

E-10 2nd TERM COUNTRY PROFILES

BELGIUM

General Information

<i>Official Name:</i>	Kingdom of Belgium
<i>Capital:</i>	Brussels
<i>Population:</i>	10,403, 951
<i>Major Languages:</i>	Dutch, French, and German
<i>Major Religions:</i>	Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Anglican, Greek, Russian Orthodox, and Secularism
<i>Regional/Economic Organizational Membership:</i>	ACCT, ADB, AfDB, Australia Group, Benelux, BIS, CE, CERN, EAPC, EBRD, EIB, EMU, ESA, EU, FAO, G-9, G-10, IADB, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICCt, ICRM, IDA, IEA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, IMSO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO, ITSO, ITU, ITUC, MIGA, NATO, NEA, NSG, OAS, OECD, OIF, OPCW, OSCE, Paris Club, PCA, Schengen Convention, SECI, UN, UNSC, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNIFIL, UNRWA, UNTSO, UPU, WADB, WCL, WCO, WEU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO, and the ZC, etc.

Governmental System

On October 4, 1830 Belgium declared independence from the Netherlands during the Belgian Revolution. The 1830 revolution led the establishment of an independent, Catholic and neutral Belgium under a provisional government and national congress. Since the installation of Leopold I as king on 21 July 1831 (now a national holiday), Belgium has been a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. Initially, an oligarchy ruled mainly by the Catholic party and the Liberals, the country evolved towards universal suffrage by World War II with the rise of the Labor Party and trade unions.

Today, Belgium still remains a federal parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy. Due to a constitutional revision in 1993 that furthered devolution into a federal state, there are now three levels of government- federal, regional, and linguistic community- each with a complex division of responsibilities. There are three regions and ten provinces making up the federal and regional levels of government:

Regions: Brussels, Flanders, Wallonia

Provinces: in Flanders—Antwerpen, Limburg, Oost-Vlaanderen, Vlaams-Brabant, West-

Vlaanderen, and in Wallonia—Brabant Wallon, Hainaut, Liege, Luxembourg, Namur

The separation of government into linguistic communities has caused some tension amongst Dutch-speaking and francophone areas. Minorities within these communities feel disenfranchised from the government. The normal distinction of party preference coupled with a language divide has created tension on the national level. This accounts for the difficulty of forming a coalition in the 2007 elections and the call from some to separate the two linguistic areas into separate countries.

King Albert II has been the Chief of State since 9 August 1993. The heir apparent is Prince Phillippe, son of the current monarch. The head of Government is Prime Minister Yves Leterme who took office 20 March 2008. He tendered his resignation to King Albert II in July of the same year, because of failure to meet a self imposed deadline to devolve powers further into the linguistic communities through implementation of constitutional reform. The King rejected Leterme's resignation and instead appointed a commission of representatives from the linguistic communities to advise on how to issue a reform process.

Foreign Policy

Belgium's small size and catastrophic losses in the two World Wars have led it to pursue membership in a range of international organizations aimed at preserving world peace and building prosperity. Belgium has proved a strong member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and an enthusiastic supporter of a long term EU effort to build not only an integrated economy but ultimately a joint foreign and defense policy with other member states.

Former Prime Minister, Verhofstadt, was an advocate of the government's effort to join the European Monetary Union (EMU), which occurred on 1 January 1999. In 2002, Belgium was among the twelve European nations that converted to the Euro.

Issues Summary

Issue 1: Iran → Belgium has numerous economic interests in Iran including cooperation in the banking and energy sectors. Belgium is in support of a peaceful Iranian nuclear energy program. However when Iran refused to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency, Belgium supported the implementation of economic sanctions. Belgium is also concerned with Iran's violations of human rights.

Issue2: Democratic Republic of the Congo → Being a former Belgian colony, the DRC has remained associated with its former colonizer. The DRC's economy is closely tied with that of Belgium. One-third of all exports go to Belgium, which in turn contributes 12% of the DRC's imports. The Belgian Foreign Minister recently expressed concern over the increased military activity in the eastern DRC and supported the Security Council's recent extension of the arms embargo on the country. Belgium will continue to work with the DRC and its neighbors to try to bring about a peaceful resolution.

Issue 3: Sudan → Belgium was in full support of Security Council Resolution 1769 which,

among other things, created an African Union/United Nations Hybrid operation in Darfur, and set up a framework for political remediation of the conflict. Belgium also supports increased aid for the African Union's Mission in Sudan.

Issue 4: Terrorism → Belgium recognizes the innumerable challenges faced by nations in combating modern international terrorism. Belgium believes that these challenges are too great for any one nation to deal with on its own and therefore requires an international response. Belgium has played an active role at the European and International organizations such as the UN, EU, and NATO must also get involved in the war on terrorism

Relationship with the United Nations

As one of the original members of the United Nations, Belgium has always been a strong believer and supporter of the UN. For the year 2005, Belgium contributed over \$20 million dollars to the United Nations. This equates to 1.069% of the entire UN general budget for 2005, compared to the US contribution of around 22%. However, when one considers the contributions in relation to GDP, one finds that Belgium contributed 0.006% of its GDP, compared to only 0.003% for the United States. This data shows that Belgium is easily contributing its "fair share" of financial support to the United Nations. As of July 2007, Belgium has 357 personnel serving in various peace keeping operations around the globe. Although this number is slightly higher than that of the United States and Russia, it is far less than number one contributor, Pakistan, having nearly 11, 000 men serving. It is Belgium's desire to contribute more in the area of diplomatic mediation rather than in military personnel.

Relations with United Nations Security Council Members

European Union and United States: Belgium has stated that they will be viewing Security Council views from a European as well as an international perspective. As a member of the European Union, Belgium will generally follow the lead of fellow EU members such as France, Germany, and to a lesser extent, the U.K. As a member of NATO, headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, Belgium will also work closely with members of the alliance when dealing with international security threats. This includes most members of the EU and the United States.