order to alleviate the economic tensions and increasing the power of the state over the elites. His outsider status also helped perceptions against the extensive power of the elite-class Maronites<sup>156</sup>. Thus, there was clearly recognition of the problems posed by the elites when dealing with this crisis and there were attempts to solve it. Unfortunately, the next crisis would be so intense that it would completely destroy the system and leave the country in a civil war for 15 years.

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<sup>153</sup> Cyrus Schayegh, "1958 Reconsidered: State Formation and the Cold War in the Early Postcolonial Arab Middle East," 422.

<sup>154</sup> Peter L. Hahn, "Securing the Middle East: The Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2006), 42.

<sup>155</sup> Danilo Di Mauro, "The Consociational Democracy at Stake: Four Approaches to Explain Lebanon Past and Present," 456-457.

<sup>156</sup> Tom Najem, *Lebanon: The Politics of a Penetrated Society*, 23-25.

The most significant crisis that the Lebanese state had to weather was the presence of Palestinian militias and their attacks on Israel from within their borders. Due to the Arab/Israeli crisis, there was a large amount of Palestinian militias attacking Israel from within bordering countries. After the 1967 war, many Arab states pushed the militias out of their countries. Eventually, these states forced Lebanon to accept the 1969 Cairo Agreement which allowed Palestinian militias autonomy within the refugee camps in Lebanon<sup>157</sup>. Lebanon already housed a large amount of Palestinian refugees from both the 1948 diaspora and after the 1967 war, and their presence was a divisive issue within Lebanon because the groups did not agree on how to deal with them<sup>158</sup>. Some groups – largely the Sunnis – wanted to support the Palestinians in their fight against Israel or provide them with Lebanese citizenship. On the other hand, other communities sympathised with them but did not want to get involved in the fight or give the majority-Sunni refugees citizenship, as it would severely disrupt the tense demographic balance<sup>159</sup>. Regardless, the presence of these militias in Lebanon and their war against Israel slowly began to deteriorate the security situation in Lebanon.

When the Palestinians attacked Israel, Israel would destroy Lebanese infrastructure as retaliation for “housing” the Palestinians<sup>160</sup>. Naturally, this divided the elites. They were getting pushed to further extremes as the Israeli retaliations did more and more damage. Also, economic disparities and the weakness of the state were once again prevalent issues as President Franjieh had undone many of the measures imposed by Chehab<sup>161</sup>. As the state was incredibly weak and

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<sup>157</sup> Kail C. Ellis, “Lebanon: The Struggle of a Small Country in a Regional Context,” 9.

<sup>158</sup> YenÝlmez, Meltem ÝNce, “The Impact of Forced Migration in the Middle East: Syrian and Palestinian Refugees,” *Perceptions* 22, no. 4 (2017), 186-187.

<sup>159</sup> Kail C. Ellis, “Lebanon: The Struggle of a Small Country in a Regional Context,” 6-7.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*, 8-9.

<sup>161</sup> Tom Najem, *Lebanon: The Politics of a Penetrated Society*, 25-26.

the security situation was deteriorating, militias began to emerge among the Lebanese communities<sup>162</sup>. All of these pressures led to the collapse of the system in 1975.

This period is the ultimate example of the problems that can be posed by loads on the system. The period from 1967-1975 in Lebanon was one of constant tension as the societal pressures continued to increase and exacerbate each other. The actions of the elites at times made these problems even worse – such as Franjeh ending the Chehabist policies.

Unfortunately, it is hard to see any possible route the elites could have taken to keep the state together. What this period highlights is the incredible havoc that can be wrought by extreme loads. There is a point when the loads on the system become so intense that no amount of prudent action by the elites can help.

In 1990, the civil war was ended with the Ta'if Accord, but this would institute another load on the system that severely constrains elite leadership – the institutionalization of foreign intervention. As was mentioned, Lebanon was a perfect battleground for regional tensions, even more so during the civil war. The civil war was fought by identity-based militias and they found allies in foreign patrons who provided them with resources. Most famously, Hezbollah was created and funded by Iran. Thus, these militias developed deep networks between them and their foreign patrons<sup>163</sup>. At the end of the civil war, these militias were forced to put down their guns – with the exception of Hezbollah - but in return they would become legitimate actors. These militias entered the system as new *zu'ama* for the second consociational era, but the relations with foreign patrons continued. This has led to these foreign actors having considerable influence over the domestic Lebanese political system through their client parties. Also,

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<sup>162</sup> Kail C. Ellis, “Lebanon: The Struggle of a Small Country in a Regional Context,” 9-11.

<sup>163</sup> Danilo Di Mauro, “The Consociational Democracy at Stake: Four Approaches to Explain Lebanon Past and Present,” 43.

according to the Ta'if Accord, Syria would have effective control over Lebanon, and this would continue until they were forced out of the country in 2005<sup>164</sup>. After they left, the political system shifted and now there are two major alliances of parties – the March 8 and the March 14 Alliances<sup>165</sup>. This shows how important international allegiances are.

What this means for the Lebanese political system is that the key actors have been captured by foreign powers. The dominant Sunni *zaim* is the Hariri family which has close ties to Saudi Arabia, and the two dominant Shia *zu'ama* - Hezbollah and Amal - are close to Iran and Syria respectively. This means that cooperation between the elites is no longer solely a matter of having to deal with domestic communal tensions, but they also have to balance regional issues. The domestic Lebanese political system has become a primary battleground for foreign powers. This is not as overt a crisis as foreign militias operating within their soil, but international orientation has always been a controversial issue, so its institutionalization raises tensions and hurts the leadership abilities of the elites.

Clearly, Lebanon has faced many loads that have placed great strains on their system. At times, the elites led prudently to help defuse the tensions, but other times their actions have made the problems worse or been unable to help. Regardless, it is important to note that the instability of the Lebanese system is not inherently a sign of poorly functioning government, but caused by the extreme external loads that the Middle East regional system places on it.

#### **5.1.4 – Comparison**

This is another area where the experiences of the three consociational democracies were wildly different. The Netherlands was extremely lucky in that it had no real loads to deal with.

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<sup>164</sup> Ohannes Geukjian, “Political Instability and Conflict After the Syrian Withdrawal from Lebanon,” 522-523

<sup>165</sup> Natalia Nahas Calfat, “The Frailties of Lebanese Democracy: Outcomes and Limits of the Confessional Framework,” 275.

With the exception of the Irene crisis, there were no issues that significantly divided society and raised tensions. Ultimately, the smooth Dutch experience can partially be attributed to the lack of major loads straining the system. The same cannot be said of Belgium and Lebanon. Belgium faced controversial issues that originated domestically and were exacerbated by poor leadership by the elites. Lebanon's loads were foreign in nature and strained the domestic divisions to a breaking point. In Lebanon, although there are examples of less-than-prudent actions by the elites, the elites largely tried to save the regime, but the loads were simply beyond what they could deal with. In Belgium, the elites largely saw these issues as ways to push through the interests of their segment, and used consociational means to defuse the crisis that emerged.

The loads that strain a political system are crucial to understanding the prospect of de-consociational transition. Dealing with the divisions and tensions within society is necessary to undergo this transition, and thus any sort of controversy that increases those tensions and divisions will run counter to that goal. This is shown by the three cases. The Netherlands only had one significantly controversial issue to deal with, and it was dealt with prudently before it could destabilize society further. Later on, they underwent a de-consociational transition. The other two cases are a different story. Both Belgium and Lebanon had incredible loads to deal with throughout their consociational experience, and these significantly increased the tensions and divisions within society. In Belgium it led to the system becoming increasingly divided along the ethno-linguistic cleavage with the regions becoming more powerful, and in Lebanon it led to the complete collapse of the system and a civil war for 15 years - the repercussions of which are still felt to this day. This shows that the loads on a political system have an incredible impact on the divisions in a society, thus impacting the possibilities for a de-consociational transition. Ultimately, a state with few loads will fare better than one with many.

## CHAPTER 6 – WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DIVISIONS?

Because consociational democracies are designed to deal with societal divisions, it is logical to assume that a state will not undergo transition if they have not been diminished to an acceptable degree. These divisions would continue to wreak havoc in society and need consociational measures to mediate them. Thus, one needs to measure what happened to the divisions in consociational democracies over time.

### 6.1.0 - What Happened to the Divisions Over Time?

#### 6.1.1 – The Netherlands

In the Netherlands the divisions were diminished to such a degree that a consociational democracy was no longer necessary<sup>166</sup>. Some scholars point to the industrialization and economic prosperity of the Netherlands leading to a change in values away from traditional church doctrine causing a diminishing of divisions along the religious cleavage<sup>167</sup>. Increasing economic prosperity would also ease the tensions along the socio-economic cleavage as more people found their standard of living increasing. The Netherlands has some of the highest standards of living in the world, thus contributing to that division's decline<sup>168</sup>. Regardless, what is important to note is that by 1967, the Netherlands' divisions had been reduced to such an extent that a consociational democracy was no longer necessary to mediate them<sup>169</sup>.

This lessening of divisions is a permanent feature of the Dutch system, as religion still plays a remarkably small role in Dutch society. According to polls conducted between 2010 and

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<sup>166</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, "Consociationalism in the Low Countries: Comparing the Dutch and Belgian Experience," 416-417

<sup>167</sup> Erik Jones, "The Decline and Fall of Three Hegemonic Parties in Europe," 77

<sup>168</sup> Stefan Ólafsson, "Well-being in the Nordic Countries: An International Comparison," *Stjórnmal Og Stjórnslá* 9, no. 2 (2013), 347

<sup>169</sup> Paul Pennings and Hans Keman, "The Changing Landscape of Dutch Politics since the 1970s: A Comparative Exploration," *Acta Politica* 43, no. 2-3 (2008), 155-160.

2014, the importance of religion in citizens' daily life in the Netherlands was very low, with only 10.7% saying it is "very important" and 14.5% saying it is "rather important". On the other hand, 28.9% say it is "not very important", and 43.8% say it is "not at all important"<sup>170</sup>. That is incredible for a country whose political system was centered on religious divisions. Another poll conducted by the same organization showed that membership to churches has become remarkably low as well. During the consociational era, churches were the primary organization through which the religious pillars mobilized supporters, and thus decreasing church attendance and affiliation would mark a significant decrease in the divisions supporting the consociational system. The poll found that 70.1% were "not a member" and 18.8% were "inactive members", while only 10.9% claimed to be an "active member"<sup>171</sup>. This reflects the de-pillarization that occurred toward the end of their consociational mandate. Citizens began to associate less with their pillars as the divisions in society diminished. Clearly, the religious divisions have diminished to a negligible amount.

There is one final indicator of the declining divisions within Dutch society – the emergence of the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) in the 70s. This party is a combination of the Catholic party and the two Protestant parties<sup>172</sup>. As the religious division was the primary dividing feature of the Dutch consociational system, the fact that the three religious parties combined to form one party speaks volumes. This would never have happened during the consociational era and it speaks to the decreasing divisions in the Netherlands as there is now enough common ground between them to form one party. Clearly, the Netherlands saw a

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<sup>170</sup> World Values Survey - Netherlands, "V9. – Important in life: religion," *World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014*, Accessed May 18, 2020, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

<sup>171</sup> World Values Survey - Netherlands, "V25.- Active/inactive membership of church or religious organization," *World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014*, Accessed May 18, 2020. <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

<sup>172</sup> Paul Pennings and Hans Keman, "The Changing Landscape of Dutch Politics since the 1970s: A Comparative Exploration," 157.



significant reduction of divisions and has reached a point where the divisions in society that once divided them are no longer an issue.

### **6.1.2 – Belgium**

In Belgium, the first consociational era was much like the Netherlands, with divisions along religious and socio-economic lines, and scholars pointing to the economic prosperity throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century leading to a decrease in religious affiliation<sup>173</sup>. There is one difference however. At the end of the School Issue in 1958, the religious leaders seemed to make a serious effort to decrease the animosity along religious cleavage, decreasing the divisions even quicker<sup>174</sup>. Thus, like the Netherlands, the religious differences diminished significantly and the socio-economic issues were being dealt with. It looked like Belgium was on track to follow the Netherlands' trajectory, but one factor made it so that this could not happen– the existence of the ethno-linguistic division<sup>175</sup>.

Unfortunately, Belgium remains bitterly divided between Dutch-speaking Flanders and French-speaking Wallonia. These divisions are not helped by the nationalist and at-times separatist rhetoric that emerges from Flanders, as shown by the incredible success of Flemish nationalist and separatist parties<sup>176</sup>. The periods of crises have almost always been resolved by devolving more powers to the regions, leading to the federal government being fairly weak and acting as a battleground for the two ethno-linguistic groups to further their own interests. This then heightens divisions. Also, the party system is divided regionally; there are no national

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<sup>173</sup> Erik Jones, "The Decline and Fall of Three Hegemonic Parties in Europe," 77

<sup>174</sup> Kris Deschouwer, "And the Peace Goes On? Consociational Democracy and Belgian Politics in the Twenty-First Century," 897

<sup>175</sup> B. Guy Peters, "Consociationalism, Corruption and Chocolate: Belgian Exceptionalism," 1082-1083.

<sup>176</sup> Politico, "Belgium – 2019 general election results," *Politico Poll of Polls*, Accessed May 18, 2020. <https://www.politico.eu/europe-poll-of-polls/belgium/>

parties, further hindering any sort of national consensus-building<sup>177</sup>. The two communities live almost entirely separate lives and only really interact at the federal level. Each community has a strong sense of nationalism as well. It is important to note that the groups still identify with Belgium to a degree. In Flanders, 42.8% claim they are as much Fleming as Belgian, and in Wallonia 39.1% claim they are equally Walloon as they are Belgian. In Flanders only 31.3% claim they are more Fleming than Belgian, and in Wallonia 11.9% claim they are more Walloon than Belgian<sup>178</sup>. Thus, there remains some form of Belgian identification, but it is a hyphenated identity – Fleming-Belgian or Walloon-Belgian. All of these factors lead to the ethno-linguistic divisions in Belgium remaining quite strong.

Unlike the Netherlands, Belgium has not had the same success with diminishing its divisions. They managed to reduce their religious and socio-economic divisions to a point where it was no longer dividing Belgian society, but the ethno-linguistic division emerged stronger than ever. This division remains to this day and continues to divide Belgian society

### **6.1.3 – Lebanon**

Unlike Belgium and the Netherlands, Lebanon did not see any reduction in its divisions. Out of the three cases, the divisions that first divided the Lebanese system are the ones that remain to this day.

The reason for the longevity of these divisions is due to the civil war and the regional system Lebanon finds itself in. The civil war, although initially driven more by ideology and conflict over reformation of the system, eventually was fought entirely along identity lines. Each group had their own militia and civilians relied on them for protection and the provision of

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<sup>177</sup> Wilfried Swenden and Maarten Theo Jans, “‘Will It Stay or Will It Go?’ Federalism and the Sustainability of Belgium,” 889-891.

<sup>178</sup> Jaak Billiet, Bart Maddens, and Andre-Paul Frogner, “Does Belgium (Still) Exist? Differences in Political Culture between Flemings and Walloons,” 916

services. These relations would be transferred to the new system when these militias became legitimate political actors<sup>179</sup>. Also of note is that due to the intense violence during the civil war, significant grievances between the groups emerged, which further divided the system. The international regional system is also significant. As was mentioned, the Middle East is quite tense and divided along identity lines, and these tensions play out in Lebanon, further heightening and entrenching the religious identities. This is reflected in the political system through the March 8 and March 14 alliances. March 8 is captured by the Shia community, and March 14 is dominated by the Sunni community, with the Maronites being split between the two<sup>180</sup>. These alliances further divide the communities and harm any attempts at working together.

Recent polling from 2010-2014 shows the importance that religion continues to play in Lebanon. 52.9% say that religion remains ‘very important’ in their daily life and 24.1% claim it is ‘rather important’. On the other hand, only 11.8% say it is ‘not very important’ and only 8.2% claim it is ‘not at all important’<sup>181</sup>. This is a significant difference from the Netherlands where it was the exact opposite, where religion became remarkably unimportant. A second poll conducted during the same period reveals even more. This one asked whether the respondent trusts someone of another religion. Only 9.6% trust someone from another religion ‘completely’ and 38.8% trust them ‘somewhat’, while 30.7% do not trust them very much and 17.3% do “not trust them at all”<sup>182</sup>. There is almost an even split between people trusting and not trusting a

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<sup>179</sup> Dan Naor, “In the Arena of the Zu’ama – Reviewing Hizballah’s Role in Lebanon,” 8-9

<sup>180</sup> Stephen Deets and Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss, “Jumping out of the ‘Hobbesian Fishbowl’ and into the Fire: Lebanon, Elections, and Chronic Crisis,” 519

<sup>181</sup> World Values Survey – Lebanon, “V9. – Important in life: Religion,” *World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014*, Accessed May 18, 2020. <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

<sup>182</sup> World Values Survey – Lebanon, “V106.- Trust: People of another religion (B),” *World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014*, Accessed May 18, 2020. <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

fellow citizen solely on the basis of their religion. This shows that there are still strong animosities among people of other religions and can explain the tensions that remain in Lebanon.

It is clear that in the case of Lebanon, the divisions have not diminished at all. The divisions that forced the elites to come together to establish the consociational system in 1943 continue to this day.

#### **6.1.4 – Comparison**

The Netherlands is unique in seeing its divisions diminish and no longer causing tensions in the political system. Belgium had a similar trajectory with its religious and socio-economic divisions, but, unfortunately, the ethno-linguistic divisions remained to cause problems in Belgian society. They remain divided along this cleavage to this day. Lebanon is the only case where the initial divisions did not diminish and continue to divide society.

Ultimately, this is one of the crucial differences that help to explain de-consociational transition. The societal divisions were what forced these cases to introduce consociational measures in order to help stabilize society, and thus the lessening of these divisions would be a necessary condition to the transition away from consociational democracy. They do not need to fully disappear, as all societies remain divided along certain lines, but they need to diminish to the point where they do not destabilize society to an extreme degree. As has been shown through this study, the Netherlands has had a positive experience in the factors that could help or hinder the reduction of their divisions – the segments have no antagonistic narratives, there was a strong tradition of prudent elite leadership, and there were few loads on the system – and thus, they were able to reduce the divisions and tensions in society and undergo a de-consociational transition. On the other hand, Belgium and Lebanon had less positive track records – with strong antagonistic narratives among the segments, poorer elite leadership, and many more extreme

loads on the system. Thus, their society remained tense, and their divisions were not able to diminish. With these divisions remaining strong, they were also unable to undergo a de-consociational transition

## **CHAPTER 7 – DE-CONSOCIATIONAL TRANSITION**

As Lijphart notes, consociational democracy is not always a permanent solution. It is a system of government that is used to mediate significant societal difference. As these societies change, consociational democracy may no longer be necessary, and competitive practices may emerge. When measuring de-consociational transition, we must look at the practices within the system to see if it has truly reached a post-consociational state or is moving in that direction. Consociational democracy is marked by the consensus-building actions of elites. The emergence of more majoritarian and competitive practices would, thus, mark a transition away from consociationalism. It is important to note the effect that this change in behaviour has on the system. These changes must occur smoothly without increasing the tensions again within society. As was noted in Belgium and Lebanon earlier, there were instances where competitive and majoritarian practices emerged, but it led to a destabilization of society and cannot be considered a de-consociational transition. Thus, the stable emergence of adversarial, competitive practices within these systems is an indicator that states are undergoing or have undergone a de-consociational transition.

### **7.1.0 - Were competitive political practices able to emerge smoothly in society?**

#### **7.1.1 – The Netherlands**

From 1967 to the modern era, the Netherlands has undergone a clear transition from a consociational system to a competitive political system. It has done so by changing the

conventions guiding elite behaviour and the electorate without changing any of the institutional features. As has been mentioned at length, a consociational democracy requires the elites to cooperate and rule prudently. This means that on top of the institutional features of the system, the conventions guiding the elites and their interactions are of utmost importance. Thus, when the elites stop following those conventions and it does not raise the tensions within society, a de-consociational transition is occurring. This can be seen in the Netherlands.

The first convention is that of the grand coalition. As was discussed, the Netherlands never truly embodied this as at least one pillar party was always in opposition. Nonetheless, the Netherlands was unique with almost always using majority surplus coalitions with often up to 75% of the seats in parliament reflected in government. In the post-consociational era from 1967 onward, coalitions are still required to rule. The size of the coalitions has changed significantly, however. Now, most coalitions are minimum-winning, meaning that the coalitions are big enough to just receive a parliamentary majority. From 1967-2007, there were 10 minimum winning coalitions and 3 surplus majority<sup>183</sup>. The coalitions got significantly less inclusive, which is a massive deviation from consociational norms. It is also important to note that these coalitions were much more prone to split due to internal dissent, thus highlighting the increased adversarial and political nature of the Dutch elite<sup>184</sup>.

This increased politicization is another de-consociational indicator, because one of the most important principles in a consociational democracy is to treat politics as a serious business and not a game. This politicization manifests in a number of ways. For one, government formation now takes longer. In the consociational era, it was a foregone conclusion that the

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<sup>183</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, "Coalition Politics in the Netherlands: From Accommodation to Politicization," 257-258

<sup>184</sup> Paul Pennings and Hans Keman, "The Changing Landscape of Dutch Politics since the 1970s: A Comparative Exploration," 159-160.

pillar parties would form government and there was some deliberation as one was usually relegated to opposition-status. Due to the increased politicization, government formation takes considerably longer. Now, the door to government has been opened to non-pillar parties – another de-consociational indicator as this never happened during the consociational era - and thus government formation takes the form of political bargaining<sup>185</sup>. This politicization is also reflected in cabinet through the appointment of cabinet ministers. These appointments were largely technocratic in the consociational period, but from 1967 onward, they took on a considerably more political tone as party leaders now almost always take a cabinet position<sup>186</sup>. This increased politicization has also manifested in regular parliamentary procedure. It was noted earlier that during the consociational period, legislation was not seriously contested. This changed significantly as the number of amendments to bills went from 150 per year during the consociational era, to more than 1000 per year after 1967 for about the same number of bills<sup>187</sup>. Finally, the re-emergence of parliamentary inquiries used to investigate serious matters, which went unused during the consociational period, also shows increased politicization as the legislature is no longer as deferent to cabinet<sup>188</sup>.

This clearly shows that it is no longer a strongly held convention that the elites need to avoid playing political games and opposing one another in parliament. The fact that this opposition has not increased tensions in Dutch society shows that they have undergone a de-consociational transition.

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<sup>185</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, “Coalition Politics in the Netherlands: From Accommodation to Politicization,” 260-261,

<sup>186</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, Lieven De Winter and Wolfgang C. Muller, “Parliamentary Opposition in Post-Consociational Democracies: Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands,” 102

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid*, 98.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid*, 98.

Another key characteristic of a consociational democracy is the deference of the citizens to the elites. The people do not challenge the elites and allow them to make deals with the rival segments. This is shown through the stability of the electoral and party system. This has been one of the most noticeable areas where the Dutch political system has changed as it has become much more volatile. The Catholic party was a pivot party during the Dutch consociational period, but from 1994-2002, for the first time since WW1, they were relegated to the opposition<sup>189</sup>. More recently, the Labour Party faced the most significant drop in support in its history when their electoral results dropped from 24.8% to 5.7% in 2017<sup>190</sup>.

This extreme volatility came at the same time as the incredible proliferation of new political parties. During the consociational era, the party system was very stable with the five pillar parties being dominant and there being some small parties receiving a few seats. Now, there are countless parties all receiving a significant amount of support. The emergence of Democrats '66 (D66) in 1966 marked a shift in the Dutch political system and many new parties have emerged since then<sup>191</sup>. To emphasize this point, one needs only look at the results from the 2017 election. The traditional pillar parties together only received 39.4% of the vote. The rest of the support went to 'new' parties that do not represent the traditional segments<sup>192</sup>. For comparison, during the consociational era, the pillar parties got 75-90% of the vote<sup>193</sup>. This shows the incredible changes that have occurred within the Dutch electoral system and the 'newfound' lack of deference the electorate has to the traditional elites. It is no longer assumed

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<sup>189</sup> Erik Jones, "The Decline and Fall of Three Hegemonic Parties in Europe," 83

<sup>190</sup> Politico, "Netherlands – 2017 general election results," *Politico Poll of Polls*, Accessed May 19, 2020. <https://www.politico.eu/europe-poll-of-polls/netherlands/>

<sup>191</sup> Paul Pennings and Hans Keman, "The Changing Landscape of Dutch Politics since the 1970s: A Comparative Exploration," 157

<sup>192</sup> Politico, "Netherlands – 2017 general election results," *Politico Poll of Polls*, Accessed May 19, 2020. <https://www.politico.eu/europe-poll-of-polls/netherlands/>

<sup>193</sup> Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, 23-24



that they will represent the people in the decision-making process. They have to fight for support.

Ultimately, what this discussion has shown is how significantly the Dutch political system has changed. Where once it was a democracy that focused on consensus-building with an incredibly deferential electorate it has turned into a democracy that has fully embraced adversarial and politicized tactics. The electorate is no longer deferential and the pillar parties now need to fight a large amount of new parties for the support they could take for granted during the consociational era. The Netherlands is no longer a consociational democracy.

### **7.1.2 – Belgium**

As the previous chapters have highlighted, Belgium remains heavily divided along the ethno-linguistic cleavage, and these divisions continue to cause tensions that must be alleviated. What is interesting about Belgium is that their current consociational system operates in an intermittent fashion. While the cooperation of the elites on a day to day basis to pass legislation remains important, its consociational colours truly come to the forefront when the ethno-linguistic tensions explode. Earlier, the case of BHV was mentioned to show the extent to which these divisions can strain Belgian society, and it is in those instances that true consociationalism becomes apparent. These tensions have erupted numerous times – in 1970, 1980, 1988, 1993, 2001/2003, and 2011/2012<sup>194</sup>. The 1970 reforms set the stage for how consociationalism would be practiced in the new era whenever a crisis erupts. There is a summit meeting of all key political actors discussing the issue (grand coalition), and the eventual devolution of powers to the regions in order to alleviate tensions (segmental autonomy)<sup>195</sup>. It is also noteworthy that after

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<sup>194</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, “Consociationalism in the Low Countries: Comparing the Dutch and Belgian Experience,” 417-418

<sup>195</sup> Maureen Covell, “Agreeing to Disagree: Elite Bargaining and the Revision of the Belgian Constitution,” 452-453.

the 1970 reforms, each group has a veto power, thus contributing to the consociational nature of the bargaining process. Thus, whenever tensions emerge, these consociational practices are used to eventually alleviate the tensions.

Day to day, Belgium still has many of the important consociational characteristics. There is the mandatory linguistic parity in cabinet, and the governing coalitions still require many actors to be represented. The minority veto is firmly entrenched in the legislative process, and it is frequently mentioned when discussions are ongoing – as shown by the BHV process. Their most important consociational feature is the segmental autonomy, represented in its highly decentralized federal structure, where the ethno-linguistic groups live almost completely separate lives. Clearly, Belgium still resembles the consociational model day-to-day

It is important to note that, as discussed earlier, Belgian elite do have a tendency to act in a majoritarian manner, forcing them to revert to consociational practices in order to deal with the crisis that emerges. This proves that it remains a consociational democracy to this day, because competitive and adversarial political practices cannot emerge smoothly. These adversarial policies, like those during the BHV ordeal, resulted in significant destabilization and required extensive negotiation and compromise to deal with. While Belgium's model may differ from other states, with its intermittent use of consociationalism<sup>196</sup>, it has not undergone a transition like the Netherlands.

### **7.1.3 – Lebanon**

In Lebanon, consociational democracy remains a crucial part of the day-to-day operation of the system. All governments require the representation of all major segments and the two political alliances. These negotiations remain tense and difficult due to the various actors that

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<sup>196</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg, "Consociationalism in the Low Countries: Comparing the Dutch and Belgian Experience," 417-418.

need to be dealt with in order to maintain a sense of stability in society. This is shown by the 8 months it took former-Prime Minister Saad Hariri to form a government after elections in 2019<sup>197</sup>. When Hariri resigned months later due to the popular protests, it caused a mini-crisis as the government had to find a new prime minister that is accepted by all parties<sup>198</sup>. They also still utilise the minority veto – through the effective vetoes of the three highest offices – and segmental autonomy – as the elites are the primary means with which resources are diverted from the government to society and the identity groups still have significant authority over day-to-day laws – showing that they remain a consociational democracy.

Finally, there are cases where adversarial practices emerged in Lebanon, but immediately destabilized society and the political system, thus - like Belgium - they resorted to more consociational means in order to solve the crisis. The best example of this is the series of events leading to the Doha Accord. From 2005-2008 it was tense in Lebanon as Rafic Hariri had been assassinated and Syria left the country. The political system was now beginning to operate under the two new political alliances and there were tensions between them. In 2007, March 14 rejected a deal from March 8 regarding the presidency and cabinet portfolios which further increased tensions. To make matters worse, the government took actions that were perceived to be against Hezbollah, a powerful member of the March 8 Alliance. At its height, the country was on the brink of another civil war but was saved by the Doha Accord. This agreement adjusted the power-sharing arrangement, as now the opposition was guaranteed a third of the

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<sup>197</sup> Anchal Vohra, “Lebanon announces government after months of deadlock,” *Aljazeera*, January 31, 2019. Accessed May 20, 2020 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2019/01/lebanon-announces-government-months-deadlock-190131172502369.html>

<sup>198</sup> Andrea Rosa and Bilal Hussein, “Lebanese PM Saad Hariri resigns amid anti-government protests,” *The Globe and Mail*, October 29, 2019. Accessed May 20, 2020. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-hundreds-of-hezbollah-supporters-attack-protest-camp-in-central-beirut/>

cabinet seats, granting it a veto power – as decisions are made with a 2/3 majority<sup>199</sup>. This shows that when adversarial policies emerge, it significantly destabilizes the political system, resulting in consociational methods being used to alleviate the tensions. In the case of the Doha Accord, these measures re-emphasized the consociational system and provided greater opportunities for the opposition to take part in the decision-making process, further entrenching the consociational system. It is clear then, that Lebanon has also not undergone a de-consociational transition.

#### **7.1.4 – Comparison**

What has become clear is that out of the three cases, the Netherlands is the only state to have undergone a de-consociational transition. The Dutch elite have begun to use competitive tactics, while in Belgium and Lebanon these adversarial practices emerge from time to time but significantly destabilize society and require consociationalism to rebuild stability. What is interesting is the difference in the way that consociational democracy manifests in those two states. In Belgium it operates in a much more intermittent fashion in order to alleviate tensions that arise from time to time, whereas in Lebanon it remains a crucial part of day-to-day governance of the elites. This shows the flexibility of the system, as different approaches can be taken to stabilize society.

Ultimately, the diminishing of divisions and tensions within society is necessary for a de-consociational transition to emerge. In a society where the divisions and tensions are still stark, competitive practices cannot emerge smoothly as they destabilize society – as shown by Belgium and Lebanon. On the other hand, if the divisions and tensions have been dealt with, the competitive practices can gradually emerge without destabilizing society – as shown by the

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<sup>199</sup> Ohannes Geukjian, “Political Instability and Conflict After the Syrian Withdrawal from Lebanon,” 533-535.

Netherlands. Thus, dealing with the underlying reasons behind a consociational democracy is necessary for it to transition to a competitive democracy.

## CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSION

What this study has shown is that de-consociational transition is impacted by many factors. In order for a state to transition, it needs to deal with the underlying factors that caused a consociational democracy to be necessary in the first place. Without this, it will remain necessary to mediate divisions and this will stop attempts at a transition. These underlying tensions and divisions can be aggravated by a number of factors, so these are important to pay attention to when considering this transition. Out of the three cases, the Netherlands is the only state to undergo a transition from consociationalism to a competitive democracy. Adversarial practices were able to emerge without destabilizing society. Lebanon and Belgium both had periods where these types of adversarial policy practices emerged, but they quickly destabilized the system and they had to resort to consociational practices to bring stability back to society. These countries remain consociational democracies.

Thus, if one wants to answer the question of why some countries are successful at transitioning, it makes sense to compare the successful case of the Netherlands with the unsuccessful cases of Lebanon and Belgium. What has become obvious over the course of this study is that the Netherlands appears to be the “perfect” case for consociationalism. All of the important factors worked in their favour. For one, they fully embodied the model and its four characteristics. They did not have antagonistic historical narratives between the groups that would cause further tensions and strengthen divisions. The Dutch elite were skilled and able to come together and rule prudently day-to-day. Finally, the Netherlands was also incredibly lucky,

as they did not have any severe loads to deal with that could have strained the consociational system.

The other two cases were not quite as lucky. Both systems embodied the consociational model well, as their systems included the four characteristics that Lijphart outlined. After this, there are difficulties. Both Belgium and Lebanon had noteworthy antagonisms between their different segments, and this flared up from time to time straining relations between the elites and contributing to a destabilization of society. These tensions were further exacerbated in the daily leadership of the elites. Both Belgium and Lebanon had clear examples of elites that ruled prudently and put cooperation and consensus-building above political games, but these systems also had examples of majoritarian and self-serving practices used by the elite. This contributed to tension and periods of destabilization in the systems. Finally these states were unlucky as they had to face significant loads that strained their consociational systems. In Belgium's case, these loads were domestic political controversies that were exacerbated by majoritarian political practices, resulting in crisis before being dealt with in a consociational manner. In Lebanon, these loads were much more deadly as they are a result of Lebanon's placement in a tense regional system. Lebanon is very susceptible to the political battles played by their neighbours and this has destabilized their system to the point where the elites could not save it.

Ultimately, all of the above factors led to a successful diminishing of the religious and socio-economic divisions and tensions in Dutch society, allowing competitive political practices to emerge and the Netherlands to undergo a de-consociational transition. They were able to create a stable political culture and a peaceful society which allowed for the divisions between people to slowly erode. It is also important to note that there was considerable economic development in the Netherlands, likely helping the erosion of these divisions. This is not quite

the case in Belgium and Lebanon. The initial divisions in Belgium were very similar to that of the Netherlands, and these eroded around the same time as those in the Netherlands.

Unfortunately for Belgium, there was a latent ethno-linguistic division that remained present and this came to the forefront when the other divisions went away. There was also considerable economic development in Belgium, but in a much more uneven fashion with Flanders becoming the economic heart of the country and Wallonia struggling. This further increased the divisions, and now the Belgian system is completely dominated by the ethno-linguistic divide. Finally, Lebanon is still dominated by the divisions that led to the consociational system initially. They have been entrenched in the institutional structure of the state and the country's troubled history has further inflamed these tensions as groups have considerable grievances with one another due to the legacy of the civil war. It is also important to note that Lebanon never economically recovered after the civil war, and faces incredible economic hardship to this day.

Thus, what can be shown by this paper is that in order for a state to be able to transition from a consociational democracy, the divisions within society must be diminished. This stands to reason, as these systems are meant to deal with unsustainable divisions in society. Once the system has successfully dealt with this, it will gradually allow for adversarial practices to emerge smoothly and the transition can begin. There are various factors that can hurt this process by destabilizing society – strong antagonistic narratives, the lack of prudent leadership, and the presence of loads on the system. Some of these factors are beyond anyone's ability to prevent – such as antagonisms between segments and the emergence of certain loads – but it is up to the elites to deal with them effectively. Ultimately, if everything goes smoothly, a state can transition from a consociational democracy to a competitive political system.

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