Globalized Election
Weekly Report
June 23, 2010 to June 29, 2010

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Week # 125

Federal elections for the House of Representatives and 40 Senate seats were held in Belgium on Sunday, June 13.

The Colombian presidential election of 2010 took place under a two-round system, with an initial vote held on May 30 and a second poll held three weeks later on June 20.

Kingdom of Belgium

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Capital	Brussels
Largest metropolitan area	Brussels Capital Region
Official language(s)	Dutch, French, German
Demonym	Belgian
Government	Federal parliamentary democracy and Constitutional monarchy
- King	Albert II
- Prime Minister	Yves Leterme
Independence	
- Declared from the Netherlands	4 October 1830
- Recognized	19 April 1839
EU accession	25 March 1957
Area	
- Total	30,528 km2 (139th) 11,787 sq mi
- Water (%)	6.4

Population

- 1.1.2010 estimate   10,827,519 (76th)

- 2001 census   10,296,350

- Density   354.7/km2 (33rd)
  918.6/sq mi

GDP (PPP)   2009 estimate

- Total $382.749 billion

- Per capita $35,421

GDP (nominal)   2009 estimate

- Total $470.400 billion

- Per capita $43,533

1. INTRODUCTION

Belgium officially the Kingdom of Belgium, is a country in northwest Europe. It is a founding member of the European Union and hosts its headquarters, as well as those of other major international organizations, including NATO. Belgium covers an area of 30,528 square kilometres (11,787 sq mi), and it has a population of about 10.7 million people.

Straddling the cultural boundary between Germanic and Latin Europe, Belgium is home to two main linguistic groups, the Dutch-speakers, mostly Flemish, and the French-speakers, mostly Walloons, plus a small group of German-speakers. Belgium's two largest regions are the Dutch-speaking region of Flanders in the north and the French-speaking southern region of Wallonia. The Brussels-Capital Region, officially bilingual, is a mostly French-speaking enclave within the

Flemish Region. A small German-speaking Community exists in eastern Wallonia. Belgium's linguistic diversity and related political and cultural conflicts are reflected in the political history and a complex system of government.

The name 'Belgium' is derived from Gallia Belgica, a Roman province in the northernmost part of Gaul that was inhabited by the Belgae, a mix of Celtic and Germanic peoples. Historically, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg were known as the Low Countries, which used to cover a somewhat larger area than the current Benelux group of states. From the end of the Middle Ages until the 17th century, it was a prosperous centre of commerce and culture. From the 16th century until the Belgian revolution in 1830, many battles between European powers were fought in the area of Belgium, causing it to be dubbed the battleground of Europe—a reputation strengthened by both World Wars.

Upon its independence, Belgium eagerly participated in the Industrial Revolution and, during the course of the twentieth century, possessed several colonies in Africa. The second half of the 20th century was marked by the rise of communal conflicts between the Flemings and the Francophones fuelled by cultural differences on the one hand and an asymmetrical economic evolution of Flanders and Wallonia on the other hand. These still-active conflicts have caused far-reaching reforms of the formerly unitary Belgian state into a federal state.

History

In the 1st century BC, the Romans defeated the local tribes and created the province of Gallia Belgica. A gradual immigration by Germanic Frankish tribes during the 5th century brought the area under the rule of the Merovingian kings. A gradual shift of power during the 8th century led the kingdom of the Franks to evolve into the Carolingian Empire.

The Treaty of Verdun in 843 divided the region into Middle and Western Francia and therefore into a set of more or less independent fiefdoms which, during the Middle Ages, were vassals either of the King of France or of the Holy Roman Emperor. Many of these fiefdoms were united in the Burgundian Netherlands of the 14th and 15th centuries. Emperor Charles V extended the personal union of

the Seventeen Provinces in the 1540s, making it far more than a personal union by the Pragmatic Sanction of 1549 and increased his influence over the Prince-Bishopric of Liège.

The Eighty Years' War (1568–1648) divided the Low Countries into the northern United Provinces (Belgica Foederata in Latin, the "Federated Netherlands") and the Southern Netherlands (Belgica Regia, the "Royal Netherlands"). The latter were ruled successively by the Spanish and the Austrian Habsburgs and comprised most of modern Belgium. This was the theatre of most Franco-Spanish and Franco-Austrian wars during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Following the campaigns of 1794 in the French Revolutionary Wars, the Low Countries—including territories that were never nominally under Habsburg rule, such as the Prince-Bishopric of Liège—were annexed by the French First Republic, ending Austrian rule in the region. The reunification of the Low Countries as the United Kingdom of the Netherlands occurred at the dissolution of the First French Empire in 1815.

The 1830 Belgian Revolution led to the establishment of an independent, Catholic and neutral Belgium under a provisional government and a national congress. Since the installation of Leopold I as king in 1831, Belgium has been a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. Although the franchise was initially restricted, universal suffrage for men was introduced in 1893 (with plural voting until 1919) and for women in 1949.

The main political parties of the 19th century were the Catholic Party and the Liberal Party, with the Belgian Labour Party emerging towards the end of the century. French was originally the single official language adopted by the nobility and the bourgeoisie. It progressively lost its overall importance as Dutch became recognized as well. This recognition became official in 1898 and in 1967 a Dutch version of the Constitution was legally accepted.

The Berlin Conference of 1885 ceded control of the Congo Free State to King Leopold II as his private possession. From around 1900 there was growing international concern for the extreme and savage treatment of the Congolese population under Leopold II, for whom the Congo was primarily a source of

revenue from ivory and rubber production. In 1908 this outcry led the Belgian state to assume responsibility for the government of the colony, henceforth called the Belgian Congo.

Germany invaded Belgium in 1914 as part of the Schlieffen Plan, and much of the Western Front fighting of World War I occurred in western parts of the country. Belgium took over the German colonies of Ruanda-Urundi (modern day Rwanda and Burundi) during the war, and they were mandated to Belgium in 1924 by the League of Nations. In the aftermath of the First World War, the Prussian districts of Eupen and Malmedy were annexed by Belgium in 1925, thereby causing the presence of a German-speaking minority. The country was again invaded by Germany in 1940 during the Blitzkrieg offensive and occupied until its liberation by the Allies in 1945. The Belgian Congo gained independence in 1960 during the Congo Crisis; Ruanda-Urundi followed with its independence two years later.

After World War II, Belgium joined NATO as a founding member and formed the Benelux group of nations with the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Belgium became one of the six founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 and of the European Atomic Energy Community and European Economic Community, established in 1957. The latter is now the European Union, for which Belgium hosts major administrations and institutions, including the European Commission, the Council of the European Union and the extraordinary and committee sessions of the European Parliament.

Government and politics

Belgium is a constitutional, popular monarchy and a parliamentary democracy.

The federal bicameral parliament is composed of a Senate and a Chamber of Representatives. The former is made up of 40 directly elected politicians and 21 representatives appointed by the 3 Community parliaments, 10 co-opted senators and the children of the king, as senators by Right who in practice do not cast their vote. The Chamber's 150 representatives are elected under a proportional voting system from 11 electoral districts. Belgium is one of the few

countries that has compulsory voting and thus holds one of the highest rates of voter turnout in the world.

The King (currently Albert II) is the head of state, though with limited prerogatives. He appoints ministers, including a Prime Minister, that have the confidence of the Chamber of Representatives to form the federal government. The numbers of Dutch- and French-speaking ministers are equal as prescribed by the constitution. The judicial system is based on civil law and originates from the Napoleonic code. The Court of Cassation is the court of last resort, with the Court of Appeal one level below.

Belgium's political institutions are complex; most political power is organized around the need to represent the main cultural communities. Since around 1970, the significant national Belgian political parties have split into distinct components that mainly represent the political and linguistic interests of these communities. The major parties in each Community, though close to the political centre, belong to three main groups: the right-wing Liberals, the socially conservative Christian Democrats and the socialists forming the left wing. Further notable parties came into being well after the middle of last century, mainly around linguistic, nationalist, or environmental themes and recently smaller ones of some specific liberal nature.

A string of Christian Democrat coalition governments from 1958 was broken in 1999 after the first dioxin crisis, a major food contamination scandal. A 'rainbow coalition' emerged from six parties: the Flemish and the French-speaking Liberals, Social Democrats, Greens. Later, a 'purple coalition' of Liberals and Social Democrats formed after the Greens lost most of their seats in the 2003 election. The government led by Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt from 1999 to 2007 achieved a balanced budget, some tax reforms, a labour-market reform, scheduled nuclear phase-out and instigated legislation allowing more stringent war crime and more lenient soft drug usage prosecution. Restrictions on withholding euthanasia were reduced and same-sex marriage legalized. The government promoted active diplomacy in Africa and opposed the invasion of

Iraq. Verhofstadt's coalition fared badly in the June 2007 elections. For more than a year, the country has experienced a political crisis.

This crisis was such that many observers speculated on a possible partition of Belgium. From 21 December 2007 until 20 March 2008 the temporary Verhofstadt III Government was in office. This coalition of the Flemish and Francophone Christian Democrats, the Flemish and Francophone Liberals together with the Francophone Social Democrats was an interim government until 20 March 2008. On that day a new government, led by Flemish Christian Democrat Yves Leterme, the actual winner of the federal elections of June 2007, was sworn in by the king. On 15 July 2008 Leterme announced the resignation of the cabinet to the king, as no progress in constitutional reforms had been made. In December 2008 he once more offered his resignation to the king after a crisis surrounding the sale of Fortis to BNP Paribas. At this juncture, his resignation was accepted and Flemish Christian Democrat Herman Van Rompuy was sworn in as Prime Minister on 30 December 2008.

After Herman Van Rompuy was designated the first permanent President of the European Council on 19 November 2009, he offered the resignation of his government to King Albert II on 25 November 2009. A few hours later, the new government under Prime Minister Yves Leterme was sworn in. On 22 April 2010, Leterme again offered the resignation of his cabinet to the king after one of the coalition partners, the OpenVLD, withdrew from the government, and on 26 April 2010 King Albert officially accepted the resignation. The Parliamentary elections in Belgium on 13 June 2010 saw the Flemish separatist N-VA become the largest party in Flanders, and the Socialist Party PS the largest party in Wallonia.

Communities and regions

Communities:

    Flemish Community / Dutch language area   Flemish & French Community / bilingual language area   French Community / French language area   German-speaking Community / German language area

Regions:

Flemish Region / Dutch language area   Brussels-Capital Region / bilingual language area   Walloon Region / French and German language areas

Following a usage which can be traced back to the Burgundian and Habsburgian courts, in the 19th century it was necessary to speak French to belong to the governing upper class, and those who could only speak Dutch were effectively second-class citizens. Late that century, and continuing into the 20th century, Flemish movements evolved to counter this situation. While the Walloons and most Brusselers adopted French as their first language, the Flemings refused to do so and succeeded progressively in imposing Dutch as Flanders' official language. Following World War II, Belgian politics became increasingly dominated by the autonomy of its two main language communities. Intercommunal tensions rose and the constitution was amended in order to minimise the conflict potentials.

Based on the four language areas defined in 1962–63 (the Dutch, bilingual, French and German language areas), consecutive revisions of the country's constitution in 1970, 1980, 1988 and 1993 established a unique federal state with segregated political power into three levels:

The federal government, based in Brussels.

The three language communities:

the Flemish Community (Dutch-speaking);

the French (i.e., French-speaking) Community;

the German-speaking Community.

The three regions:

the Flemish Region, subdivided into five provinces;

the Walloon Region, subdivided into five provinces;

the Brussels-Capital Region.

The constitutional language areas determine the official languages in their municipalities, as well as the geographical limits of the empowered institutions for

specific matters. Although this would allow for seven parliaments and governments, when the Communities and Regions were created in 1980, Flemish politicians decided to merge both. Thus the Flemings just have one single institutional body of parliament and government is empowered for all except federal and specific municipal matters.

The overlapping boundaries of the Regions and Communities have created two notable peculiarities: the territory of the Brussels-Capital Region (which came into existence nearly a decade after the other regions) is included in both the Flemish and French Communities, and the territory of the German-speaking Community lies wholly within the Walloon Region. Conflicts between the bodies are resolved by the Constitutional Court of Belgium. The structure is intended as a compromise to allow different cultures to live together peacefully.

The Federal State's authority includes justice, defence, federal police, social security, nuclear energy, monetary policy and public debt, and other aspects of public finances. State-owned companies include the Belgian Post Group and Belgian Railways. The Federal Government is responsible for the obligations of Belgium and its federalized institutions towards the European Union and NATO. It controls substantial parts of public health, home affairs and foreign affairs. The budget—without the debt—controlled by the federal government amounts to about 50% of the national fiscal income. The federal government employs ca. 12% of the civil servants.

Communities exercise their authority only within linguistically determined geographical boundaries, originally oriented towards the individuals of a Community's language: culture (including audiovisual media), education and the use of the relevant language. Extensions to personal matters less directly connected with language comprise health policy (curative and preventive medicine) and assistance to individuals (protection of youth, social welfare, aid to families, immigrant assistance services, etc.).

Regions have authority in fields that can be broadly associated with their territory. These include economy, employment, agriculture, water policy, housing, public works, energy, transport, the environment, town and country planning, nature

conservation, credit and foreign trade. They supervise the provinces, municipalities and intercommunal utility companies.

In several fields, the different levels each have their own say on specifics. With education, for instance, the autonomy of the Communities neither includes decisions about the compulsory aspect nor allows for setting minimum requirements for awarding qualifications, which remain federal matters. Each level of government can be involved in scientific research and international relations associated with its powers. The treaty-making power of the Region's and Communities' Governments is the broadest of all the Federating units of all the Federations all over the world.

Politics of Belgium

Politics of Belgium takes place in a framework of a federal, parliamentary, representative democratic, constitutional monarchy, whereby the King of the Belgians is the Head of State and the Prime Minister of Belgium is the head of government in a multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government. Federal legislative power is vested in both the government and the two chambers of parliament, the Senate and the Chamber of Representatives. The federation is made up of (cultural/political) communities and (territorial) regions.

Belgium's political institutions are complex; most political power is organised around the need to represent the main cultural (and political) communities. Since around 1970, the significant national Belgian political parties have split into distinct representations for each communities' interests besides defenders of their ideologies. These parties belong to three main political families, though close to the centre: the right-wing Liberals, the social conservative Christian Democrats, and Socialists forming the left-wing. Other important newer parties are the Green parties and, nowadays mainly in Flanders, the nationalist and far-right parties. Politics is influenced by lobby groups, such as trade unions and employers' organizations such as the Federation of Belgian Enterprises. Majority rule is often superseded by a de facto confederal decision making process where

the minority (the French-speakers) enjoy important protections through specialty majorities (2/3 overall and majority in each of the 2 main communities).

Constitution

The Constitution of Belgium, the primary source of law and the basis of the political system of the Country, was established on February 7, 1831. It has been changed several times, but the most relevant reforms were performed in 1970 and in 1993.

In 1970, in response to a growing civil conflict between the Dutch-speaking and French-speaking communities in Brussels, the Government declared that "the unitary state, its structure and functioning as laid down by law, had become obsolete". The new constitution recognised the existence of strong communautarian and regional differences within Belgium, but sought to reconcile these differences through a diffusion of power to the communities and the regions.

In 1993 the parliament approved a constitutional package transforming Belgium into a full-fledged federal state.

Government

Executive

Main office holders

Office	Name	Party	Since
King	Albert II		9 August 1993
Prime Minister	Yves Leterme	Christian Democratic and Flemish	25 November 2009
Coalition partners		Flemish Liberals and Democrats, Reformist Movement, Socialist Party, Humanist Democratic Centre	30 December 2008

Head of state

The King of the Belgians is the constitutional head of the Belgian state and holds office for life. The duties of the king are laid out by the Belgian Constitution and other laws enforced under it.

As titular head of state, the King plays a ceremonial and symbolic role in the nation. His main political function is to designate a political leader to form a new cabinet after an election or the resignation of a cabinet. In conditions where there is a "constructive vote of no-confidence," the government has to resign and the lower house of Parliament proposes a new Prime Minister to the King.[1] The King is also seen as playing a symbolic unifying role, representing a common national Belgian identity.

The present monarch, Albert II, succeeded his brother, Baudouin I, who died July 31, 1993. Albert took the oath of office on August 9, 1993.

Federal government

The executive power is held by the Prime Minister and the ministers, who together form the Council of Ministers, and by the secretaries of state, each of whom is deputy to a minister and is part of the federal Government, but does not sit in the Council of Ministers.

Members of the Federal Government, who are formally appointed by the King, are in fact drawn from the political parties which form the government coalition.

The Federal Government must enjoy the confidence of the Chamber of Representatives.

The total number of Ministers, including the Prime Minister, cannot exceed 15. Also, the number of Dutch- and French-speaking ministers must be equal, with the possible exception of the Prime Minister.

Ministers head executive departments of the government. The Prime Minister and his ministers administer the government and the various public services and the ministers must defend their policies and performance in person before the Chamber.

Regional and community governments

The new regional and community councils and governments have jurisdiction over transportation, public works, water policy, cultural matters, education, public health, environment, housing, zoning, and economic and industrial policy. They rely on a system of revenue-sharing for funds. They have the authority to levy a very few taxes (mostly surcharges) and to contract loans. Moreover, they have obtained exclusive treaty-making power for those issues coming under their respective jurisdictions. Of total public spending (interest payments not considered), more than 30% is authorised by the regions and communities, although their financing comes for over 80% from national Belgian budgets; at the same time, the national government controls 100% of social security, and strictly limits the taxation policy by the federalised entities. As a result, Belgian institutions still control over 90% of the effective, global taxation levels on individuals and companies.

Though since 1993 article 35 of the Constitution requires the creation a list specifying federal as opposed to regional and communities' competences, such list was never created. Therefore, the federal government continues to exercise all competences not explicitly dedicated to the lesser levels.

The Flemish parties generally favour much larger community (and regional) autonomy, including financial and tax autonomy, while the francophone parties generally oppose it. The French-speaking parties tend to favour more state control.

As of 2008, the regional executives are the following:

Minister-President of Flemish Government (Region+Community): Kris Peeters (CD&V)

Minister-President of French Community Government: Rudy Demotte (PS)

Minister-President of Walloon Regional Government: Rudy Demotte (PS)

Minister-President of Brussels-Capital Regional Government: Charles Picqué (PS)

Minister-President of German Community Government: Karl-Heinz Lambertz (SP)

Provincial and local government

In addition to three regions and three cultural communities, Belgium is also divided into 10 provinces (plus Brussels) and 589 municipalities. Provincial and local government is an exclusive competency of the regions. Therefore, one should see the relevant articles for more detailed information on provincial and local government.

In the Brussels region, there is another form of intermediate government, constituted by institutions from each of the two competent communities. Those institutions (COCOF for the French-speakers and VGC for the Flemings) have similar competencies, although only COCOF has legislative powers.

Legislative

Legislative powers in Belgium are divided between the national, the regional and the community levels.

The Belgian Federal Parliament consists of the Senate (Dutch: Senaat, French: Sénat) and the Chamber of Representatives (Dutch: Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, French: Chambre des Représentants). The Chamber has 150 members; the Senate has 71. All 150 representatives are elected directly via a system of proportional representation. On the contrary, only 40 senators are elected directly (25 by Flemish and 15 by Francophones); 21 other senators are elected by the parliaments of the three communities; 10, finally, are coopted by the others.

Since the Constitutional reform of 1993, the two Houses of Parliament do not sit on a level of parity: other than in cases regarding the constitutional, institutional or federal structure or international relation, the consent of the Senate either is not required (so-called "unicameral laws", voted only by the House, such as the budget) or can be dispensed of by the House. The Chamber of Representatives is also the only house that votes the confidence to the Government.

Each of the five components of the federal system (Flemish Community, French Community, German-speaking Community, Walloon Region and Brussels-Capital Region) have their own, directly elected unicameral council or parliament.

They vote decrees (or ordinances in Brussels), that have the same value and are on the same juridical level as the federal laws.

The influence of the main political parties and party leaders is enormous. Many experts[citation needed] estimate that the presidents of the main parties are considerably more powerful than both ordinary ministers and the entire Parliament. For this reason, the Belgian political system is often called a particracy.

Judiciary

The judicial system is based on civil law and originates from the Napoleonic code. It has a judicial review of legislative acts. It accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction, with reservations. The Court of Appeals is one level below the Court of Cassation, an institution based on the French Court of Cassation. The Court of Cassation (Dutch: Hof van Cassatie, French: Cour de Cassation) is the most important court in Belgium. Judges are appointed for life by the Belgian monarch.

Elections and parties

Electoral system

The election for the Belgian Chamber of Representatives is based on a system of open list proportional representation. Several months before an election, each party forms a list of candidates for each district. Parties are allowed to place as many candidates on their lists as there are seats available. The formation of the list is an internal process that varies with each party. The place on the list is considered to play a role in the election of a candidate, by giving stronger visibility to those high on the list; this phenomenon, however, seems to have lost importance since the last electoral reform.

Belgian voters are given five options. They may:

Vote for a list as a whole, thereby showing approval of the order established by the party;

Vote for one or more individual candidates, regardless of his/her ranking on the list (a "preference vote");

Vote for one or more of the "alternates" (substitutes);

Vote for one or more candidates, and one or more alternates;

Vote invalid or blank so no one receives the vote.

While there are some options to vote on more than one person, it should be noted that voters cannot vote for candidates of more than one candidate list (party). Doing so makes the vote invalid.

Political campaigns in Belgium are relatively short, lasting only about one month. They are subjected to several limitations:

There are restrictions on the use of billboards.

For all of their activities, campaigns included, the political parties have to rely on government subsidies and dues paid by their members.

An electoral expenditures law restricts expenditures during the campaign.

Because of the huge public bureaucracy, the high politisation of nominations, and the widely accepted practice that political nominees spend many man-months paid for by all tax-payers for partisan electioneering, this arrangement is considered to massively favour the ruling political parties.

Belgium is one of the few countries that has compulsory voting, thus having one of the highest rates of voter turnout in the world.

Elections for the Federal Parliament are normally held every four years. The community and regional parliaments are elected every five years, and their elections coincide with those for the European Parliament. Elections for the members of Belgium's municipal and provincial councils are held every six.

The latest municipal and provincial elections were held in 2006 and the latest general election was held in 2007. The next community and regional elections are expected in 2009.

Results from last Chamber election (2007)

Chamber						
Votes	+/-	%	+/-	Seats	+/-	
Christian Democratic and Flemish – New-Flemish Alliance	1,234,950	+162,802	18.51%	+2.20%	30	+8

(Christen-Democratisch & Vlaams – Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie)						
Reformist Movement (Mouvement Réformateur)	835,073	+86,121	12.52%	+1.12%	23	−1
Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang)	799,844	+38,437	11.99%	+0.40%	17	−1
Open VLD	789,455	−219,768	11.83%	−3.53%	18	−7
Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste)	724,787	−131,205	10.86%	−2.16%	20	−5
Socialist Party – Different – Spirit (Socialistische Partij – Anders – Spirit)	684,390	−295,360	10.26%	−4.65%	14	−9
Humanist Democratic Centre (Centre Démocrate Humaniste)	404,077	+44,417	6.06%	+0.59%	10	+2
Ecolo	340,378	+139,260	5.10%	+2.04%	8	+4
List Dedecker (Lijst Dedecker)	268,648	+268,648	4.03%	+4.03%	5	+5
Green! (Groen!)	265,828	+103,623	3.98%	+1.51%	4	+4
National Front (Front National)	131,385	+1,373	1.97%	−0.01%	1	±0
Others	192,545	—	2.89%	—	—	—
6,671,360		100%		150		

The 2003 data are resp. CD&V and N-VA instead of CD&V NVA alliance, Vlaams Blok instead of Vlaams Belang and Agalev instead of Groen!.

Results from last Senate election (2007)

Senate							
Votes	+/-	%	+/-	Seats	+/-		
Christian Democratic and Flemish	1,287,389	+254,267	19.42%	+3.65%	9	+3	

– New-Flemish Alliance (Christen-Democratisch & Vlaams – Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie)						
Open VLD	821,980	−185,888	12.40%	−2.98%	5	−2
Reformist Movement (Mouvement Réformateur)	815,755	+19,998	12.31%	+0.16%	6	+1
Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang)	787,782	+45,842	11.89%	+0.57%	5	±0
Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste)	678,812	−162,096	10.24%	−2.60%	4	−2
Socialist Party – Different – Spirit (Socialistische Partij – Anders – Spirit)	665,342	−348,218	10.04%	−5.43%	4	−3
Humanist Democratic Centre (Centre Démocrate Humaniste)	390,852	+28,147	5.90%	+0.36%	2	±0
Ecolo	385,466	+176,598	5.82%	+2.63%	2	+1
Groen!	241,151	+80,127	3.64%	+1.18%	1	+1
List Dedecker (Lijst Dedecker)	223,992	+223,992	3.38%	+3.38%	1	+1
National Front (Front National)	150,461	+3,156	2.27%	+0.02%	1	±0
Others	179,145	—	2.69%	—	—	—
6,628,127		100.00%		40		

The 2003 data are resp. CD&V and N-VA instead of CD&V NVA alliance, Vlaams Blok instead of Vlaams Belang and Agalev instead of Groen!.

Political parties

In Belgium, all important political parties are either "Dutch-speaking" or "French-speaking" (aside from 1 German speaking party). Political parties are thus organised along community lines, especially for the two main communities. There are no representative parties active in both communities. Even in Brussels, all

parties presenting candidates are either exclusively Dutch or French speaking. As such, the internal organisation of the political parties reflects the fundamentally dual nature of Belgian society. At the same time, this is, for the French-speaking parties, a serious indication against their own claim for a more regional stress in the Belgian federalisation (as opposed to the community-focus favoured by the Flemings). The Flemish parties currently all favour to reform the Belgian federal political system to (at least) a confederal system whereby the regions are the centrepiece of the political system. Some parties, most notably the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) and Vlaams Blok, even favour the division of Belgium.

Another important characteristic of Belgian national politics is the highly federal nature of decision making. Important decisions require both a national majority (2/3 for constitutional changes), as well as majorities in the two main language groups. On top of that, both these communities can activate 'alarm bell'-procedures, delaying changes. In addition, there are no national parties to speak of. As a result of this, Belgian decision making can be slow and expensive. On top, it tends to significantly favour the more conservative parties. Given the historically very high public expenditure, and the very strict central control over taxation, even for revenues going to regions and communities, the tendency of Belgian governments to lower taxation and especially labour charges has been limited, at least if compared to radical-liberal approaches followed by certain other countries.

History of the political landscape

From the creation of the Belgian state in 1830 and throughout most of the 19th century, two political parties dominated Belgian politics: the Catholic Party (Church-oriented and conservative) and the Liberal Party (anti-clerical and progressive). In the late 19th century the Socialist Party arose to represent the emerging industrial working class. These three groups still dominate Belgian politics, but they have evolved substantially in character.

In the years before and after the Second World War, the linguistic problem became a stronger divisive issue in Belgian politics, with the emergence in the 1950s and 1960s of linguistic parties (Volksunie, FDF and Rassemblement Wallon. In the 1960s and 1970s, each of the main political parties of Belgium split into Flemish and French-speaking parties.

After May 68, the country saw a growing environmental and left wing movement, that led to the foundation of the ecological parties Groen! and Ecolo.

Especially in Flanders, the 1980s saw the growth of the far right, represented by the Vlaams Belang, which became one of the larger parties of the country in the 1990s.

During the years surrounding the new millennium, an attempt at restructuring the political landscape took place, mainly taking the form of political cartels.

Main political parties

Belgian Union (BUB)
Committee for Another Policy (CAP)
Humanist Democratic Centre (CDH)
Christian Democratic and Flemish (CD&V)
Christian Social Party (CSP)
Ecolo
Francophone Democratic Front (FDF)
Front National
Groen!
Citizens' Movement for Change (MCC)
Reformist Movement (MR)
New Flemish Alliance (N-VA)
Party for Freedom and Progress (PFF)
For German-speaking Community (ProDG)
Workers Party of Belgium (PVDA/PTB)
Socialist Party (PS)

Socialist Party – Differently (SP.A)

SPIRIT

Vlaams Belang

Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats (VLD)

Belgian general election, 2003

2004 Belgian regional elections

2007–2008 Belgian government formation

Belgian general election, 2010

Trade unions

Belgium is a highly unionised country, and organised labour is a powerful influence in politics. About 53% of all private sector and public service employees are labour union members. Not simply a "bread and butter" movement in the American sense, Belgian labour unions take positions on education, public finance, defence spending, environmental protection, women's rights, abortion, and other issues. They also provide a range of services, including the administration of unemployment benefits.

Belgium's three principal trade union organizations are the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (CSC/ACV) (1,705,000 members), the General Federation of Belgian Labour (FGTB/ABVV) (1,198,000 members) and the General Confederation of Liberal Trade Unions of Belgium (CGSLB/ACLVB) which has 230,000 members.

Until the fifties, the FGTB/ABVV was the largest confederation, since then, however, the CSC/ACV has become the leading trade union force. In the most recent works council elections held in 2004 the CSC/ACV garnered close to 53% of the vote, the Socialist confederation obtained 36%, and the Liberal confederation 10%.

The Confederation of Catholic labour Unions (CSC/ACV). Organised in 1912, the CSC/ACV rejects the Marxist concept of "class struggle" and seeks to achieve a just social order based on Christian principles. The CSC/ACV is not formally

linked to its party political counterparts, the Christian Democratic parties (CD&V and CDH), but exercises great influence in their councils.

The CSC/ACV is the leading union in all Flemish provinces, and in Wallonia's Luxembourg province. It has almost equal strength with the socialist confederation in the Brussels area. Its President is currently Luc Cortebeeck.

The Belgian Socialist Confederation of labour (FGTB/ABVV). The FGTB/ABVV derives from the Socialist Trade Union Movement, established in the late 19th century in Walloon industrial areas, Brussels, and urban areas of Flanders. Today the FGTB/ABVV is the leading union in the Hainaut, Namur, and Liège provinces and matches the CSC/ACV in Brussels. The FGTB/ABVV is led by President Michel Nollet.

Linguistic Division

Belgium is a country in which language is a major political issue. In the 19th and early 20th century, Flemings did not enjoy the same rights as French-speakers, both de facto and de jure. When the country was founded in 1830 under a census voting system, only around 1% of the adult population could vote: nobility, haute-bourgeoisie and higher clerics, all of them French-speaking. A Flemish movement fought peacefully to gain equal rights, obtaining most of these. Minor issues exist also between German speakers and French speakers.

In the third century AD, Germanic Franks migrated into what is now Belgium. The less populated northern areas became Germanic, while in the southern part, where the Roman presence had been much stronger, Latin persisted despite the migrations of the Franks. This linguistic frontier has more or less endured.

The Industrial Revolution of the late 18th and the 19th century further accentuated the North-South division. Francophone Wallonia became an early industrial boom area, affluent and politically dominant. Dutch-speaking Flanders remained agricultural and was economically and politically outdistanced by Wallonia and the capital. The elite during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century spoke French, even in the Dutch speaking area. In the 20th century, and particularly after the Second World War, Flanders saw an economic

flowering while Wallonia became economically stagnant. As Flemings became more educated and more well off, and sought a fair and equal share of political power, tensions between the two communities rose.

Linguistic demonstrations in the early 1960s led in 1962 to the establishment of a formal linguistic border and elaborate rules were made to protect minorities in linguistically mixed border areas. In 1970, the Constitution was amended. Flemish and francophone cultural councils were established with authority in matters relating to language and culture for the two language groups.

The 1970 constitutional revision did not finally settle the problem, however. A controversial amendment declared that Belgium consists of three cultural communities (the Flemish Community, the French(-speaking) Community and the German-speaking Community) and three economic regions (Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels) each to be granted a significant measure of political autonomy. It was not until 1980, however, that an agreement could be reached on how to implement this new constitutional provision.

In August 1980, the Belgian Parliament passed a devolution bill and amended the Constitution, establishing:

A Flemish community legislative assembly (council) and Flemish government;

A Francophone community legislative council and government competent for cultural, language, and educational matters; and

Walloon and Flemish regional legislative assemblies and governments competent for regional economic matters.

Immediately, the Flemings had their regional legislative council and government transfer its competencies to the community legislative council and government. That became competent for both cultural, language, and educational affairs, and for regional economic matters.

Since 1984 the German language community of Belgium (in the eastern part of Liège Province) has had its own legislative assembly and executive, competent for cultural, language, and educational affairs.

In 1988-89 the Constitution was again amended to give additional responsibilities to the regions and communities. The most sweeping change was to devolve

nearly all responsibilities for educational matters to the communities. Moreover, the regions and communities were provided additional revenue, and Brussels Region was given its own legislative assembly and executive.

Another important constitutional reform took place in the summer of 1993. It formally changed Belgium from a unitary to a federal state. It also (modestly) reformed the bicameral parliamentary system and provided for the direct election of the members of the community and regional legislative councils. The bilingual Brabant province was split into separate Flemish Brabant and Walloon Brabant provinces, whereas in the Brussels-Capital Region most of the elsewhere provincial powers are exercised by the region and the responsibilities of an elsewhere provincial governor towards the federal level, by the Governor of Brussels-Capital. However, the electoral and judicial districts of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde were not split.

Despite the numerous constitution revisions, the matter is not completely settled. There is still a lot of political tension between French-speakers and Dutch-speakers, and, to a lesser degree, between French-speakers and the politically far weaker German-speakers.

Shift from linguistic to cultural and political animosity

At the end of the 20th century, it became clear that the main opposition between Flemings and Walloons was not primarily linguistic anymore, but had shifted to major political and demographic differences. Flemish parties appear much more 'Anglo-Saxon' in policy choices, moving away from 'big state' philosophies.[French-speaking parties, including their 'right-wing' parties, tend to favor big government and support for the poor.

This became very obvious after the 2007 elections: in Flanders, the classical left-wing parties only captured 1/4 of the votes. On the French-speaking side, the left still carried 1/2 of the votes. One of the key differences centers on the policy towards everyone receiving allocations. Flemings strongly favor a policy focused at helping them regain their autonomy.

Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde district

This existence of this electoral district was condemned in 2002 as unconstitutional by the Arbitration Court (Dutch: Arbitragehof, French: Cour d'Arbitrage), without however requesting the splitting of the district.

The reasons behind this ruling are as follows: the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde electoral district includes both the bilingual Brussels-Capital region and the unilingual Dutch Halle-Vilvoorde. Brussels is constitutionally bilingual. As such, its voters can choose candidates from both communities for European and national elections. However, because of the bilingual Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde electoral district, that possibility is also extended to the French-speakers in the Halle-Vilvoorde district, which belongs to the Flemish Region. That allows French-speaking candidates from Brussels and Wallonia (thus from outside the Flemish region and from outside the constitutional Dutch-only area) to attract votes from outside their electoral district. The current Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde electoral district breaches both the constitutionally established provincial borders as well as by the borders between the linguistic areas, and between the communities.

At the same time, Flemish candidates have no possibility of attracting votes from Flemings living in Wallonia, not even from those in Walloon municipalities with legally established facilities. The court ruled this unconstitutional, to much controversy.

Elections in Belgium

Belgium elects its bicameral federal legislature, the Federal Parliament (Federale Parlement/Parlement Fédérale/Föderales Parlament. The Chamber of People's Representatives (Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers/Chambre des Représentants/Abgeordnetenkammer) has 150 members, each elected for a four year term by proportional representation. The Senate (Senaat/Sénat/Senat) has 71 members, of which 40 are directly elected for a four year term by proportional representation, 21 are appointed by the Community parliaments, and 10 are co-

opted (i.e., appointed by the other senators). In addition, the children of the King are senators by right.

Belgium has a multi-party system, with numerous parties in which no one party often has a chance of gaining power alone, and parties must work with each other to form coalition governments.

Several months before an election, each party forms a list of candidates for each district. Parties are allowed to place as many candidates on their "ticket" as there are seats available. The formation of the list is an internal process that varies with each party. The place on the list influences the election of a candidate, but its influence has diminished since the last electoral reform.

Political campaigns in Belgium are relatively short, lasting only about one month, and there are restrictions on the use of billboards. For all of their activities, campaigns included, the political parties have to rely on government subsidies and dues paid by their members. An electoral expenditures law restricts expenditures of political parties during an electoral campaign. Because of the huge public bureaucracy, the high politisation of nominations, and the widely accepted practice that political nominees spend many man-months paid for by all tax-payers for partisan electioneering, this arrangement massively favors the ruling political parties.

Since no single party holds an absolute majority, after the election the strongest party or party family will usually create a coalition with some of the other parties to form the government.

Voting is compulsory in Belgium; more than 90% of the population participates. Belgian voters are given five options when voting. They may—

Vote for a list as a whole, thereby showing approval of the order established by the party they vote for

Vote for one or more individual candidates belonging to one party, regardless of his or her ranking on the list. This is a "preference vote"

Vote for one or more of the "alternates (substitutes)"

Vote for one or more candidates, and one or more alternates, all of the same party

Vote invalid or blank so no one receives the vote

Elections for the Federal Parliament are normally held every four years, although early elections are possible. The regional parliaments are elected for fixed terms of five years, and their elections coincide with those for the European Parliament. Elections for the members of Belgium's municipal and provincial councils are held every six years, also for fixed terms.

Voting in Belgium is done almost entirely by electronic voting on a computer. A few weeks before the actual election, every Belgian older than 18 receives a voting card with the details of where to vote. Voting bureaus are usually in schools. On polling day, a volunteer at the voting bureau checks the voter in. After taking the voter's electronic identity card and voting card, the volunteer issues a magnetic card to operate the voting machine. After the voter has finished, the volunteer verifies that the magnetic card was used to cast a valid vote, then returns the voter's ID and voting card, now stamped as proof of having voted.

The most recent general election was held on 13 June 2010. The next regional elections are expected in June 2009 and the next communal and provincial elections in October 2012.

Latest federal election

Chamber						
Votes	+/−	%	+/−	Seats	+/−	
New Flemish Alliance (Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie)	1,135,617	*	17.40%	*	27	*
Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste)	894,543	+169,756	13.71%	+2.85%	26	+6
Christian Democratic and Flemish (Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams)	707,986	*	10.85%	*	17	*
Reformist Movement (Mouvement Réformateur)	605,617	−229,456	9.28%	−3.23%	18	−5

Socialist Party – Differently (Socialistische Partij – Anders)	602,867	−81,523	9.24%	−1.02%	13	−1
Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats (Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten)	563,873	−225,572	8.64%	−3.19%	13	−5
Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang)	506,697	−293,147	7.76%	−4.23%	12	−5
Humanist Democratic Centre (Centre Démocrate Humaniste)	360,441	−43,636	5.53%	−0.53%	9	−1
Ecolo	313,047	−27,331	4.80%	−0.30%	8	±0
Green! (Groen!)	285,989	+20,161	4.38%	+0.40%	5	+1
List Dedecker (Lijst Dedecker)	150,577	−118,071	2.31%	−1.72%	1	−4
Popular Party (Parti Populaire)	84,005	—	1.29%	+1.29%	1	+1
Others	316,108	—	4.84%	—	—	—
6,527,367			100%		150	

Senate						
Votes	+/−	%	+/−	Seats	+/−	
New Flemish Alliance (Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie)	1,268,894	*	19.61%	*	9	*
Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste)	880,828	+202,016	13.62%	+3.37%	7	+3
Christian Democratic and Flemish (Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams)	646,371	*	9.99%	*	4	*
Socialist Party – Differently (Socialistische Partij – Anders)	613,091	−52,251	9.48%	−0.54%	4	±0

Reformist Movement (Mouvement Réformateur)	599,618	−216,137	9.27%	+3.04%	4	−2
Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats (Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten)	533,171	−288,809	8.24%	−4.16%	4	−1
Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang)	491,519	−296,263	7.60%	−4.29%	3	−2
Ecolo	353,111	−32,355	5.46%	−0.36%	2	±0
Humanist Democratic Centre (Centre Démocrate Humaniste)	331,870	−58,982	5.13%	−0.77%	2	±0
Green! (Groen!)	251,605	+10,454	3.89%	+0.25%	1	±0
List Dedecker (Lijst Dedecker)	130,777	−93,215	2.02%	−1.36%	0	−1
Popular Party (Parti Populaire)	98,858	—	1.53%	—	0	—
Others	264,591	—	4.09%	—	—	—
6,469,304			100.00%		40	

[edit] Results in Flanders

Party	2007		2003		Change	
	%	seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
CD&V/N-VA	29.6	30	25.3	22	+4.3	+8
Open Vld	18.8	18	25.9	25	-7.1	-7
Vlaams Belang	19	17	18.2	18	+0.8	-1
sp.a-spirit	16.3	14	24.9	23	-8.6	-9
Lijst Dedecker	6.5	5	-	-	+6.5	+5
Groen!	6.3	4	3.9	0	+2.4	+4
Others	3.5	0	1.8	0	-	=
Total	100.0	88	100.0	88	0.0	0

Belgian general election, 2010

All 150 seats to the Belgian Chamber of Representatives
and 40 (of 71) seats to the Belgian Senate

June 13, 2010

Incumbent Prime Minister
Yves Leterme
CD&V

Formateur
Bart De Wever
N-VA

Background

Fall of the government

Main article: Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde

Following a continued lack of agreement over how to resolve the conflict over the electoral arrondissement of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde, the liberal Open VLD left the government on 22 April 2010, continuing the 2007–2008 Belgian political crisis. Prime Minister Yves Leterme (Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams) immediately offered his resignation to King Albert II, who accepted it on 26 April 2010. Following the elections held on 13 June, there were fears that coalition-building may take so long that Belgium's presidency of the Council of the European Union, which starts on 1 July 2010, might have to start under a caretaker government.

Constitutionality of elections

According to a statement by the Flemish President of the Constitutional Court, Marc Bossuyt, the elections might be ruled unconstitutional unless the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde arrondissement is split up beforehand. On 4 May, all but one Flemish judge-president of the 13 Flemish Courts of First Instance wrote a

collective letter, saying that the elections cannot be held with the current electoral districts and that a return to the previous electoral arrondissements is necessary. In contrast, Ghislain Londers, the president of the Court of Cassation declared that all judges are obliged to cooperate with the electoral process. Before the judges' letters, former president of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives Herman De Croo stated that no court could prevent the elections from taking place.

Importance of elections

The international media saw the election as crucial to determine the future of the country, even though it was admitted that devolution would not happen immediately.

Parties
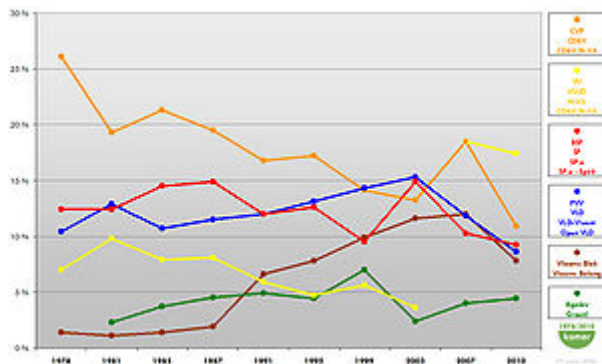
The main six Flemish political parties and their results for the House of Representatives (Kamer). From 1978 to 2010, in percentages for the complete 'Kingdom'.

Flemish parties (Dutch speaking)

These Flemish parties field candidates in the regions of Flanders and the partially bilingual electoral district Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde.

New Flemish Alliance (Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie, N-VA) – centre-right political party, seeking secession of Flanders.

Christian Democratic and Flemish (Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams, CD&V) – Christian democratic party with historic ties to both trade unionism and corporative organizations.

Socialist Party – Differently (Socialistische Partij – Anders, sp.a) – social-democratic party.

Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats (Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten, open-VLD) – liberal party.

Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang) – seeking the independence of Flanders and strict limits on immigration.

Green! (Groen!) – green political party.

List Dedecker (Lijst Dedecker) – conservative-liberal party.

[edit] Walloon parties (French speaking)

These Francophone parties fielded candidates in the region of Wallonia and in the electoral district Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde.

Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste, PS) – social-democratic party.

Reformist Movement (Mouvement Réformateur , MR) – liberal-conservative party.

Humanist Democratic Centre (Centre Démocrate Humaniste, CDH) – christian democratic party.

Ecolo – green political party.

Popular Party (Parti Populaire) – conservative-liberal party.

Candidates

Leterme stepped aside on 28 April 2010 and was replaced as leader of CD&V by Marianne Thyssen.

Notable newcomers in politics:

Rik Torfs, former canon law professor at the Catholic University of Leuven, was on the Senate list for CD&V.

Siegfried Bracke, former political analyst at the Flemish public broadcaster VRT was first on the Chamber list in East-Flanders for N-VA.

Eva Brems, human rights professor at Ghent University and former president of the Flemish division of Amnesty International. She was head of the Chamber list in Flemish Brabant for Groen!.

[Polls

As of May 26, it appeared that the major development in the election was the surge in popularity of the N-VA in Flanders. Led by Bart De Wever, it supports eventual independence for Flanders, and an immediate switch from a federal Belgium to a confederal Belgium. The N-VA replaces the CD&V of outgoing PM Yves Leterme as the most popular party in Flanders. This development opens the question of how the francophone parties might react to forming a government with an openly sovereignist, but politically centrist party if they do win a plurality of votes in Flanders. It appeared that the N-VA had attracted some popularity from the ethnic nationalist party, Vlaams Belang.

Date	Source	Flemish constituency							Francophone constituency						
		CD&V	N-VA	Open VLD	SP–A	VB	Groen!	LDD	PS	MR–FDF	CDH	Ecolo	FN	PP	RWF
10 June 2007	2007 election	29.6%		18.8%	16.3%	19.0%	6.3%	6.5%	29.5%	31.2%	15.8%	12.8%	5.6%	/	/
29 March 2010	La Libre Belgique [17]	20.0%	17.8%	13.8%	15.5%	17.3%	8.1%	5.5%	31.7%	20.5%	15.5%	20.2%	/	4.3%	/
4 May 2010	L'Avenir [18]	18.9%	22.9%	14.8%	14.2%	12.5%	7.9%	3.9%	32.5%	21.1%	18.2%	17.6%	2.9%	<1%	2.0%
26 May 2010	Dimarso [19]	19.5%	26.0%	12.4%	16.0%	10.3%	7.8%	5.4%							
28 May 2010	Vers l'Avenir [20]								33.0%	20.4%	17.0%	17.6%	2.5%	1.9%	1.9%
4 June 2010	Standaard/VRT [21]	19.0%	25.2%	13.9%	13.8%	11.5%	8.2%	6.2%							
June 2010	La Libre Belgique	16.2%	26%	13.6%	16.3%	15%	6.8%	4.3%	30%	20.2%	16.1%	18.9%	4.1%	4.1%	/

Results

After polls showed the N-VA receiving 29% of votes in their region, media interpreted the election as a "victory for Flemish independence."

Chamber of Representatives

Chamber							
Votes	+/−	%	+/−	Seats	+/−		
New Flemish Alliance (Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie)	1,135,617	*	17.40%	*	27	*	
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6,527,367		100%		150			

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Others	264,591	—	4.09%	—	—	—
6,469,304		100.00%		40		

Aftermath

On possible coalitions, election winner Bart De Wever announced he would seek negotiations with the Francophone Socialist Party. The Socialist Party leader Elio di Rupo was tipped to become the next Prime Minister, because the socialist parties emerged as the largest "party family" in the elections, and because the New Flemish Alliance lacks a Francophone counterpart.

Philip Blenkinsop of Reuters stated that the win of the New Flemish Alliance could have negative effects because "Belgium can ill afford drawn-out coalition talks because it has a large debt and any policy paralysis could make the country vulnerable on financial markets that are closely watching a sovereign debt crisis." Coalition formation talks are still under way. The Belgian king gave Bart De Wever the task of informateur (informer) to smoothen the path for the future government. One of the tipped "optimal" coalitions is what is called the "mirror government," a government using the same coalitions that exist in the Flemish (CD&V, N-VA and sp.a) and Walloon (PS, cdH and Ecolo) regions respectively, though in the federal government.

2010 Belgian government formation

Following the 2010 Belgian general election, held on 13 June, a process of cabinet formation started in Belgium.

Since the election produced a very fragmented political landscape, with the Flemish separatist New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) as the largest party in Flanders and the country as a whole and the francophone Socialist Party (PS) in Wallonia, cabinet negotiations may take a long time.

Bart De Wever (N-VA) announced he would seek negotiations with the PS. PS leader Elio di Rupo was tipped to become the next Prime Minister, because the "Socialist" parties emerged as the largest "party family" in the elections, and because the N-VA lacks a Francophone counterpart.

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This type of coalition gives multiple advantages:

- It not only has a majority in the federal parliament, but also a majority within the Flemish and Francophone language groups. The previous Leterme government was criticised for not having a majority within the Flemish language group after N-VA broke the cartel with CD&V and left the government.
- It has the necessary 2/3 majority needed to enact state reforms, a main point of the N-VA's electoral promise.
- It facilitates cooperation and communication between the federal and regional governments, because the majority and opposition parties are the same on all levels.
- It is formed by only 6 parties, as opposed to other possible coalitions of 7 or 8 parties, which would make a coalition agreement satisfying all coalition partners harder to reach.

It has however several disadvantages:

- This coalition would be composed of social democrats, ecologists, Christian democrats and conservative Flemish separatists, bringing together parties from all sides of the political spectrum. This could

potentially cause clashes on specific subjects, especially social-economic policy and state reforms.

- CDH opposes the move to confederalism and other state reforms, while the N-VA and CD&V campaigned on those issues.

ELECTION ANALYSIS

Federal elections for the House of Representatives and 40 Senate seats were held in Belgium on Sunday, June 13. I had attempted to provide a brief analysis and overview of the problems and issues in one of Europe's most divided countries. This snap election had come as a result of the collapse of the Leterme II cabinet this year over a major dispute concerning the electoral constituency of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde (BHV). Apart from the far-left, there are no 'national' parties in Belgium since the late 70s when the three main political families: socialists, liberals and Christian democrats each split up into a Dutch party and a French-Walloon party. Though most of the mainstream various parties maintain informal links with each other, some links are weak (as the quasi-inexistent links between Flemish CD&V and Walloon cdH) and all parties must negotiate to form a coalition, a coalition which always threatens to explode over linguistic issues and contentious border disputes (in the past, Voeren-Fourons and today BHV). The truth, however, is that the federal government has limited and declining authority in a country with six million institutional levels.

Voting is compulsory in Belgium, though abstention climbed up 2.3% to reach 15.9%. White or null votes climbed 0.7% to reach 5.8%. Here are the results. Please note that the CD&V and N-VA formed an electoral cartel in 2007 which gave 7 deputies and 1 elected senator to the N-VA. The CD&V's results in 2010 are compared to that of the 2007 cartel. The Sp.a and Spirit formed an electoral cartel in 2007, but Spirit, renamed SLP, has disappeared. Lastly, some parties, such as the FN, ran lists in only a few electoral constituencies and not in all. No party except the PTB+ (Wallonia) and PvdA+ (Flanders) ran lists north and south.

Chamber of Deputies (national)

N-VA	17.40%	(+17.40%)	winning	27	seats	(+20)
PS	13.70%	(+2.84%)	winning	26	seats	(+6)
CD&V	10.85%	(-7.66%)	winning	17	seats	(-6)
MR	9.28%	(-3.24%)	winning	18	seats	(-5)
Sp.a	9.24%	(-1.02%)	winning	13	seats	(-1)
Open VLD	8.64%	(-3.19%)	winning	13	seats	(-5)
Vlaams Belang	7.76%	(-4.23%)	winning	12	seats	(-5)
cdH	5.52%	(-0.53%)	winning	9	seats	(-1)
Ecolo	4.8%	(-0.31%)	winning	8	seats	(nc)
Groen!	4.38%	(+0.40%)	winning	5	seats	(+1)
Lijst Dedecker	2.31%	(-1.72%)	winning	1	seat	(-4)
PP	1.29%	(+1.29%)	winning	1	seats	(+1)
PvdA+	0.81%	(+0.24%)	winning	0	seats	(nc)
PTB+	0.6%	(+0.37%)	winning	0	seats	(nc)
Wallonie d'abord	0.56%	(+0.56%)	winning	0	seats	(nc)
RWF	0.55%	(+0.15%)	winning	0	seats	(nc)

FN 0.51% (-1.45%) winning 0 seats (-1)

Dutch Voters: N-VA 27.8%, CD&V 17.3%, Sp.a 14.6%, Open VLD 13.6%, VB 12.3%, Groen 6.9%, LDD 3.7%, OTH 3.8%

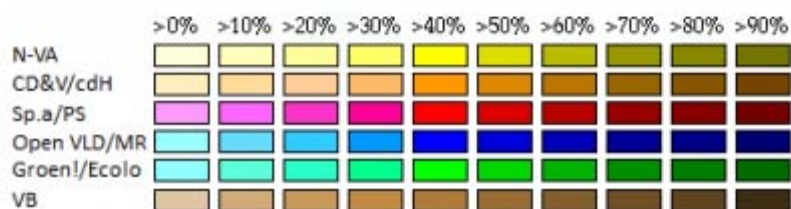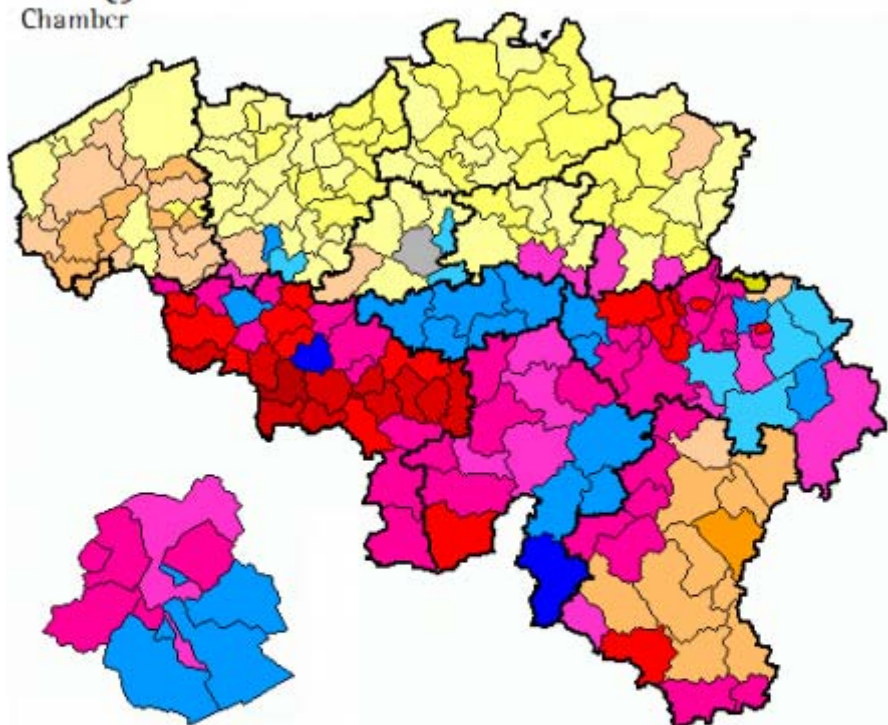**French Voters:** PS 37.6%, MR 22.2%, cdH 14.6%, Ecolo 12.3%, PP 3.1%, FN 1.4%, OTH 8.8%

Overall: 'Anti-Belgian State' and regionalists (Flemish nationalists, Walloon regionalists and *rattachistes*) 28.58%, Socialists 22.94%, Liberals 17.92%, Catholics 16.37%, Greens 9.18%, Far-left 1.41%, PP 1.29%, French far-right 0.51%

Overall Seats: Flemish Nationalists 40, Socialists 39, Liberals 31, Catholics 26, Greens 13, PP 1

Belgium 2010
Chamber

	>0%	>10%	>20%	>30%	>40%	>50%	>60%	>70%	>80%	>90%
N-VA										
CD&V/cdH										
Sp.a/PS										
Open VLD/MR										
Groen!/Ecolo										
VB										

Senate

Dutch-Flemish College

N-VA	31.69%	(+31.69%)	winning	9	seats	(+8)
CD&V	16.15%	(-15.26%)	winning	4	seats	(-4)
Sp.a	15.31%	(-0.92%)	winning	4	seats	(nc)
Open VLD	13.32%	(-6.74%)	winning	4	seats	(-1)
Vlaams Belang	12.28%	(-6.94%)	winning	3	seats	(-2)
Groen!	6.28%	(+0.40%)	winning	1	seat	(nc)

Lijst Dedecker 3.27% (-2.20%) winning 0 seats (-1)

PvdA+ 1.35% (+0.50%) winning 0 seats (nc)

Secessionist and Nationalist Parties 47.24% (35.96% in 2009)

French-Walloon College

Party	%	Change		Seats		Change
PS	34.72%	(+8.89%)	winning	7	seats	(+3)
MR	24.32%	(-7.93%)	winning	4	seats	(-2)
Ecolo	14.32%	(-0.92%)	winning	2	seats	(nc)
cdH	13.46%	(-1.99%)	winning	2	seats	(nc)
PP	4.01%	(+4.01%)	winning	1	seats	(+1)
Wallonie d'abord	2.52%	(+2.52%)	winning	0	seats	(nc)
PTB+	2.07%	(+1.28%)	winning	0	seats	(nc)
RWF	1.64%	(+0.37%)	winning	0	seats	(nc)

FN 0.00% (-5.95%) winning 0 seats (-1)

Belgium 2010

Senate
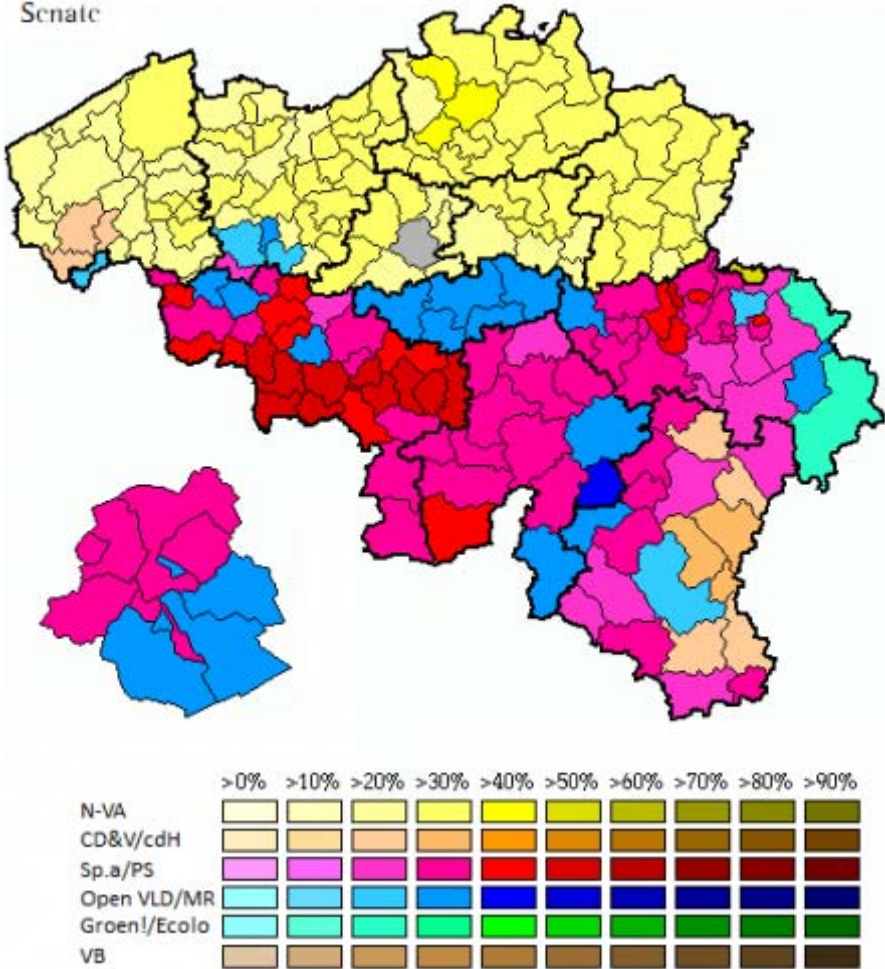
This is a rather marking election in Belgian history: for the first time ever, a party which is opposed to the existence of the Belgian state itself has topped the poll nationwide, and parties opposed to the current Belgian state – that is, either regionalists (Wallonie d'abord) or parties wishing the end of the Belgian state in some form or another, have nearly 30% of the nationwide vote. I don't think there's any other *country* where a party or parties whose ultimate goal is the destruction of said state as a sovereign entity can reach nearly 30% (Quebec doesn't count as it isn't a country).

In Flanders, the winner is the N-VA. Their electoral appeal shows that in the past support for Flemish autonomy or independence was not concentrated entirely in

the controversial Vlaams Belang, but rather in all parties. In fact, all parties except Groen! saw their vote share fall as it was squeezed by Bart de Wever's party. The N-VA has shown that despite a rocky start in 2003 (when it won only 1 seat, as Bart de Wever pointed out last night), it can be a party for a vast majority of Flemish nationalists because it both shares Flanders' traditional conservatism but is not xenophobic or controversial like the VB. That is a very important point. In the Senatorial ballot, the N-VA won 31.7% – a result far superior to most polling and an excellent showing for any party in a very divided political system. Bart de Wever's personality and popular appeal explains the difference between the showings of the N-VA in the lower and upper house. The N-VA also dominates largely throughout Flanders, proving that Flemish nationalism isn't concentrated in one or two province. It is ahead in Antwerp, the VB's old stronghold, as well in Ghent, Ostende, Bruges, Leuven and most of BHV's Dutch areas. The only major city on the lower house ballot where it is not ahead is Kortrijk (Courtrai). Only what I assume are wealthy areas (for Open VLD) or deeply Catholic areas around Ypres (for the CD&V) didn't place the N-VA on top in the Senate ballot. The only potential issue for the N-VA now is that its large electoral coalition from 2010 might unravel, especially if it enters government. The mainstream CD&V, Sp.a and VLD all fell to the N-VA, though the socialists resisted best while the CD&V totally unraveled after a poor campaign and the unpopularity of outgoing Prime Minister Yves Leterme. Open VLD, without Verhofstadt's persona appeal this time, fell quite badly, especially in the Senate where Verhofstadt's Senate candidacy in 2007 had helped it limit the unraveling in 2007. Vlaams Belang, traditionally the nationalist party, fell quite badly, also falling victim to the N-VA's spectacular gains. Immigration and security were lesser issues in this campaign and the party couldn't resist to a party which appeals to their traditional electorate especially well. Groen!'s performance is quite impressive, given that their vote wasn't squeezed too much by the N-VA, even though overlap between both parties is scarce (although their MEPs sit in the same group, along with Ecolo MEPs). The Lijst Dedecker also fell victim to

the N-VA's success though the remnants of a favourite son vote for Dedecker himself in West Flanders has given them one lone seat in the lower house.

In Wallonia, the winner is the PS and all other parties are losers (except the far-left). The PS had suffered in 2007, especially in its traditional stronghold in Charleroi and Hainaut Province due to bad corruption scandals in Charleroi which were in the headlines in 2006 and 2007. Thanks to a popular government at the regional level as well as a campaign based around the defense of social spending in the wake of the recession, the PS vote was boosted by around the same amount as the MR vote receded, although, compared to pre-election polling, the MR did manage to hold tight. The PS returned to sky-high results in Charleroi, where its up around 20% since 2007, and throughout the mining regions of Hainaut and Liège. In Liège, the well-known Michel Daerden won an historic result for himself despite being last placed on the party's list after internal feuds. The MR, as mentioned earlier, did slightly better than expected and held up well in both BHV and the Brussels commuter land in the Walloon Brabant. The MR's close links to Olivier Mangain's FDF in the BHV area likely helped it, though the area is sociologically inclined to vote for them. Ecolo, riding high (17-18%) in polling, must be quite disappointed but if they learned anything from 2009, they should have been expecting it. They overpolled by roughly 4% in 2009 and they again overpolled by 4% in 2010. Quite surprisingly, Ecolo's total vote share fell slightly in both the Chamber and Senate. Once again, people behind the curtain (or in front of the voting machine) likely thought twice about their vote and chose to go with what they know best or think will be most useful in government (in both cases, either the PS or MR). The cdH could also have expected to do quite a bit better given pre-election polling, so they too will be disappointed. Given the overlap between the cdH (which is more of a Christian social-humanist party than a CD&V-type Christiandem outfit) and the PS – both are in government at the regional level – the disappointing result isn't very surprising. The right-wing populist Popular Party (PP) managed to squeak out a seat in Walloon Brabant where it polled 5.04%, right above the threshold. The

FN, running for the Chamber only in Hainaut, Namur and BHV unsurprisingly lost all its seats with only 2.8% in Hainaut and Namur and a paltry 0.4% in BHV. It did not run for Senate. The far-right's vote, which, in Wallonia was traditionally anti-immigrant (like in most European countries), seems to have shifted to the regionalist side like in Flanders. Wallonie d'abord, a far-right regionalist party similar to Alsace d'abord (they even stole their logo, like the FN had stolen the French FN's logo), polled a surprising 2.5%. Is this a protest vote or does it perhaps highlight a growing regionalist current *south* of the border? If it does, Belgium is *really* screwed. The old *rattachistes* (RWF) polled 1.6%, increasing its vote share slightly. The far-left PTB+ also did well, reaching 9% in the mining community of Herstal in Liège.

The question on everybody's mouth is "when will Belgium break up?" Giving a serious answer to such a question is quite difficult and it's a very hard question. The country of Belgium as we know it will most probably still exist on June 14, 2011. It could still exist by the time the next EU ballot comes around in 2014. But in ten or twenty years? Who knows. The answer partly depends on what government is formed and how this government deals with two pressing issue: BHV and 'state reform'.

The options for coalitions are quite open and the N-VA isn't necessarily a necessity for a government, even though excluding them would be a **bad** idea (bolded for a reason). The PS, the Walloon winners, have not showed much triumphalism in their victory and they say that they'll open talks with the N-VA. Bart de Wever, who met Albert II earlier today, has also stretched out his hand to the Francophone community as a whole, and said that it would be a mistake for anybody to work independently and aloofly. The N-VA does seem committed to maintaining, for now, stability and peace in Belgium. The coalition options – based on seats in the Chamber (given that indirectly elected seats for the Senate have yet to be chosen) are given below (a majority is 76).

- 'Regional coalition combo' > CD&V/N-VA/Sp.a/PS/cdH/Ecolo: 105

- PS/N-VA/CD&V/Sp.a/cdH: 92
- 'Double olive tree' > PS/CD&V/Sp.a/cdH/Ecolo/Groen: 78

Under all of these options, the Walloon Socialist Elio di Rupo is favoured to be the next Prime Minister, as it is unlikely the PS or any Walloon party will accept having Bart de Wever on top, as it would be a hard sell for voters in the south. Such a coalition will most likely include the N-VA, given that the parties know that excluding the N-VA would likely result in further gains for the party while including it in government could both 'tame' the party and weaken its electoral appeal (as some of its voters would likely flow back to VB and other parties). However, a coalition with the PS and N-VA on top will likely be rather unstable and will have a hard time (as any government) solving the issues of BHV. Even though Vlaams Belang said it welcomed the N-VA as a partner for a progress on Flemish autonomy and independence, the VB will not be in government (obviously) and its radical program – it will propose a bill splitting BHV in two as soon as Parliament reconvenes – will be accepted by the N-VA. A coalition of good-will is likely to emerge, but it will be a coalition both of bickering and "small reforms" which won't be good enough for Flemish nationalists.

COLOMBIA

Contents--**Page#**

Colombia

Republic of Colombia

Capital (and largest city)	Bogotá D.C. 4°39′N 74°3′W
Official language(s)	Spanish
Recognised regional languages	The languages and dialects of ethnic groups are also official in their

	territories.
Ethnic groups	57% Mestizo, 21% Afro-Colombian 20% White 1% Amerindian 1% Asian.
Demonym	Colombian
Government	Unitary presidential republic
- President	Álvaro Uribe Vélez
- Vice President	Francisco Santos
- President of Congress	Javier Cáceres Leal
- President of the Supreme Court	Augusto Ibáñez Guzmán
Independence	From Spain
- Declared	July 20, 1810
- Recognized	August 7, 1819
- Current constitution	1991
Area	
- Total	1,141,748 km^2 (26th) 440,839 sq mi
- Water (%)	8.8

Population

- March 2010 estimate	46,100,050
- 2005 census	42,888,592
- Density	40/km^2 104/sq M i
GDP (PPP)	2008 estimate
- Total	$397.249 billion
- Per capita	$8,800
GDP (nominal)	2008 estimate
- Total	$240.832 billion
- Per capita	$4,400

1. INTRODUCTION

Colombia officially the **Republic of Colombia** is a constitutional republic in northwestern South America. Colombia is bordered to the east by Venezuela and Brazil; to the south by Ecuador and Peru; to the north by the Caribbean Sea; to the northwest by Panama; and to the west by the Pacific Ocean. Colombia also shares maritime borders with Jamaica, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. With a population of over 45 million people, Colombia has the 29th largest population in the world and the second largest in South America, after Brazil. Colombia has the third largest Spanish-speaking population in the world after Mexico and Spain.

The territory of what is now Colombia was originally inhabited by indigenous nations including the Muisca, Quimbaya, and Tairona. The Spanish arrived in 1499 and initiated a period of conquest and colonization killing or taking as slaves almost 90% of that native population, and then creating the Viceroyalty of New Granada (comprising modern-day Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, the northwest region of Brazil and Panama) with its capital in Bogotá. Independence from Spain was won in 1819, but by 1830 "Gran Colombia" had collapsed with the secession of Venezuela and Ecuador. What is now Colombia and Panama emerged as the Republic of New Granada. The new nation experimented with federalism as the Granadine Confederation (1858), and then the United States of Colombia (1863), before the Republic of Colombia was finally declared in 1886. Panama seceded in 1903 under pressure to fulfill financial responsibilities towards the United States government to build the Panama Canal.

Colombia has a long tradition of constitutional government. The Liberal and Conservative parties, founded in 1848 and 1849 respectively, are two of the oldest surviving political parties in the Americas. However, tensions between the two have frequently erupted into violence, most notably in the Thousand Days War (1899–1902) and La Violencia, beginning in 1948. Since the 1960s, government forces, left-wing insurgents and right-wing paramilitaries have been engaged in the continent's longest-running armed conflict. Fuelled by the cocaine trade, this escalated dramatically in the 1980s. However, in the recent decade (2000s) the violence has decreased significantly. Many paramilitary groups have demobilized as part of a controversial peace process with the government, and the guerrillas have lost control in many areas where they once dominated. Meanwhile Colombia's homicide rate, for many years one of the highest in the world, has almost halved since 2002.

Colombia is a standing middle power with the fourth largest economy in Latin America. It also has the most unequal distribution of wealth of any country in Latin America.

Colombia is very ethnically diverse, and the interaction between descendants of the original native inhabitants, Spanish colonists, Africans brought as slaves and twentieth-century immigrants from Europe and the Middle East has produced a rich cultural heritage. This has also been influenced by Colombia's varied geography. The majority of the urban centres are located in the highlands of the Andes mountains, but Colombian territory also encompasses Amazon rainforest, tropical grassland and both Caribbean and Pacific coastlines. Ecologically, Colombia is one of the world's 18 megadiverse countries (the most biodiverse per unit area).

History

Pre-Colombian era

Approximately 10,000 BC, hunter-gatherer societies existed near present-day Bogotá (at "El Abra" and "Tequendama") which traded with one another and with cultures living in the Magdalena River Valley. Beginning in the first millennium BC, groups of Amerindians developed the political system of "cacicazgos" with a pyramidal structure of power headed by caciques. Within Colombia, the two cultures with the most complex cacicazgo systems were the Tayronas in the Caribbean Region, and the Muiscas in the highlands around Bogotá, both of which were of the Chibcha language family. The Muisca people are considered to have had one of the most developed political systems in South America, after the Incas.

Spanish discovery, conquest, and colonization

.Spanish explorers made the first exploration of the Caribbean littoral in 1499 led by Rodrigo de Bastidas. Christopher Columbus navigated near the Caribbean in 1502. In 1508, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa started the conquest of the territory through the region of Urabá. In 1513, he was the first European to discover the Pacific Ocean which he called *Mar del Sur* (or "Sea of the South") and which in fact would bring the Spaniards to Peru and Chile.

The territory's main population was made up of hundreds of tribes of the Chibchan and Carib, currently known as the Caribbean people, whom the Spaniards conquered through warfare and alliances, while resulting disease such as smallpox, and the conquest and ethnic cleansing itself caused a demographic reduction among the indigenous. In the sixteenth century, Europeans began to bring slaves from Africa.

Independence from Spain

Since the beginning of the periods of Conquest and Colonization, there were several rebel movements under Spanish rule, most of them either being crushed or remaining too weak to change the overall situation. The last one which sought outright independence from Spain sprang up around 1810, following the independence of St. Domingue in 1804 (present-day Haiti), who provided a non-negligible degree of support to the eventual leaders of this rebellion: Simón Bolívar and Francisco de Paula Santander.

In a movement initiated by Antonio Nariño, who opposed Spanish centralism and which led the opposition against the viceroyalty. After the independence of Cartagena in November 1811, two independent governments formed which fought a Civil War, a period known as La Patria Boba. The following year Nariño proclaimed the United Provinces of New Granada, headed by Camilo Torres Tenorio. Despite the successes of the rebellion, the emergence of two distinct ideological currents among the liberators (federalism and centralism) gave rise to an internal clash between these two, thus contributing to the reconquest of territory by the Spanish, allowing restoration of the viceroyalty under the command of Juan de Samano, whose regime punished those who participated in the uprisings. This stoked renewed rebellion, which, combined with a weakened Spain, made possible a successful rebellion led by Simón Bolívar, who finally proclaimed independence in 1819. The pro-Spanish resistance was finally defeated in 1822 on the present territory of Colombia and in 1823 around the Viceroyalty of time.

The Congress of Cucuta in 1821 adopted a constitution, whose main goal was to create the Republic of Colombia, now referred to as La Gran Colombia, which also included present-day Venezuela, Panama and Ecuador. However, the new republic was very unstable and ended with the rupture of Venezuela in 1829, followed by Ecuador, in 1830.

The Venezuelan Simón Bolívar had become the first President of Colombia, and Francisco de Paula Santander was Vice President; when Simón Bolívar stepped down, Santander became the second President of Colombia. The rebellion finally succeeded in 1819 when the territory of the Viceroyalty of New Granada became the Republic of Colombia organized as a union of Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela (Panama was then an integral part of Colombia).

Post-independence and republicanism

Internal political and territorial divisions led to the secession of Venezuela and Quito (today's Ecuador) in 1830. The so-called "Department of Cundinamarca" adopted the name "Nueva Granada", which it kept until 1856 when it became the "Confederación Granadina" (Grenadine Confederation). After a two-year civil war in 1863, the "United States of Colombia" was created, lasting until 1886, when the country finally became known as the Republic of Colombia. Internal divisions remained between the bipartisan political forces, occasionally igniting very bloody civil wars, the most significant being the Thousand Days civil war (1899–1902).

This, together with the United States of America's intentions to influence the area (especially the Panama Canal construction and control) led to the separation of the Department of Panama in 1903 and the establishment of it as a nation. The United States paid Colombia $25,000,000 in 1921, seven years after completion of the canal, for redress of President Roosevelt's role in the creation of Panama, and Colombia recognized Panama under the terms of the Thomson-Urrutia Treaty. Colombia was engulfed in the Year-Long War with Peru over a territorial dispute involving the Amazonas Department and its capital Leticia.

Soon after, Colombia achieved a relative degree of political stability, which was interrupted by a bloody conflict that took place between the late 1940s and the early 1950s, a period known as *La Violencia* ("The Violence"). Its cause was mainly mounting tensions between the two leading political parties, which subsequently ignited after the assassination of the Liberal presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán on April 9, 1948. This assassination caused riots in Bogotá and became known as El Bogotazo. The violence from these riots spread throughout the country and claimed the lives of at least 180,000 Colombians. From 1953 to 1964 the violence between the two political parties decreased first when Gustavo Rojas deposed the President of Colombia in a coup d'état and negotiated with the guerrillas, and then under the military junta of General Gabriel París Gordillo.

After Rojas' deposition the two political parties Colombian Conservative Party and Colombian Liberal Party agreed to the creation of a "National Front", whereby the Liberal and Conservative parties would govern jointly. The presidency would be determined by an alternating conservative and liberal president every 4 years for 16 years; the two parties would have parity in all other elective offices. The National Front ended "La Violencia", and National Front administrations attempted to institute far-reaching social and economic reforms in cooperation with the Alliance for Progress. In the end, the contradictions between each successive Liberal and Conservative administration made the results decidedly mixed. Despite the progress in certain sectors, many social and political problems continued, and guerrilla groups were formally created such as the FARC, ELN and M-19 to fight the government and political apparatus. These guerrilla groups were dominated by Marxist doctrines.

Emerging in the late 1970s, powerful and violent drug cartels further developed during the 1980s and 1990s. The Medellín Cartel under Pablo Escobar and the Cali Cartel, in particular, exerted political, economic and social influence in Colombia during this period. These cartels also financed and influenced different

illegal armed groups throughout the political spectrum. Some enemies of these allied with the guerrillas and created or influenced paramilitary groups.

The new Colombian Constitution of 1991 was ratified after being drafted by the Constituent Assembly of Colombia. The constitution included key provisions on political, ethnic, human and gender rights. The new constitution initially prohibited the extradition of Colombian nationals, causing accusations that drug cartels had lobbied for the provision; extradition was allowed again in 1996 when the provision was repealed. The cartels had previously promoted a violent campaign against extradition, leading to many terrorist attacks and mafia-style executions. They also tried to influence the government and political structure of Colombia through corruption, as in the case of the 8000 Process scandal.

In recent years, the country has continued to be plagued by the effects of the drug trade, guerrilla insurgencies like FARC, and paramilitary groups such as the AUC (later demobilized, though paramilitarism remains active), which along with other minor factions have engaged in a bloody internal armed conflict. President Andrés Pastrana and the FARC attempted to negotiate a solution to the conflict between 1999 and 2002. The government set up a "demilitarized" zone, but repeated tensions and crisis led the Pastrana administration to conclude that the negotiations were ineffectual. Pastrana also began to implement the Plan Colombia initiative, with the dual goal of ending the armed conflict and promoting a strong anti-narcotic strategy.

During the presidency of Álvaro Uribe, the government applied more military pressure on the FARC and other outlawed groups, under the stance that nearly half a century of negotiations with no results was a sign that "some entities just cannot be negotiated with." Mostly through military pressure and increased military hardware from the US most security indicators improved, showing a steep decrease in reported kidnappings (from 3,700 in the year 2000 to 172 in 2009 (Jan.-Oct.)) and intentional homicides (from 28,837 in 2002 to 15,817 in

2009 according to police). Guerrillas have been reduced from 16,900 insurgents to 8,900 insurgents.

While some in the UN argue Colombia is violating human rights to achieve peace, most do not argue that increased military pressure has had considerable improvements that have favored economic growth and tourism. The 2006–2007 Colombian parapolitics scandal emerged from the revelations and judicial implications of past and present links between paramilitary groups, mainly the AUC, and some government officials and many politicians, most of them allied to the governing administration.

Government

The government of Colombia takes place within the framework of a presidential representative democratic republic as established in the Constitution of 1991. In accordance with the principle of separation of powers, government is divided into three branches: the executive branch, the legislative branch and the judicial branch.

The head of the executive branch is the President of Colombia who serves as both head of state and head of government, followed by the Vice President and the Council of Ministers. The president is elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms and is currently limited to a maximum of two such terms (increased from one in 2005). At the provincial level executive power is vested in department governors, municipal mayors and local administrators for smaller administrative subdivisions, such as *corregidores* for *corregimientos*.

The legislative branch of government is composed by the Senate and the House of Representatives. The 102-seat Senate is elected nationally and the Representatives are elected by every region and minority groups. Members of both houses are elected two months before the president, also by popular vote and to serve four-year terms. At the provincial level the legislative branch is

represented by department assemblies and municipal councils. All regional elections are held one year and five months after the presidential election.

The judicial branch is headed by the Supreme Court, consisting of 23 judges divided into three chambers (Penal, Civil and Agrarian, and Labour). The judicial branch also includes the Council of State, which has special responsibility for administrative law and also provides legal advice to the executive, the Constitutional Court, responsible for assuring the integrity of the Colombian constitution, and the Superior Council of Judicature, responsible for auditing the judicial branch. Colombia operates a system of civil law, which since 2005 has been applied through an adversarial system.

Administrative divisions

	Department	Capital city		Department	Capital city
1	**Amazonas**	Leticia	18	**La Guajira**	Riohacha
2	**Antioquia**	Medellín	19	**Magdalena**	Santa Marta
3	**Arauca**	Arauca	20	**Meta**	Villavicencio
4	**Atlántico**	Barranquilla	21	**Nariño**	Pasto
5	**Bolívar**	Cartagena	22	**North Santander**	Cúcuta

6	**Boyacá**	Tunja	23	**Putumayo**	Mocoa
7	**Caldas**	Manizales	24	**Quindío**	Armenia
8	**Caquetá**	Florencia	25	**Risaralda**	Pereira
9	**Casanare**	Yopal	26	**San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina**	San Andrés
10	**Cauca**	Popayán	27	**Santander**	Bucaramanga
11	**Cesar**	Valledupar	28	**Sucre**	Sincelejo
12	**Chocó**	Quibdó	29	**Tolima**	Ibagué
13	**Córdoba**	Montería	30	**Valle del Cauca**	Cali
14	**Cundinamarca**	Bogotá	31	**Vaupés**	Mitú
15	**Guainía**	Inírida	32	**Vichada**	Puerto Carreño
16	**Guaviare**	San José del Guaviare	33	**Capital District**	Bogotá
17	**Huila**	Neiva			

Colombia is divided into 32 departments and one capital district, which is treated as a department (Bogotá also serves as the capital of the department of Cundinamarca). Departments are subdivided into municipalities, each of which is assigned a municipal seat, and municipalities are in turn subdivided into *corregimientos*. Each department has a local government with a governor and assembly directly elected to four-year terms. Each municipality is headed by a mayor and council, and each *corregimiento* by an elected *corregidor*, or local leader.

In addition to the capital nine other cities have been designated districts (in effect special municipalities), on the basis of special distinguishing features. These are Barranquilla, Cartagena, Santa Marta, Cúcuta, Popayán, Tunja, Turbo, Buenaventura and Tumaco. Some departments have local administrative subdivisions, where towns have a large concentration of population and municipalities are near each other (for example in Antioquia and Cundinamarca). Where departments have a low population and there are security problems (for example Amazonas, Vaupés and Vichada), special administrative divisions are employed, such as "department *corregimientos*", which are a hybrid of a municipality and a *corregimiento*.

Elections in Colombia

Elections in Colombia is regulated and controlled by the National Electoral Council which also gives information on elections and election results in for the politics of Colombia.

Colombia elects on national level a head of state - the president - and a legislature. The president is elected for a four year term by the people. The *Congress'* (*Congreso*) has two chambers. The **Chamber of Representatives** (*Cámara de Representantes*) has 162 members, elected for a four year term by proportional representation. The **Senate of the Republic** (*Senado de la República*) has 102 members, elected for a four year term by proportional

representation. Colombia has a two-party system, which means that there are two dominant political parties, a situation which has usually meant that it would be difficult for anybody to achieve significant electoral success under the banner of any other party. Dissidents from the two main parties usually have chances to win elections, if they are not confronted by strong challengers from their own former party (in which cases their traditional opponents tend to win). Recent electoral inroads made by a number of independent candidates towards the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, such as the elections of Antanas Mockus and later Luis Eduardo Garzón as mayors of Bogotá, amid a climate of perceived generalized dissatisfaction with the country's traditional political background, have tended to shows signs that past electoral trends may be weakening and the potential for diversity could be increasing.

2006 Presidential election

Summary of the 28 May 2006 Colombian presidential election results

Parties - Candidates	Votes	%
Álvaro Uribe Vélez - Colombia First (*Primero Colombia*)	7,363,421	62.35
Carlos Gaviria Díaz - Alternative Democratic Pole (*Polo Democrático Alternativo*)	2,609,412	22.04
Horacio Serpa Uribe - Colombian Liberal Party (*Partido Liberal Colombiano*)	1,401,173	11.84
Antanas Mockus Sivickas - Indigenous Social Alliance	146,540	1.24

Movement (*Movimiento Alianza Social Indígena*)		
Enrique Parejo González - National Democratic Reconstruction (*Reconstrucción Democrática Nacional*)	44,610	0.38
Álvaro Leyva Durán - National Movement for Reconciliation (*Movimiento Nacional de Reconciliación*)	22,039	0.19
Carlos Arturo Rincón Barreto - Colombian Community and Communal Political Movement (*Movimiento Politico Comunal y Comunidad Colombiano*)	20,477	0.17
Total votes for candidates	**11,607,672**	**98.05**
Blank votes	230,749	1.95
Total valid votes	11,838,421	100.00
Null votes	136,326	
Unmarked ballots	84,041	
Total votes cast (turnout 45.1%)	12,058,788	
Registered voters	26,731,700	

2006 Parliamentary election

Summary of the 12 March 2006 Chamber of Representatives of Colombia election results

Parties	Votes	%	Seats
Colombian Liberal Party (*Partido Liberal Colombiano*)	2,646,404	19.0	31
Social National Unity Party/Party of the U (*Partido Social de Unidad Nacional*, also known as *Partido de la U*)	1,453,353	16.7	28
Colombian Conservative Party (*Partido Conservador Colombiano*)	1,363,656	15.8	26
Radical Change (*Cambio Radical*)	932,207	10.7	18
Alternative Democratic Pole (*Polo Democrático Alternativo*)	708,664	8.2	14
Citizens' Convergence (*Convergencia Ciudadana*)	397,903	4.6	8

Wings - Team Colombia Movement (*Movimiento Alas Equipo Colombia*)	370,789	4.3	8
Mira Movement (*Movimiento Mira*)	233,920	2.7	5
Democratic Colombia Party (*Partido Colombia Demócrata*)	215,753	2.5	5
Liberal Opening (*Apertura Liberal*)	199,810	2.3	4
National Movement (*Movimiento Nacional*)	175,012	2.0	4
United People's Movement (*Movimiento Popular Unido*)	129,977	1.5	3
For the Country of our Dreams (*Por el País que soñamos*)	99,565	1.1	2
Regional Integration Movement (*Movimiento Integración Regional*)	91,547	1.1	2
Huila New and Liberalism (*Huila Nuevo y Liberalismo*)	80,688	0.9	2
Social Action Party (*Partido de Acción Social*)	52,340	0.6	0

Renovation Movement Labour Action (*Movimiento Renovación Acción Laboral*)	33,308	0.4	0
National Salvation Movement (*Movimiento de Salvación Nacional*)	28,975	0.3	0
People's Participation Movement (*Movimiento de Participación Popular*)	18,449	0.2	0
Progressive National Movement (*Movimiento Nacional Progresista*)	8,146	0.1	0
Total votes for parties (turnout 40.54%)	8,678,535	100.0	**162**
Sources: Adam Carr and Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil			

Summary of the 12 March 2006 Senate of Colombia election results

Parties	%	Seats
Social National Unity Party/Party of the U (*Partido Social de Unidad Nacional*, also known as *Partido de la U*)	17.49	20
Colombian Conservative Party (*Partido Conservador Colombiano*)	16.13	18

Party	Votes (%)	Seats
Colombian Liberal Party (*Partido Liberal Colombiano*)	15.52	18
Radical Change (*Cambio Radical*)	13.36	15
Alternative Democratic Pole (*Polo Democrático Alternativo*)	9.74	10
Citizens' Convergence (*Convergencia Ciudadana*)	6.25	7
Wings - Team Colombia Movement (*Movimiento Alas Equipo Colombia*)	4.68	5
Democratic Colombia Party (*Partido Colombia Demócratica*)	2.85	3
Mira Movement (*Movimiento Mira*)	2.35	2
Living Colombia Movement (*Movimiento Colombia Viva*)	2.46	2
Let the Moreno play movement (*Movimiento Dejen Jugar al Moreno*)	1.50	0
C4	0.88	0
Visionaries with Antanas Mockus (*Visionarios con Antanas Mockus*)	0.77	0

Comunitarian Participation Movement (*Movimiento de Participación Comunitaria*)	0.56	0
Communal and Comunitarian Movement of Colombia (*Movimiento Comunal y Comunitario de Colombia*)	0.42	0
Colombia Unite Movement (*Movimiento Únete Colombia*)	0.17	0
Independent Conservatism (*Conservatismo Independiente*)	0.14	0
National Democratic Reconstruction (*Reconstrucción Democrática Nacional*)	0.08	0
Progressive National Movement (*Movimiento Nacional Progresista*)	0.09	0
Indigenous Social Alliance (*Alianza Social Indigena*)		2
Total valid votes (turnout 40.54%)		**102**
Sources: Registraduria Nacional del Estado Civil, Caracol Radio		

e • d **2006 elections to the 2 seats reserved for Indigenous in the Senate of Colombia**

Parties		Votes	%	Seats
Indigenous Social Alliance (*Alianza Social Indigena*)	ASI	44,557	28.27	1
Indigenous Authorities of Colombia (*Autoridades Indigenas de Colombia*)	AICO	21,304	13.52	1
Total (turnout %)				
Source: Registraduria Nacional del Estado Civil. Note: As the blank vote percentage was 58.21% (more than 50%), this special election must be repeated, with the same parties but different candidates				

2010 Parliamentary election

Summary of the 14 March 2010 Chamber of Representatives of Colombia election results			
Parties	Votes	%	Seats
Party of the U (Partido de la U)	2,486,824	25.9	47
Colombian Conservative Party (Partido Conservador Colombiano)	2,057,849	21.4	38
Colombian Liberal Party (Partido Liberal Colombiano)	1,856,068	19.3	37

Radical Change (Cambio Radical)	743,758	7.7	15
National Integration Party (Partido de Integración Nacional)	714,476	7.4	12
Alternative Democratic Pole (Polo Democrático Alternativo)	563,555	5.9	4
Independent Absolute Renovation Movement (Movimiento Independiente de Renovación Absoluta)	284,244	3.0	3
Green Party (Partido Verde)	283,293	3.0	3
Indigenous Social Alliance (Alianza Social Indigena)	182,515	1.9	1
Liberal Alternative (Alternativa Liberal)	171,090	1.8	1
Liberal Opening (Apertura Liberal)	117,871	1.2	2
Regional Integration (Integración Regional)	5,045	0.1	1
Others	143,883	1.5	—
Total valid votes (turnout 43.8%)	9,610,471	100.0	164
Sources: Adam Carr's Election Archive			

Summary of the 14 March 2010 Senate of Colombia election results

Parties	Votes	%	Seats
Party of the U (Partido de la U)	2,804,123	25.8	28
Colombian Conservative Party (Partido Conservador Colombiano)	2,298,748	21.2	22
Colombian Liberal Party (Partido Liberal Colombiano)	1,763,908	16.3	17
National Integration Party (Partido de Integración Nacional)	907,468	8.4	9
Radical Change (Cambio Radical)	888,851	8.2	8

Alternative Democratic Pole (Polo Democrático Alternativo)	848,905	7.8	8
Green Party (Partido Verde)	531,293	4.9	5
Independent Absolute Renovation Movement (Movimiento Independiente de Renovación Absoluta)	298,862	2.8	2
Citizens' Compromise for Colombia (Compromiso Ciudadano por Colombia)	182,286	1.7	1
Others	326,763	3.0	—
Indigenous Social Alliance (Alianza Social Indigena)	—	—	1
Indigenous Authorities of Colombia (Autoridades Indígenas de Colombia)	—	—	1
Total valid votes (turnout 44.2%)	10,851,207	100.0	102
Sources: Adam Carr's Election Archive			

Seats reserved for indigenous			
Parties	Votes	%	Seats
Indigenous Social Alliance (Alianza Social Indigena)	26,428	25.1	1
Indigenous Authorities of Colombia (Autoridades Indigenas de Colombia)	23,809	22.6	1
National Integration Party (Partido de Integración Nacional)	20,887	19.9	—
Others	34,111	32.4	—
Total (turnout %)	105,235	100.0	2
Source: Adam Carr's Election Archive			

Colombian presidential election, 2010

30 May and 20 June 2010

Nominee	Juan Manuel Santos	Antanas Mockus
Party	Party of the U	Green Party
Home state	Bogotá	Bogotá
Running mate	Angelino Garzón	Sergio Fajardo
Popular vote	9.004.221	3.588.819
Percentage	69.05	27.52

Previous   President
Álvaro   Uribe
Colombia First

President-elect
Juan   Manuel   Santos
Party of the U

The Colombian presidential election of 2010 took place under a two-round system, with an initial vote held on May 30 and a second poll held three weeks later on June 20. A referendum proposal that would have allowed incumbent President Álvaro Uribe the opportunity to run for a third term was rejected by the Constitutional Court of Colombia in a 7–2 ruling on February 26, 2010. Because no candidate received a majority (more than one-half) of the votes cast in the May 30 poll, the candidates with the two highest vote totals, Juan Manuel Santos and Antanas Mockus, competed in a runoff election on June 20.

Candidates

Government group

In 2002, Álvaro Uribe of the Colombia First party was elected president with 53.1 per cent of the vote, breaking the two-party system that ruled the country since 1958, with the promise of ending the armed conflict that haunts the country since 1964 by strengthening the Armed Forces. In 2006, he managed to change the Constitution in order to run for a second consecutive term. After a practically mute campaign, Uribe won the election with 62.2 per cent of the vote, followed by Carlos Gaviria of the Alternative Democratic Pole with a distant 22 per cent.

In 2007, Luis Guillermo Giraldo, leader of the pro-Uribe Party of the U, announced he would create the "promoters' committee", a group charged with gathering signatures to call a referendum on whether Uribe should be allowed to run for a third term in office. In September 2009, Congress approved the referendum bill in a late-night voting boycotted by members of the opposition. On February 26, 2010, the Constitutional Court voted against the referendum bill. Immediately after the ruling, former defence minister Juan Manuel Santos confirmed that he would become a presidential candidate. Another Uribist candidate is Germán Vargas Lleras of the Radical Change party. Former Colombian ambassador to the United Kingdom, Noemí Sanín, and former agriculture minister Andrés Felipe Arias, two of the closest Uribe allies, were seeking nomination by the Conservative Party. Sanín was nominated.

Opposition group

Two of the opposition candidates are Rafael Pardo of Liberal Party and Gustavo Petro of the Alternative Democratic Pole. Álvaro Leyva Durán, a Uribe opponent, was seeking the presidential nomination by the Conservative Party.

On October 2, 2009, the Green Party was officially created. It nominated its presidential candidate on a primary ballot that took place on March 14, 2010, the same day as the legislative election. The contenders were three former Bogotá mayors: Enrique Peñalosa, Antanas Mockus, and Luis Eduardo Garzón. The Greens seek to be a moderate force in what they called "a polarized" political situation, calling themselves "Post-Uribists." Mockus was chosen as their candidate. Former Medellín mayor Sergio Fajardo joined him as his running mate

on 5 April 2010, after missing the requirements to become a presidential candidate himself.

Opinion polls

First Round

Date	Institute	Candidate											
		Rafael Pardo	Gustavo Petro	Germán Vargas Lleras	Sergio Fajardo	Juan Manuel Santos	Antanas Mockus	Noemí Sanín	Róbinson Devia	Jaime Araújo	Jairo Calderón	Undecided (Ns/Nr) V. None	S
March 24, 2010	Invamer Gallup	5.1%	6.3%	6.2%	6.1%	34.2%	10.4%	23.3%	0%	0%	0%	8.4%	[5]
March 26, 2010	Datexco	5.5%	7.1%	6.6%	4.4%	34.1%	8.9%	21.7%	0%	0.2%	0.1%	11.4%	[6]
March 27, 2010	Ipsos Napoleón Franco	4%	6%	8%	5%	36%	9%	17%	1%	0%	0%	14%	[7]
March 27, 2010	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	3.4%	3.6%	6.5%	3.6%	28.6%	11.3%	21.9%	0%	0%	0%	21.1%	[8]
April 8, 2010	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	5%	6%	3%	-	37%	22%	20%	0%	0%	0%	7%	[9]
April 9, 2010	Datexco	5.2%	3.1%	3%	-	29.5%	24.8%	16.4%	0%	0%	0%	17.2%	[1
April 15, 2010	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	4%	4%	2%	-	36%	29%	19%	0%	1%	0%	5%	[1
April 16,	Ipsos Napoleón	5%	4%	3%	-	30%	20%	12%	1%	5%	5%	15%	[1

Date	Pollster												
2010	Franco												
April 22, 2010	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	5%	5%	4%	-	35%	34%	12%	0%	1%	0%	3%	[1
April 26, 2010	Ipsos Napoleón Franco	3%	5%	3%	-	29%	38%	11%	0%	1%	0%	10%	[14
April 28, 2010	Invamer Gallup	5.7%	5.0%	3.6%	-	34.2%	31.6%	16.2%	0%	0.1%	0%	3.5%	[1
April 29, 2010	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	3%	5%	4%	-	34%	39%	11%	0%	0%	0%	4%	[1
April 30, 2010	Datexco	2.3%	2.9%	3.3%	-	26.7%	38.7%	9.8%	0%	0%	0%	16.3%	[1
May 6, 2010	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	3%	5%	5%	-	34%	38%	11%	0%	0%	0%	4%	[1
May 7, 2010	Datexco	1.4%	4.2%	3.1%	-	25.2%	37.7%	6.7%	0%	0%	0%	21.7%	[1
May 9, 2010	Ipsos Napoleón Franco	4%	4%	3%	-	35%	34%	8%	0%	0%	0%	12%	[2
May 13, 2010	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	3%	4%	4%	-	38%	36%	9%	0%	0%	0%	6%	[2
May 14, 2010	Datexco	3.1%	7.5%	4.3%	-	29.3%	32.8%	5.6%	0%	0.4%	0%	13.8%	[2

Date	Institute												Source
May 19, 2010	Invamer Gallup	3.8%	7.3%	3.8%	-	37.5%	35.4%	8.8%	0.1%	0.2%	0%	3.1%	[2...]
May 20, 2010	University of Medellin	2.4%	5.5%	3.6%	-	32.9%	37.4%	8.1%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	6.9%	[2...]
May 20, 2010	Centro Nacional De Consultoría	4%	5%	4%	-	39%	34%	9%	0%	0%	0%	4%	[2...]
May 21, 2010	Datexco	2%	5%	3%	-	35%	34%	9%	0%	0%	0%	12%	[2...]
May 22, 2010	Ipsos Napoleón Franco	3%	6%	5%	-	34%	32%	6%	0%	0%	0%	14%	[2...]

[edit] Second Round: Mockus vs. Santos

Date	Institute	Candidate		Undecided (Ns/Nr) V. None	Source
		Juan Manuel Santos	Antanas Mockus		
April 15, 2010	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	49%	44%	7%	[28]
April 16, 2010	Ipsos Napoleón Franco	45%	37%	18%	[12]
April 22, 2010	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	44%	50%	6%	[13]
April 26, 2010	Ipsos Napoleón Franco	37%	50%	13%	[14]
April 28, 2010	Invamer Gallup	42.2%	47.9%	9.9%	[15]
April 29, 2010	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	42%	53%	5%	[16]
April 30, 2010	Datexco	29%	41.5%	29.5%	[17]
May 6, 2010	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	43%	50%	7%	[18]
May 7, 2010	Datexco	30.5%	52%	17.5%	[19]
May 9, 2010	Ipsos Napoleón Franco	41%	48%	11%	[20]
May 13, 2010	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	47%	47%	6%	[21]
May 14, 2010	Datexco	33.6%	47.9%	17.5%	[22]
May 19, 2010	Invamer Gallup	42.2%	48.5%	9.3%	[29]

May 20, 2010	University of Medellin	36%	41.4%	22.6%	[30]
May 20, 2010	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	47%	46%	7%	[31]
May 21, 2010	Datexco	44%	45%	11%	[32]
May 22, 2010	Ipsos Napoleón Franco	40%	45%	15%	[33]
June 3, 2010	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	61.6%	29.8%	5.8%	[34]

Electoral results

On polling day seven Colombian security services personnel were killed and eight were missing; parallels were drawn with FARC attacks and Santos' tenure as Defense Minister.

Results

No candidate received an outright majority in the first round vote held on May 30. Santos and Mockus faced one another in the runoff election on 20th June, leading to the election of Juan Manuel Santos as the next Colombian President.

Santos achieved a landslide victory, with 69 per cent of the votes. Mockus got 27.51 per cent of votes. This was the largest margin of victory for a president in the democratic period of Colombia's history. Santos won 32 of the country's 33 electoral districts. His allies have an overwhelming majority in the Colombian Congress. Santos vowed to continue his predecessor's hardline stance against the country's Marxist rebels. He paraphrased Isaac Newton – "If we have come far it's because we are standing on the shoulders of giants" – and said he would rid Colombia of what he described as the "nightmare of violence".

The United States said it was "pleased" with the election of Santos and praised the "spirited debate" before the runoff and Colombia's "longstanding commitment to democratic principles".

Summary of the 30 May 2010 and 20 June 2010 Colombian presidential election results				
Candidates – Parties	First round		Second round	
	Votes	%	Votes	%

Candidate	Votes	%	Votes	%
Juan Manuel Santos – Party of the U (Partido de «la U»)	6,802,043	46.68	9,004,221	69.1
Antanas Mockus – Green Party (Partido Verde)	3,134,222	21.51	3,588,819	27.5
Germán Vargas Lleras – Radical Change (Cambio Radical)	1,473,627	10.11		
Gustavo Petro – Alternative Democratic Pole (Polo Democrático Alternativo)	1,331,267	9.14		
Noemí Sanín – Colombian Conservative Party (Partido Conservador Colombiano)	893,819	6.13		
Rafael Pardo – Colombian Liberal Party (Partido Liberal Colombiano)	638,302	4.38		
Róbinson Devia – Voice of Conscience Movement (Movimiento la Voz de la Consciencia)	31,338	0.22		
Jairo Calderón – Liberal Opening (Movimiento Apertura Liberal)	29,151	0.20		
Jaime Araújo – Afro-Colombian Social Alliance (Alianza Social Afrocolombiano)	14,847	0.10		
Total votes for candidates	14,348,616	98.46		
Blank votes	223,977	1.54		
Total valid votes	14,572,593	100.00		
Null votes	170,874			
Unmarked ballots	37,553			
Total votes cast	14,781,020			
Source: Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil				

ELECTION ANALYSIS

The runoff ballot in the Colombian presidential election was held on Sunday, June 20. The first round, held on May 29, placed former Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos far ahead of former Bogota mayor Antanas Mockus. The first round had come as a shocker to many observers and pollsters who had all placed their bets on Mockus, who had enjoyed a upsurge in polls during the campaign and was even the favourite to win the presidency. Santos, the candidate of retiring President Álvaro Uribe, and the candidate most likely to continue Uribe's very popular policy (both at home and in Washington) of 'democratic security', placed first with a surprisingly strong 46.6% while Mockus badly trailed with a mere 21.5%, much lower than the 35% results polls had predicted for him just days before the May 29 ballot. A lot of theories have been advanced to explain Mockus' counter-performance on May 29, but the most likely one seems to be a series of dangerous gaffes made by Mockus including his avowed "admiration" for Chavez or his statement that he would consider extraditing Santos to face trial in Ecuador in the Ecuadorian case against Colombia's military attacks on a FARC base in Ecuador which killed high-ranking FARC leader Raul Reyes. Mockus' flamboyant and clownish personality could also have rebutted late deciders and even likely voters might have backed off from placing the X next to the Green Party's candidate in the secrecy of the voting booth.

Quite obviously, as I said in my post covering the first round, Mockus was dead on arrival. Any quixotic hope that he might have rallied considerably amount of voters and made the race close were quashed by Mockus' refusal to enter into any political deals with Colombia's traditional parties, most notably the opposition Liberal Party (of which Uribe and Santos are former members of) or the left-wing PDA, which Mockus said was too close to the FARC for comfort. The Liberals, one of Colombia's oldest parties (with the pro-Uribe Conservatives) and a patronage machine more than a party, quickly dropped their opposition banner

and rallied Santos. Their candidate's poor showing (4.38%) in the first round likely made the Liberals prone to ally with the likely winner, though Santos' former affiliation with the party and Mockus' anti-politician rhetoric didn't make them fond of his style. Two other *uribista* candidates, Germán Vargas Lleras of the Radical Change party and Conservative Noemí Sanín also quickly endorsed Santos. Lleras had won a surprising 10.1% while Sanín did very badly, winning only 6.1%. Here are the results (blank, null and unmarked votes are counted in the official tally):

Juan	Manuel	Santos	(Party	of	the	U)	69.05%
Antanas		Mockus		(Green)			27.52%
Blank			votes				3.41%
Null			votes				1.49%
Unmarked votes 0.74%							

turnout 44.48%

Colombia 2010

	>0%	>10%	>20%	>30%	>40%	>50%	>60%	>70%	>80%	>90%
Santos (U)										
Mockus (V)										
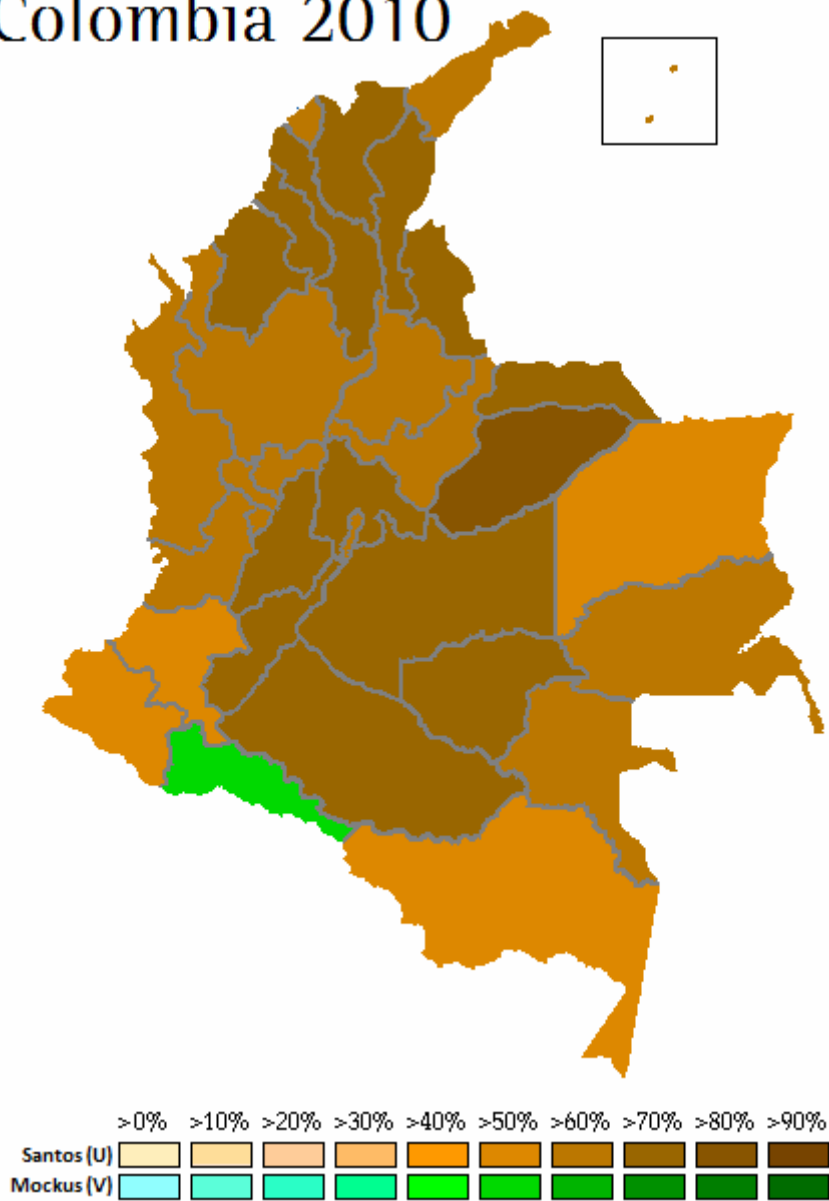
The runoff was indeed just a formality for Santos. Mockus rallied barely any additional voters, and they likely came mostly from Gustavo Petro's voters, but then again, he was far from getting all of Petro's 9%. His reluctance to accept the PDA as an ally further hurt his chances of even breaking the 30% line. Santos, on the other hand, rallied the vast majority of the remaining *uribista* voters – despite the lukewarm relations between Santos' party and Noemí Sanín's maverick status. Santos also benefited from a series of radio messages by President Uribe, who, officially barred from endorsing a candidate, gave his

unofficial backing to Santos. Uribe retains a high approval rating in Colombia as he leaves office. Turnout fell a bit, from around 49% in the first round, likely a result of the FIFA World Cup taking up a lot of popular attention in South America, even though Colombia is not qualified.

Santos' strongest showings came in areas with strong FARC activity, especially in the regions to the southeast and northeast of Bogota. Only the department of Putumayo, a rather isolated department out in the Amazonian rainforest, did not vote for Santos in either the first round or the runoff. I don't know what makes Putumayo so special – it did vote for Uribe by small margins in both 2002 and 2006 after all, but if I remember correctly these areas, rather on the outskirts of FARC activity, saw negotiations between the FARC and the government prior to Uribe's election in 2002.

Álvaro Uribe's retirement from the Presidency is a major hallmark in this election which did not see the change many had hoped for, but Uribe has marked Colombian and South American politics since 2002 in a way similar to Chavez or Lula, the latter of which is also a goner in October. Yet, Uribe's 'democratic security' policy will continue almost unchanged under Santos, the man who as defense minister between 2006 and 2009 coordinated major actions such as the killing of Raul Reyes or the liberation of high-profile FARC hostage Ingrid Betancourt (but also a paramilitary scandal and other defense scandals). Santos' victory is also a victory for Washington's Latin American policy, while a President Mockus might have proved a thorn in Washington's side. Santos, who comes from a wealthy family of newspaper magnates and whose great-uncle was President between 1938 and 1942, is not as much of a hard-liner as he is made out to me. He is in fact rather pragmatic, having supported negotiations with the FARCs until 2002 (though he staunchly opposes such talks nowadays) and having been in the cabinets of both liberal and conservative administrations.

In a grateful and unifying victory speech, Santos, hammered that it was the hour of national unity and national dialogue between Colombians. He also thanked

Mockus and said that he too would fight for transparency and legality. Santos has a crushing mandate from voters and a strong majority in Congress, while Mockus and the Green Party could emerge as the opposition as he attempts to regain some of the momentum and enthusiasm he had generated early in the campaign.