

German-speaking in Belgium and Italy: two different autonomy arrangements

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Abstract: This contribution demonstrates how different regional, national and international contextual conditions of the German-speaking minorities in Belgium and in Italy have led to different autonomy arrangements. The two autonomy arrangements are accommodated in the state structure in different ways as a result of different balances between the centrifugal capacities of the concerning German-speaking minority and the centripetal capacities of the concerning state. In this respect, also the roles of Austria or Germany have had different impacts. Despite considerable differences in the autonomy arrangements, the two cases have in common that a combination of territorial and non-territorial principles were applied. Especially in the multi-ethnic homeland of the German-speaking in Italy, a combination of territorial and non-territorial elements seems to be adequate. Especially for non-territorial elements of autonomy the presence of a German-speaking neighbour country has been an important enabling condition.

Key words: Ethnicity, Autonomy, Germans, Belgium, Italy.

1 Introduction

The states of Belgium and Italy both have a German-speaking regional minority within their borders. In Belgium as well as in Italy these minorities enjoy considerable political independence. The political arrangements for the German-speaking populations in the two countries have been realised during the past few decades. In both cases, the entire process of implementation of the autonomy arrangements has been going on up to the 1990s. Nevertheless, there are considerable differences concerning the arrangements for the German-speaking in Belgium and for the German-speaking in Italy. This also applies for the way the arrangements have been arrived at. This contribution aims to demonstrate from a comparative perspective how differing regional, national and international conditions of the two minorities have led to differing autonomy arrangements. In the following part of this introduction we will first deal with preliminary considerations. In the next two sections we will present the cases of German-speaking minorities. Finally, we draw some conclusions.

Development toward autonomy for the two German-speaking minorities are typical for a general trend in many West-European countries. During the past century, the function of states as containers of national unity with a legitimate aim for cultural and administrative unification and homogenisation, has been more and more substituted by the function as container of a welfare state with democratic institutions and with general suffrage of a well educated population (Taylor 1994). In democratic systems, means to

enforce unity are restricted and electoral capacities have become an important resource for political power and for legitimacy of regional demands.

In many instances, regional cultural distinctiveness is linked up with the complex phenomenon of ethnonational assertiveness and ethnonational mobilisation. Manifestations of ethnonationalism cannot simply be explained as defensive reactions upon tendencies of erasure of a distinct regional culture by diffusion of a dominant national culture (Nielsen 1985, Ragin 1979, Dostál 1999). The aims and demands of culturally distinct regional populations do often encompass a wider range of subjects than cultural ones, and often include regional control of economic and welfare policies. Moreover, regional demands can also include guaranteed access to higher centres of power (Mikesell and Murphy 1991). There are good reasons to consider ethnonational demands as expressions of rational interests (Hechter 1987), however in quite a number of cases it is unrealistic to ignore experiences and traumas from the past.

When pressures of ethnonational assertiveness were high, national authorities in democratic states have made concessions in order to accommodate demands. The outcome depends on the balance between centripetal capacities of the state and centrifugal capacities of the regional minority. At the regional level, conditions such as population size, organisational density, cultural solidity and the presence of different ethnic groups in the regional population are important enabling or constraining resources for ethnonational mobilisation and bargaining power (Nielsen 1985). Regional context is crucial but it is clear that at the other side of the balance, national conditions such as the constitutional state structure, political majorities and the presence of other regional movements are relevant conditions (Rudolph and Thomson 1989). Moreover there can also be a relevant international context, for example when regional minorities share ethnic solidarity with the national majority of a neighbour state, as is the case for the German-speaking in Belgium vis á vis Germany and for the German-speaking in Italy vis á vis Austria. Depending on the international situation the neighbour state can be a stimulant for ethnonational mobilisation, and it can be prepared to give significant support to the minority's demands in the international arena.

However, the balance of centripetal and centrifugal capacities is only one source of conditions that affect autonomy arrangements. In the framework of the autonomy a set of political, administrative, institutional and organisational arrangements are made. In order to function, the whole set and its constituent elements should be adapted to the situational conditions and possibilities. For the purpose of our comparison of the autonomies of the two German-speaking minorities, we should mention two potential situational complications. First, there can be the complication of incongruence between the regional ethnic group concerned and the entire population on the territory of their homeland. In these cases non-territorial arrangements can be applied, that are based on separate autonomy for ethnic groups in the territorial population (McRae 1975, Lapidoth 1996). However, this type of arrangements can only be used for a limited range of subjects, such as education and culture. For other subjects such as regional development and economy, territorial arrangements will be necessary. Second, there is the complication of the small size (Markusse 1996). When regional ethnic minorities are small, there is great chance that necessary carrying capacities of population for some crucial elements in the set of the autonomy arrangement, such as autonomous cultural and educational institutions,

cannot be met. Therefore, co-operation with others in the same or in larger territorial frameworks will be necessary. Also in this respect the neighbourhood of a German-speaking country with a German cultural infrastructure is potentially important for the German-speaking in Belgium as well as for the German-speaking in Italy.

2 The German-speaking in Belgium

The German-speaking community in Belgium counts 70,000 people, less than one percent of the Belgian population. The German-speaking live in nine municipalities near the eastern border with Germany (see Figure 1). This relatively small territory of 845 km², is divided in two separate parts. The northern part is very close to the German city of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) that has 250,000 inhabitants. The territory belonged to the Habsburg Austrian Netherlands which approximately coincided with the present state of Belgium. After the Vienna Congress in 1815 they became part of Prussia and later of Germany. In 1920 after the First World War they were ceded to Belgium.

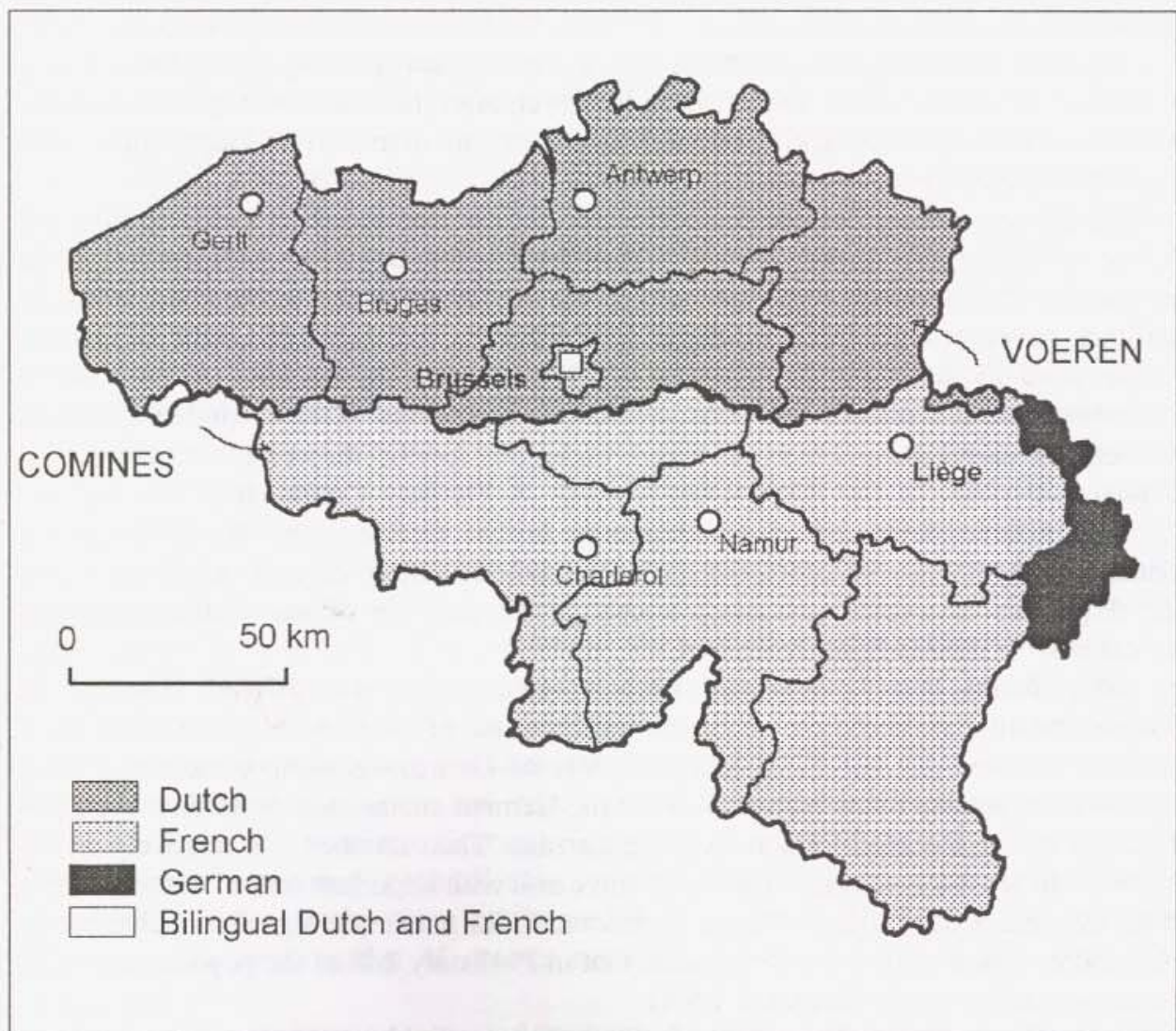


Figure 1 Language territories in Belgium

In the annexed territory was considerable support for return to Germany during the period between the two World Wars. At elections held in 1929, 1936 and 1939, about half of the electorate voted for pro-German formations (Verdoodt 1968, Rosensträter 1985). However, the Second World War has caused drastic changes in the attitude toward Germany. Since the defeat of the Third Reich the German-speaking have definitively chosen for Belgium (Eisermann and Zeh 1980). During the German occupation, the German-speaking territory was separated from Belgium and reincorporated in Germany. This implied that the inhabitants became German citizens with all rights and duties thereof, including military service. Numerous men died, disappeared or were wounded (Jenniges 1998). Moreover, the burden of the war included severe damages in the southern part of the German-speaking area.

Nevertheless, in the first years after the war relations with Belgian authorities were cumbersome. After 1945 the German-speaking were mistrusted by their fellow Belgians and many were accused of collaboration with the enemy, confronted with sanctions, and denied all kinds of rights. The German-speaking were grieved and responded by asserting their loyalty to Belgium. Indeed, it can be doubted that a very great number of people in the area did support the German nazi-regime because a relatively small number of accusations could be justified in court (Jenniges 1998). These disappointments have been an important source of dissatisfactions among the German-speaking during the first few decades after World War II (Dries 1994). However, after the traumatic experiences under German rule and the new reality of a defeated Germany there was no longer support for irredentist aspirations.

The opinion among Belgian authorities that the German-speaking had been disloyal, led to a temporarily abandonment of their benevolent linguistic policies. After the annexation Belgian authorities did not attempt to Frenchify the territory. In 1920 the military governor introduced bilingual administration, schools and courts of justice. There were facilities for the training of German-speaking teachers, even in some educational centres outside the German-speaking area. Only in the secondary grammar schools the dominating language was French, but in this respect the situation was comparable with the Dutch-speaking territory of Flanders (Verdoodt 1968). Belgian authorities have never aimed at integration of the German-speaking territories by demographic and social-economic policies, and demographic and social-economic developments have never seriously menaced the position of the German-speaking community in their Belgian homeland.

After World War II however, French became the only official language in administration and education. Also, the informal use of German in public offices and schools was severely handicapped by the loss of German-speaking personnel. Public servants and teachers who had worked for the German enemy state were dismissed and replaced by unsuspected French-speaking citizens. Their number was relatively small, because the territory was not an administrative unit with important central administrative functions and a capital city. Hence, replacement did not imply significant changes in population composition. It was estimated that in 1947 only 2 % of the population was of French-speaking origin (Verdoodt 1968).

Gradually the use of German was facilitated again, and by 1960 the old institutional position of the German language in the area was more or less restored (Verdoodt 1968,

Rosensträter 1985). In 1963 German was recognised as one of the three official languages in Belgium. Nevertheless, the deliberate neglect of recognition and support for the German language in the period after the war has contributed to dissatisfactions among the German-speaking. The various grievances engendered by the post-World War II policies of the Belgian authorities did stimulate emerging ethnic awareness and assertiveness among German-speaking Belgians, that was not decreasing after 1960.

Cultural self-confidence and ethnonational assertiveness among the German-speaking in Belgium is manifested in several ways. In the 1960s a negative attitude toward the Belgian state was expressed by high percentages of blanc votes at parliamentary elections (Dries 1994). There are many associations and organisations aiming at the preservation of local German culture in the territory (Verdoodt 1968, Rosensträter 1985). Most of these have no political ambitions and cannot be considered as platforms of action, opposition or pressure, but there are some exceptions. In the 1960s and 1970s more radical groups of intellectuals warned vigorously against perceived Frenchification of the German-speaking minority by multilingual schools. These people sent their children to German schools in Aachen. Apparently not all intellectuals did support these ideas because the groups were countered by a movement advocating bilingualism (Rosensträter 1985, interview Derwahl). In 1972, a group of former christian democrat and liberal politicians established a regional ethnic political party, Partei der Deutschsprachigen Belgier (PDB) (Rosensträter 1985, interview Derwahl). The PDB program called for enforcement of the German language in the educational system and in public administration. Moreover, it claimed for detachment of the German-speaking homeland from the province of Liège, and the Walloon federal region, in order to realise a wide-ranging autonomy in the anticipated Belgian federal state. It also claimed for a separate electoral district for the German-speaking territory, in order to realise guaranteed seats in the two chambers of the Belgian national parliament.

As a result of the gradual development of federal state structures, an elected German cultural council was established in 1973 that was to be succeeded by a German-speaking community council and executive in 1980. The PDB has mobilised considerable electoral support, but never had a majority in the German cultural council and the German-speaking community council. In 1978 it had 30 % of the votes, but since then there was a gradual decline to less than 15 % in 1995 (Rosensträter 1985, RDG). These results demonstrate that majority of German-speaking Belgians do not support relatively radical ethnonationalist demands. The autonomy for the German-speaking Belgians has considerably progressed during the past two decades, but even now it does not meet the radical proposals of the PDB. The former Belgium-wide and now Walloon-wide political parties of christian democrats, social democrats and liberals, that enjoy majority of the votes in the area, became more and more inclined to support moderate autonomist aims (Rosensträter 1985, interview Cremer). Changing attitudes of the big political parties were only partly result of political developments in the German-speaking area. In the same period these parties were confronted with successes of Flemish, Brussels and Walloon autonomist parties of greater numerical importance than the small PDB (Roessingh 1996).

Hence, the autonomous position of the German-speaking in the Belgian state is not so much resulting from their own ethnonational mobilisation and political capabilities

(interview Cremer). The present structure of the Belgian federal state, including the autonomy arrangement for the German-speaking, is result of increasing tensions between the two greater linguistic groups in Belgium of Flemish/Dutch-speaking and French-speaking.

In the past few decades Belgium has been transformed from a unitary state into a federation (see Figure 1) (Murphy 1988, Witte 1992, Roessingh 1996, Falter 1998). In 1993 federalism was explicitly adopted in the constitution, which states that Belgium is a federal state, composed of communities and regions (art.1). The constitution also mentions four language areas: the Dutch language area, the French language area, the bilingual area of Brussels-Capital and the German language area (art.4). Strict requirements for adaptations of borders of the language areas make changes of their territorial delimitation in fact impossible. A number of municipalities with linguistic minorities are designated to offer administrative and educational facilities in a second language. All municipalities in the German language area have facilities in French. In a number of adjacent municipalities in the French language area are facilities in German (Jenniges 1998).

In the complicated *sui generis* and asymmetrical federal model (Witte 1992), there are two complementary sub-national tiers of government which do not territorially overlap. There are three regions: the Flemish region (the Dutch language area), the Walloon region (the French language area plus the German language area) and the Brussels region (art.3) with competencies for economic matters, the environment, housing, physical planning and provincial and municipal administration. There are also three communities: the Flemish community, the French community and the German-speaking community (art. 2) with competencies for culture, education and so-called person related matters which are implemented as parts of health policies and social policies. The reference to person related matters does suggest a non-territorial character of the communities, but this only applies for the competencies of the French community and the Flemish community in bilingual Brussels. Apart from Brussels, the competencies of the French community are restricted to the French language area and the competencies of the Flemish community are restricted to the Dutch language area. In the same way, competencies of the German-speaking community are only exercised in the German language area of the nine municipalities.

The regions and communities can mutually agree to combine and exchange competencies (art.135–140). In the asymmetrical federal structure the executives of the Flemish region and the Flemish community are combined into one 'Flemish' government which is competent in Brussels for Flemish community matters. In the southern part of the country, merging of regional and community bodies would be much more complicated (Roessingh 1996). As a consequence, there are separate councils and executives for the Walloon region and the French and German-speaking communities.

The Belgian federation resulted from a long historical path of conflicts and compromises in the national parliament and coalition governments. In 1963 Dutch-speaking and French-speaking politicians agreed on fixation of the language borders (Murphy 1988). The 1970 constitutional reforms granted some cultural autonomy to Flemish and French cultural councils that were constituted by the Dutch speaking and the French speaking members of the national parliament. Likewise, the regions were formed

as a response to diverging economic interests between Wallonia and Flanders. Herewith, the dual character of the future Belgian federal system was established. For the Flemish it was unacceptable to include culture in the competencies of the regions. The Dutch speaking minority in the bilingual region of Brussels would not be strong enough to survive (Witte 1992). The present 'Flemish' government has even chosen Brussels as seat to underline the Flemish presence there. The establishment of Flemish and French cultural councils and communities had important consequences for the German-speaking, because it necessitated an equivalent provision for them. In 1973 a directly elected German cultural council was established that was to become a German-speaking community in the Belgian federation.

In the federal system, the German-speaking community is led by an executive of 3 ministers and a parliamentary council of 25 directly elected members (who do this work mostly in the evenings). The council has legislative and executive competencies for cultural affairs, education and person related matters. In 1997 the budget was 4,500 million Belgian Francs (eq. 110 million American Dollars).

As a part of a federation the extend of independence of the community government is far-reaching. Decrees of the German-speaking community council cannot be overruled by federal laws. And although the practical consequences are vague, residual competencies on the subjects of its responsibilities are formally reserved for the German-speaking community. Moreover, the German-speaking community is allowed to independently maintain international relations and to conclude foreign treaties concerning matters for which it is responsible (Witte 1992, RDG). This competence of the Belgian communities and regions strikingly illustrates the crucial role of the complicated political struggles between the two larger ethnic groups in Belgium for the autonomy of the German-speaking. It was part of a package deal between Walloon and Flemish political parties after a conflict about export licenses for the Walloon weapon industry (Falter 1998).

The range of the competencies for the German-speaking community is less far-reaching. The cultural affairs include among other things the protection of language and cultural heritage, German radio and TV, support for the German press and surprisingly also tourism. The person related matters are some social welfare tasks and the provision of hospitals and homes for the elderly. Two thirds of the German-speaking community's budget is spent on education. This most important competence has been transferred to the communities only recently in the beginning of the 1990s. The competencies for the schools in the territory are wide-ranging including the curricula, teachers salaries and the use of language. The majority of schools in the territory have German as the language of instruction. However, French is a very important learning subject starting already in Kindergarten.

The German-speaking minority in Belgium has effective control over the most important elements of their cultural infrastructure. Especially the German school system is important, although the small population cannot support a complete educational system including a university. For academic studies in Germany the German-speaking can rely on the normal financial facilities. About halve of university students go to universities in Belgium, the other halve goes to Germany, especially to the nearby (technical) university of Aachen (interview Cremer). Moreover, the health insurance fund allows German

Belgians to go for specialised treatments to German hospitals with German-speaking personnel. Compared with the two other communities the competencies on language use are more restricted. The Flemish and the French communities can decree the use of languages in public administration and even in firms. Moreover, in all municipalities in the German-speaking territory are obligatory linguistic facilities for French-speaking. In the Flemish and French-speaking parts of Belgium only minority of municipalities are so-called 'facilities municipalities'.

The German-speaking community has a territorial base, but it is not incorporated in a hierarchical system of territorial government. The German homeland is a small part part of the region of Wallonia with more than 3 million inhabitants. Within this region it does not even have provincial competencies, because it is a part of province of Liege with over 1 million inhabitants. German-speaking's influence in these bodies is small, as they are greatly outnumbered by the French-speaking. In the regional parliament of 75 members they have only one informally guaranteed seat. There is also a formal guarantee for a seat in the Belgian senate of 71 members. In a moderate way the German-speaking are favouring more competencies. The Walloon region's authorities who have no vital interests in the German homeland do not principally reject these demands. According to the constitution of the continuously developing Belgian federation, the Walloon region and the German community can easily agree on transferring regional competencies to the German community (RDG, interview Cremer).

3 The German-speaking in Italy

Apart from some small scattered groups, the German-speaking in Italy live in South Tyrol. This territory of 75,000 km² has 450,000 inhabitants of whom two thirds are German-speaking and over one quarter is Italian-speaking. It became part of Italy in 1919 when the Habsburg Empire was dissolved after World War I. The former Crown province of Tyrol was divided between the newly established Austrian Republic and Italy (see Figure 2). Only the southern half of the new Italian territory was Italian-speaking. This historical area of Trentino approximately covers the present province of Trento. The name South Tyrol is exclusively used for the northern half of the Italian part of historical Tyrol. This area is also known as Alto Adige or province of Bolzano/Bozen. At the time of the annexation a vast majority of the population spoke German. Italian-speaking and speakers of the ancient roman language of Ladin were small minorities, both less than 5 percent (Leidlmaier, 1958).

After the annexation, the German-speaking South Tyrolese became an ethnic minority within the Italian state with a clearly delineated homeland. Soon after World War I, Italian fascism seized power in 1922. This implied a vigorous policy of Italianisation (Alcock 1970, Freschi 1988). The regional presence today of considerable numbers of Italian-speaking in the province is the result of migrations during the fascist period. Within public authorities, all ethnic Germans were replaced by ethnic Italians. New industries provided jobs for Italian immigrants who were accommodated in new housing areas in the capital city of Bolzano. As a result, the Italian-speaking segment of the population of South Tyrol increased fast: from 20,000 permanent residents in 1920 to

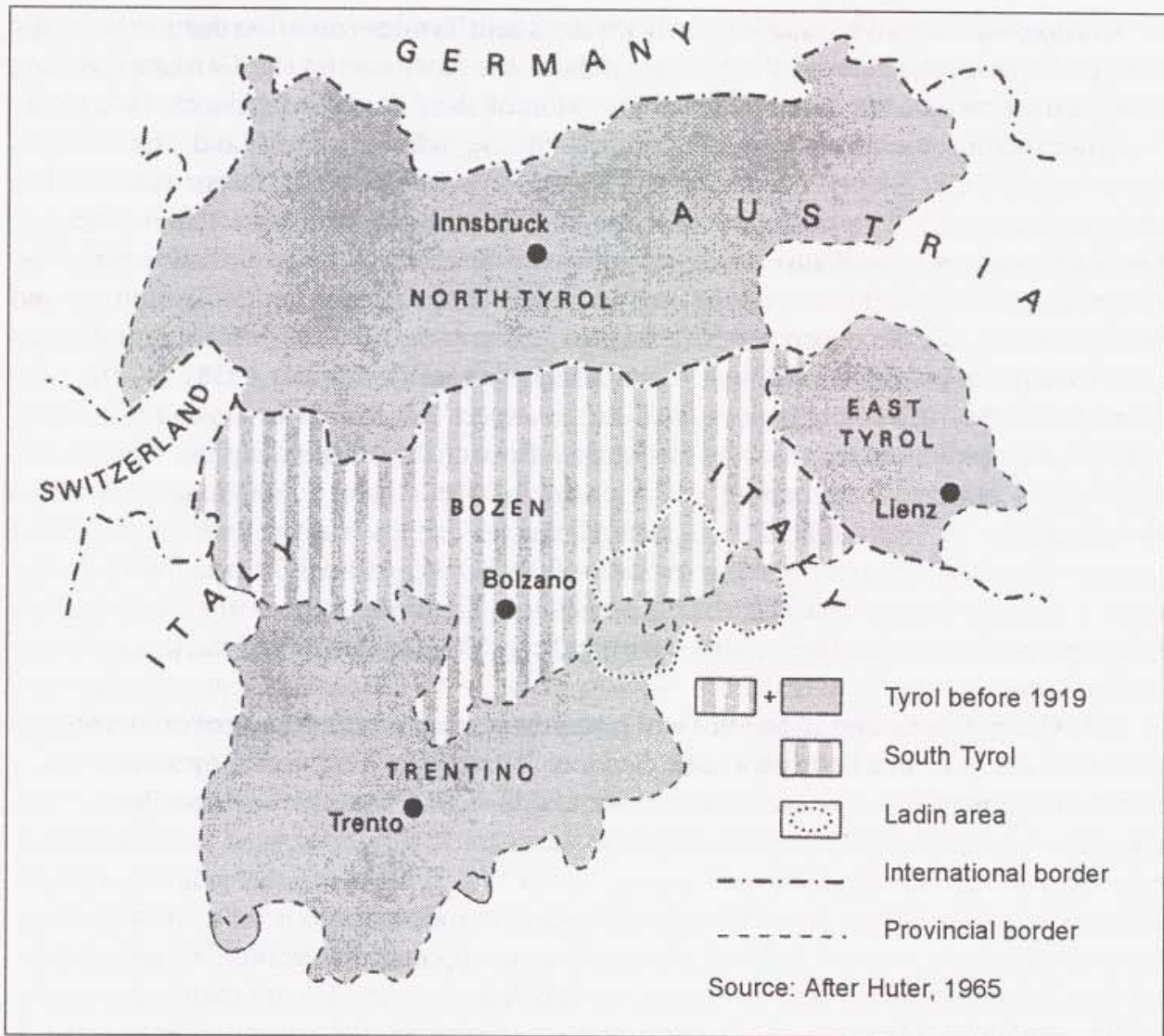


Figure 2 The partition of the former Crown province of Tyrol

105,000 in 1943 (Leidlmaier 1958). Moreover, there was also emigration of ethnic Germans and Ladins. The Berlin Agreement between Hitler and Mussolini in 1939, gave the German-speaking and the Ladins the opportunity of a 'voluntary' repatriation to the German empire. Over 60,000 people definitively left (Freschi 1988). After World War II South Tyrol had become a multi-ethnic region. The German-speaking were suspicious about the intentions of Italian national authorities. Moreover, there was a complicated inter-ethnic situation.

There were considerable differences between the ethnic groups in their residential pattern, their occupational structure and their level of education (Freschi 1998, Markusse 1996). Most of the Italian-speaking lived in towns. They were occupied in manufacturing, the public sector and other services. Their level of education was relatively high. The German-speaking and Ladins lived largely in the countryside. They were engaged in agriculture or in traditional small firms in craft and service provision. Their educational level was low, partly because of their rural background but also due to the enforced Italianisation of the schools.

In his comprehensive historical study on the South Tyrolese question during the 1950s and 1960s, Alcock sketches the backgrounds of the fears among the German-speaking elite in the province for a creeping Italianisation of their homeland (Alcock 1970). The Italian-speaking immigrants were dominating the administration and the modern segments of the economy. Moreover, the legacy of twenty years of fascist rule had left the province with a cultural and educational infrastructure that was Italian-oriented. German-speaking leaders imagined possibility of Italianisation by assimilation when the German-speaking workforce would begin to enter the culturally Italian institutions and milieus. In addition to concerns about this long-term scenario of assimilation, there was also anxiety for continued immigration of ethnic Italians (Leidlmaier 1958). By the state of affairs in the 1950s, it was not unrealistic to expect that further expansion of modern sectors of employment would attract a constant flow of Italian-speaking immigrants. All this makes clear that numerical development of the ethnic populations as well as developments in the ethnically segmented employment structure was an important concern for the German-speaking in South Tyrol. Only gradually it became clear that there was no further Italianisation of the population. There was only a very small increase of the proportion of the ethnic Italians during the 1950s, and since 1961 the proportion of Italian-speaking has decreased from 34 % to 27 % in 1991.

The German-speaking in South Tyrol have always had a high degree of ethnonational assertiveness and ethnonational mobilisation. There is a traditional awareness of a common German-Tyrolese national identity that is shared with the German-Tyroleses at the Austrian side of the border. Tyrolese nationalism is fully attributed with nationalist symbolism. The events before and during World War II have not changed this attitude. After World War II the German-speaking leaders founded the ethnonationalist political party Südtiroler Volkspartei (SVP), that is always supported in elections by about 90 % of the German-speaking voters. This party has led struggles for autonomy during the 1950s and 1960s. Moreover the German-speaking South Tyroleses have a dense network of ethnic organisations in civil society that loyally support the ethnonational ideals (Markusse 1996).

After World War II, the German-speaking South Tyroleses and the Austrian government demanded the incorporation of South Tyrol into Austria. This demand was refused by the Allies, but Austria could become the official protector (*Schützmacht*) of the German- and Ladin-speaking populations. In 1946 Italy and Austria agreed in Paris on the question of South Tyrol in terms of general diplomacy. The Paris agreement provided for territorial autonomy, an equal position for the German language, and access of the German-speaking and Ladins to positions in the public sector.

In 1948 an autonomous status was given to the region of Trentino-Alto Adige, which covered the province of Bolzano and the neighbouring province of Trento. The First Autonomy Statute of 1948 was in line with the post-war constitution of Italy, that refers to the establishment of an administrative level of 20 regions. Five regions should have autonomous competencies, specified in own special statutes. The regionalisation of Italy has been a lengthy process, but four of the five autonomous regions were immediately established (Onida 1990). The autonomy for the territory of Trentino-Alto Adige implied that the Italian-speaking became the majority in the autonomous region. The First Autonomy Statute also stipulated delegation of a number of competencies in the sphere

of culture, physical planning and housing to the two provinces of Trento and Bolzano (i.e. South Tyrol). However, Italian national and regional authorities were reluctant to give up control over the province. The legislative implementation of the autonomy stagnated. Quite soon, the German-speaking concluded that this First Autonomy Statute could not fulfil their aspirations for self-determination.

In the 1950s and the 1960s, South Tyrol was the scene of lasting protests of the German-speaking and even of violent attacks by German-speaking terrorists. Their case was supported by Austria, which claimed that Italy had not fulfilled its obligations resulting from the post-war international agreement. Years of negotiations of Austria and the South Tyrolese with the Italian government resulted in a detailed agreement, known as *Das Paket* or *Il Pacchetto*, on a new Second Autonomy Statute that was introduced in 1972. This time far-reaching autonomy was guaranteed for each of the two provinces of Trentino and South Tyrol, although the Italian authorities were not prepared to completely abolish the common autonomous region of Trentino-Alto Adige (Alcock 1970). The comprehensive legal and administrative implementation of the new autonomy statute lasted until 1992 and was followed by a formal declaration of the Austrian government recognising that Italy had fully implemented the Paris agreement (*Streitbeilegungserklärung*).

The Second Autonomy Statute implies a wide range of competencies for the autonomous provincial government. It has a budget of 4,000,000 million Italian Liras (eq. 2,000 million US dollars). The legislative and executive competencies include important subjects of regional economic development, employment and housing. For the German-speaking these competencies are crucial, because they are directly related with differential welfare impacts for the ethnic groups and they are indirectly related with migration. The extent of autonomy implies that a number of legislative competencies are not subordinated to ordinary national laws, but only to the constitution, international treaties and the general financial and monetary policies. Legitimacy of provincial laws and decrees can be tested and overruled by designated bodies of the Italian state. Moreover, residual competencies are reserved for the national government.

The statute stipulates the formal rules for co-operation between the ethnic groups in the autonomous authorities (Bonell and Winkler 1994). The autonomous authority is in hands of a provincial parliament and a provincial government. The ethnic composition of the freely elected parliament is not fixed. Only the small group of Ladins has a seat guaranteed. In practice, the ethnic composition of the parliament does not differ from that of the South Tyrolese population. In the provincial government the ethnic groups have to be represented in the same proportions that they have in the provincial parliament. The proportional representation in the government always leads to a wide coalition of the two major ethnic groups.

The application of ethnic proportionality is not limited to the provincial government. A remarkable aspect of the Second Autonomy Statute is far-reaching application of ethnic proportionality as a neutral standard of allocation between the ethnic groups. Almost all functions in the public and subsidised sectors have to be occupied by members of the ethnic groups in proportion to the shares of the groups in the South Tyrolese population. The ethnically proportionate distribution resulted in the end of the dominance of Italian-speaking in the public sector (Peterlini 1980). The proportionality principle has

been implemented gradually since mid-1970s and according to the 1976 Presidential Decree has strict proportionality to be realized in 2002. The proportionality principle is also playing an important role in the distribution of funds and subsidies. So, for instance public housing is distributed to the applicants in accordance with the proportion of their ethnic groups in the South Tyrolese population. The far-reaching and formal implementation of the proportionality principle implies that the inhabitants of South Tyrol have all kinds of rights only as a member of one of the ethnic groups. Hence, it is necessary to officially register the ethnicity of every inhabitant. Therefore, once in ten years at the time of the Italian national census, the inhabitants have to provide an official declaration of their individual ethnic affiliation (Zeller 1991).

For the German-speaking the ethnic proportionality rule in the public sector was an important issue. The German-speaking wished to expand their employment and influence in administration and to enforce the use of German as an official language. The position of German as an official language was also fostered by stipulation that all public servants should have command of both languages. For the Italian-speaking the opportunities to get positions in the public sector were declined. Their prospects were also worsened because many Italian-speaking have problems passing the German language exams.

The South Tyrolese Autonomy is a territorial autonomy, with a number of bilingual multi-ethnic bodies and institutions (Markusse 1997). However, the Second Autonomy Statute also provides for separate autonomous structures for the ethnic groups. The German section of the radio and T.V. broadcasting organisation is reserved for ethnic German personnel and completely independent from the Italian section and the national broadcasting organisation RAI. There are independent school authorities for each ethnic group, under combined responsibility of the provincial government and the national ministry of education. The German-speaking in the provincial government are strict supporters of monolingual German or Italian education in order to prevent cultural assimilation of German-speaking youth in bilingual schools.

These arrangements have strengthened the position of German culture in the multi-ethnic province. For a number of culturally German facilities, the German-speaking population in South Tyrol is too small. Therefore, German cultural infrastructure is enforced by special arrangements with institutions in the German-speaking countries, especially with Austria. The autonomy statute provides for re-broadcasting of programs from the big radio and TV networks in the German-speaking countries (Mittermaier 1987). South Tyrol has no university, but the autonomy has enabled the provincial authorities to maintain formal relations with the Innsbruck university in Austrian Tyrol. In Innsbruck one can study Italian law in German as language of instruction. In the framework of the autonomy Italy has recognised Austrian diplomas. The autonomy arrangement also enables the South Tyrolese to go to the medical clinic of Innsbruck university for specialised treatments, because for South Tyrolese residents costs of medical treatment abroad are covered by the health insurance funds.

It is clear that the South Tyrolese autonomy provides the German-speaking minority with considerable independence. They have separate autonomous structures for culture and education and they can dominate the multi-ethnic autonomous provincial government. Of course this small minority has only limited access to the Italian national political institutions. The SVP has only a few members in the two chambers of the national

parliament. The limited access to higher bodies of government the German-speaking in Italy have in common with the German-speaking in Belgium, but in contrast with them their independency from higher bodies of governance covers a much wider range of subjects.

4 Conclusions

This contribution aimed at demonstrating how differing regional, national and international conditions of the German-speaking minorities in Belgium and in Italy have led to differing autonomy arrangements. We have made clear that the two autonomies are formally accommodated in the structure of the state in different ways as a result of different balances between centripetal and centrifugal capacities. The centripetal capacities of Belgium are weak in comparison with the formally regionalised but in fact still centralised Italy. In contrast to the Belgian case, it seems that in the Italian case a high level of ethnonational mobilisation of the German-speaking minority has necessitated the autonomy arrangement. However, also 'protection' by Austria was a crucial condition. After World War II, Austria was in a better position to reclaim former territory than the Federal Republic of Germany. Moreover, there was a Tyrolese national ideology as a basis for mobilisation and support. In the case of German-speaking in Belgium mobilisation and support could not be based on a small scale national ideology and German nationalism was completely discredited.

Despite considerable differences, the two autonomy arrangements have in common that a combination of territorial and non-territorial elements were applied. In Belgium the combination of the two principles of autonomy is chosen as the structural base of the federative state, mainly as a solution for the delicate problem of the bilingual capital city. As a consequence, the German-speaking could have their German-speaking community which has a range of competencies that is typical for non-territorial autonomy, although the competencies are exercised at territorial base and the membership of the community is defined as a territorial population. This arrangement seems to be adequate for at least two reasons. First, because the German-speaking population greatly coincides with the population of the homeland. Second, because the limited number of competencies sufficiently meet the moderate ethnonational demands of the German-speaking Belgians.

In the multi-ethnic province of South Tyrol the German-speaking population cannot be territorially separated from the Italian-speaking. Moreover, the ethnonational demands of the German-speaking in Italy could not be met without autonomous competencies for economy and employment that can only be exercised at territorial base. In the Italian case, elements of territorial and non-territorial autonomy are combined within the autonomous unit itself. In the South Tyrolese autonomy arrangement the ethnic groups have parallel autonomous structures for affairs that can be dealt with on a non-territorial base. For an important number of autonomous political competencies however, the ethnic groups have to co-operate in a territorial government and administration. The autonomy arrangement stipulates rules of the game for interethnic power-sharing (Markusse 1997). Individual declarations of ethnicity and a wide application of proportionality are essential characteristics of the South Tyrolese autonomy arrangement.

Both autonomy arrangements have taken the small size of the concerning German-speaking population into account. For the very small group of German-speaking in Belgium the range of competencies is relatively limited and most of these competencies can be exercised in the small territory their homeland. Because of the limited number of competencies it was not necessary to integrate the highly independent but very small territorial authority into a hierarchical system of government. A great number of political and administrative competencies that are related with functional hierarchical systems are reserved for the hierarchical territorial tiers of regions, provinces and municipalities.

This does not apply for the greater autonomous unit of South Tyrol. However, it is clear that both German-speaking communities are too small to maintain a full hierarchy of essential provisions in education and health care. For both minorities the German cultural and educational facilities in the neighbour country are important for the maintenance of their cultural identities. Especially the German-speaking in Italy consider the link with Austria as very important for survival of their German culture within the borders of Italy.

We have mentioned that implementation of the two autonomy arrangements has been a long term development that has lasted until recently. The autonomy arrangement in South Tyrol is based on an international agreement. Adaptations have to be agreed in the complex arena of German-speaking and Italian-speaking politicians in the province and the region and two national governments. In contrast, the flexible Belgian constitution intentionally allows region's and community's authorities to mutually agree on division and transfer of competencies. Concerning future developments it seems that the different political-legal base of the two autonomies can be crucial.

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NĚMCI V BELGII A ITÁLII: DVĚ RŮZNÁ AUTONOMNÍ USPOŘÁDÁNÍ

Résumé

Príspevek ukazuje, jak různé regionální, národní a mezinárodní podmínky německy mluvících menšin v Belgii a Itálii vedly k různým autonomním uspořádáním. Ta jsou zakotvena ve státní struktuře a představují výsledek rozdílných rovnováh mezi odstředivou kapacitou německy mluvících minorit a dostředivou kapacitou státu. V tomto smyslu měla rozdílná role Rakouska, resp. Německa různé efekty. Přestože jsou obě autonomní uspořádání rozdílná, vykazují podobné kombinace teritoriálních a osobních principů autonomie. Tyto kombinace se jeví zvláště v multietnické oblasti jižních Tyrol přiměřenými. Pro zavedení osobních principů autonomie bylo důležité sousedství německy mluvící země.