

Divided we stand, divided we fall

A security risk analysis for Belgium for the next decade

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Author Note

I have written this paper in my capacity of a concerned Belgian citizen who wishes to draw the attention on certain risks we are facing as citizens and as a country within the frame of our membership of the NATO, of the European Union, and as an independent Kingdom.

The goal of this paper is not to be complete in all aspects of the security analysis, but to bring forward elements that, to my opinion, are utterly neglected in actual security studies.

Special care has been taken not to use any material that is classified within NATO, EU or BE context. All information that is used is freely available for anyone who wants to take the time to look for it, read it and correlate it with other free information.

This paper reflects my personal opinion, and only my personal opinion. Examples are given, but other cases can exist without being mentioned in this paper. The goal is to make a logic analysis leading to a conclusion about the security risks for Belgium in the next decade.

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Abstract

Starting from a geopolitical analysis of the part of the world that influences the Belgian security situation, this paper focuses deeper on one example of risk that can have major influences on the countries of the NATO and the European Union.

Using this risk analysis, we focus in on the Belgian situation. Especially elements that make Belgium vulnerable in the next decade are studied.

The author wishes to stress again that special care has been taken not to use any material that is classified within NATO, EU or BE context. All information that is used to make this analysis is freely available for anyone who wants to take the time to look for it, read it and assimilate it.

Keywords: Security, NATO, European Union, Belgium, Kinetic war, Electronic war, Hybrid war, Nuclear deterrent, Kinetic terrorism, Electronic terrorism, Hybrid terrorism, Russia, China, North Korea, Islamic State, Al Qaeda, Cold War

Divided we stand, divided we fall

We live in difficult times. Except for a number extreme rich amongst us, our money seems to disappear in the pockets of the governments and of the large companies. Taxes are higher and higher, wages are not adapted, bankers seem to take up the same megalomaniacal drive they had before the banking crisis and nobody seems to care (at least nobody who can take the necessary measures against it), the Middle East is on fire, tensions rise between the Western countries and Russia, China, North Korea...

In the West, (extreme) right political parties and separatist ideas are successful during elections and the Oxford “old boys club” (backed by Robert Mercer, an American billionaire who, by the way, also backed Donald Trump’s campaign) tricked the British into voting for a Brexit.

More and more uprisings are seen in the West, extremism of all kinds is showing its face, terrorist attacks seem to have become a daily risk, youngsters are drawn to extreme ideas and are ready to fight and die for these ideas (taking several law-abiding citizens with them in death), etc.

So, risks are all around us. But let’s focus especially on the risks that threaten the core existence of our democratic systems as we know them, and even more important, of our lifestyle as we know it.

Who are our enemies?

It would be too easy to say that only terrorists and Islamic extremists are the danger we will face during the next decade. But on the other hand, excluding these groups wouldn’t be correct neither. To decide who our potential enemies are, we should first define what dimensions of danger we conceive as threatening to our society, our democratic system and our way of life in general. For each dimension, several people, organisations and/or states can be

summarized that try or will try to destroy the specific dimension. In most cases, maybe apart from some home-grown lunatics, each of these individuals, groups or countries will have their reason to act as they do.

Physical danger

Physical danger is the element of putting at risk our lives, our health, our shelter, our food supplies, the infrastructure we use as a population to support our way of life, etc. The most obvious form of physical danger is, of course, a direct attack with arms, bombs, tanks, fighter-jets and what have you.

But other forms of physical danger exist. For instance, the release of biochemical substances in a closed environment, the hacking of a car driving on the road to disable the breaks, the hacking of life support equipment in a hospital. Even a targeted communication campaign on social media against an innocent citizen to make believe other citizens that the person in question is for instance a dangerous pedophile or a rapist can provoke an attack by a third party on the physical health of the person in question. Let's also not forget the targeted social media campaigns that push the victim of the campaign to commit suicide. And so forth...

The idea behind this summary is to make clear that a physical attack is more than trying to kill someone with a bomb or a machinegun. On the other hand, using bombs and other heavy arms to start a kinetic war (plain old mechanical war) is also a possible physical danger. Even a nuclear attack can be seen as the inflicting of physical damage.

Physical damage can be inflicted by different internal or external people or groups. Certain physical danger can even be inflicted by foreign countries in a direct or indirect way, depending on their goal(s). A direct way is attacking someone with a knife, or detonating a bomb in a railway station or an airport. An indirect way of inflicting physical damage can for instance be the sponsoring of rogue groups to create riots in a neighboring country to facilitate

an invasion under the blanket of 'defending' one's race or country members who happen to be in that country.

Individuals and groups are best placed to inflict physical damage on a small scale (although each lost life is one life too much), countries can go for the big scale damage by starting a war, a direct or indirect invasion, etc.

Economic danger

Again, there are a number of orders of magnitude to inflict economic problems for an individual or a country. On the one side, kidnapping can be seen as the action of an individual or small group against another individual or small group in order to damage them mentally or economically. On the other side, launching a large amount of well falsified money notes can bring a country into the swamp of a major economic crisis. Of course, it all depends on the means you have as an attacker, and on the goal you pursue. Even managers of major international banks can bring some countries or almost the entire world (intentionally or not) at the edge of an economic catastrophe.

A major economic damage that's often forgotten, is industrial espionage. This can go from copying products to sell them on the black market without paying taxes, to getting an insight into the strategy of a competing company. On a larger scale, mass copy of products or big scale industrial espionage can bring the victim, victim organization or even victim country on his economic knees.

In general, if one wants to bring a country in economic peril, one needs substantial means, or a very good knowledge of the economic system of the potential victim. Of course, one can make a little detour. A group of hackers who manage to bring a major bank in problems manages indirectly to bring a larger group of stakeholders in economic trouble.

Most of the time, however, to bring a country in economic trouble, the attacker must have substantial means. The ones with the most substantial means are other countries, or international companies. Let's not forget that companies like Walmart, Exxonmobil, Royal Dutch Shell, Apple, Glencore and many others have more financial and influential means than a lot of countries. Who, by the way, has ever heard of Yum! Brands Inc., Ingram Micro, TIAA-CREF, ... International companies that are often worth hundreds of billions of dollars, companies with huge interests with regards to the right party getting elected in certain countries, companies that have as only goal earning more money, even if it brings a country on or over the edge of economic trouble.

Political influence

Another dimension to interfere with the way of life of the citizens of a certain country is to get hold of the leading politicians (for instance by making sure that the 'right' people get elected). These can be the people that are in your pocket, but these can also be the people that go for independence from a larger entity (like NATO, European Union, etc).

It's often amazing how one can, with very limited means (compared to the price of an aircraft carrier or some fighter jets), direct the way a population thinks about certain things and votes for certain people, by getting a grip on the social media. We'll be more specific further in this paper.

Again, individuals also can have reasons to influence. Think about a politician who wants to become the 'elected leader' (read dictator) of a 'democratic people's republic' (read communist dictatorship). One needs a major part (or at least the right part) of the population to be influenced enough to do nothing when one takes over the power from the regular government.

In general, however, major economic players have a bigger interest into political influence. And of course, there are, again, (neighboring) countries.

Who are the candidates?

When speaking about physical damage inflicted on the spot, we can estimate that terrorist groups take the first place in the ranking. Local extremists or unsatisfied people come in second. On the other hand, when a country wants to destabilize another country, provoking riots with a lot of physical damage is not a bad idea. And it can be done in a rather inexpensive way.

So, candidates can be Islamic State, Al Qaeda, and more locally e.g. Basque separatists in Spain, extremist youth in countries all over the world, local people who feel neglected by the government, etc.

Economic damage seems more a thing of bankers who place their own income higher in priority than doing ethical management. They don't have the intention to damage the economy, but their actions can have that result. But here also, countries can try to get economic advantage by provoking economic damage to other, even economic thriving, countries. One can even imagine that provoking riots will be easier when one first creates a major recession to bring the middle class and the working class at the edge of bankruptcy.

So, Asian countries seem to be the major players in this field. But don't forget that countries like Russia also have a major interest in inflicting economic damage to some countries.

Political damage can be started by inflicting economic damage first. People in economic problems seem to take distance from their political leaders. And once the political leaders don't have the necessary trust of the people, enough political damage is done to reach one's goal.

Of course, every country that has a quarrel with another country has an interest to bring the other country in trouble by inflicting political damage. It's a given that China wishes to bring the US in trouble. A comparable given is that Russia wants to broaden its influence by breaking up NATO, the European Union, and the collaboration between the US and the other Western countries. Let's take the last example as the starting point for a further analysis that will help us pursue the goal of this paper: a security risk analysis for Belgium in the next decade.

The names of some adversaries of the West, and hence of Belgium, for the next decade are not really a surprise. The below list doesn't have the intention to be complete, but to show the diversity of the potential sources of danger. Some individuals or groups form direct and imminent danger, others are more of an indirect risk due to all kinds of elements like not checking the sources of information before they publish them, publishing information that can endanger people's lives, hacking infrastructure that is of critical importance to protect a patient's life, etc.

Individuals: Terrorists (local or international), Home-grown lunatics, Black-hat hackers, Crackers, Script Kiddies, People unsatisfied with governmental decisions

Groups: Islamic State, Al Qaeda, (Extreme) Right political party, (Extreme) Left political party, DocuLeaks, Wikileaks, Anonymous, Local terrorist groups

Countries: Russia, China, North Korea

Again, this list is far from complete, but shows nevertheless that the danger can come from a lot of different directions. The major idea is that intelligence services should start thinking as a poacher, and no longer as a bushman if they want to keep a grip on security during the next decade.

A case study: Russia against the West – Cold War 2.0

When analyzing the elements of this case, the first thing to do, obviously, is to understand the Russian goals. Therefore, we need to look at the recent history of the country.

Once the goals are clear, we can start looking at the toolbox the Russians have used in the past, and will use to obtain their future goals. Again, a look at the recent history will help us out, because no one, country, company or individual, will change their toolbox if the tools in it have worked during the realization of their goals up until now. At most, they will modernize their tools, brush them up a bit, so to speak, adapt them with new possibilities. We will try to give examples from the near past where it seems appropriate.

The Russian goals

When looking at the past of Russia, we see a state that has, for many centuries, been under the control of a Tsarist regime. A kind of dictatorship that was sometimes harsh and sometimes gentler for the population. The Tsar stayed until he died, and was replaced by a member of his family... or not. Anyway, Russians are used to being ruled by an individual without having to much of a democracy.

Russia has also been a very closed society, most of the time. Meaning that the Russians can be influenced rather easy by a biased press, a biased government loyal to the ruler, a biased church, and a biased elite. Things haven't changed that much over the last decades. Although...

From 1945 until the 1980's, Russia, as a country, had a very comfortable period. Political stability together with a major buffer zone that protected the country from its enemies: the Western countries. Also, the world was rather binary. There was the East block and there was the West, Warsaw Pact against NATO. A cold war with sufficient deterrents made that there was peace with only small squabbles from time to time. The population wasn't aware of

the times the world came to the edge of total destruction, as during the Cuban crisis. It was clear who the enemy was: the other side.

But things changed, and not for the better for Russia. They lost, bit by bit, their comfortable buffer zone that protected them against the West. More and more of its former partners had their own version of a drastic change, and saw the advantages of joining the West. More specific: the NATO and the European Union. From the point of view of Russia: the enemy.

The West had a fabulous period, but Russia didn't. During the 1990's they went through a harsh crisis, their military potential was decimated, soldiers had to sell (parts of) their uniforms because there was no money to pay their wages, atomic residue fell in the hands (read: was sold, in most cases by the military themselves, to the highest bidder) of rogue/terrorist organizations and states, and NATO as well as the European Union came closer and closer to the Russian borders. Until early 2000's where only some small countries close to their borders (like Belarus and Ukraine) weren't member of the Western organizations. But most other countries, like Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were.



Figure 1 - NATO vs Russia

During centuries, Russians always had the safe feeling of being a power player, having a buffer zone, being important enough and strong enough to be safe. And suddenly, they have economic troubles, they are surrounded by their (former?) enemy, and the West is creating

rocket defense shields that are also usable to attack Russia, not only to defend the West. How would you feel, being Russian, and living in Moscow?

So, the Russian goals, now that they have, again, enough economic power to retaliate one way or the other, should be clear, or are they?

The Russians know that their kinetic warfare equipment is not at the level of that of the NATO. Not even of that of the combined EU countries. When you have only one aircraft carrier, and when putting it to action for the first time since decades, two airplanes drop off the deck in the Mediterranean during the first week of action, and in front of the world press, you probably don't want to go to war using a classic strategy. Since NATO doesn't care about the Crimea (no oil to be found there), you can annex your former warm water port, and since Ukraine is not part of NATO, you can make some waves pretending you have nothing to do with it, but that's about all you can do. Of course, you can make believe your citizens that Russia is strong again, and you can annex the Crimea without the West doing anything about it. Major victory!?!?

Second option is the nuclear arsenal. But nobody is ready to commit suicide. So, this option is excluded also. Your goals are clear but how to achieve them?

Goal 1: Become a power-player again (Russians see themselves as weak since they have lost the Soviet Union, the Warsaw Pact countries and their buffer zone, especially Russians like Putin who had a major function in the KGB during the glory days of the empire).

Goal 2: Regain a buffer zone (like the one lost during the 1980's and 1990's) to secure Russia.

Goal 3: At least restore the power balance between Russia and the West

The only way you can achieve your goals without committing suicide is to first turn the NATO countries against the NATO idea, and do the same with the EU countries and the EU

idea. Once every country is on its own again, you can annex country after country, and you'll probably be already at Piccadilly Circus before the West starts reacting. Of course, you won't give any of them the chance to use their nuclear deterrent. You'll use salami tactics. You'll start a little riot amongst the Russian youth in Tallinn, and come to their aid. After all, the pro-Russian government that has been democratically elected (maybe after you have influenced the voting behavior of the population?) has asked you to help them out with the riot. And afterward, the same government asks you to stay... One former satellite state down, some more to go...

The only problem you have is: how to turn the western countries against the NATO idea and against the EU idea? You need the right tools, and where better to look than in the toolbox that was used during the golden days of the cold war, the days that Russia was strong and confident.

The Russian toolbox during and after the first cold war

The below list gives an overview of the methods that were used during the first cold war by several countries, and even in the aftermath of the cold war, up until now. Also, politicians, individuals and groups use these tools to get what they want. The tools are mentioned as Russian tools in this paper, as the case is oriented towards Russia, but rest assured that a lot of other individuals, groups and countries, like there are the US, Israel and the UK use(d) the same tools with more or less the same refinement.

Tool	Comments / Examples
Assassination and political violence	<p>In November 1998, Alexander Valterovich Litvinenko, a former officer of the Russian FSB, and several other FSB officers publicly accused their superiors of ordering the assassination of the Russian tycoon and oligarch Boris Berezovsky.</p> <p>On 1 November 2006, Litvinenko suddenly fell ill and was hospitalized for what was established as a case of poisoning by radioactive polonium-210 which resulted in his death on 23 November. He became the first known victim of lethal Polonium 210-induced acute radiation syndrome.</p>

Tool	Comments / Examples
Corrupting, compromising	<p>After Litvinenko's death, his widow, Marina, pursued a vigorous campaign on behalf of her husband through the Litvinenko Justice Foundation.</p> <p>In October 2011, she won the right for an inquest into her husband's death to be conducted by a coroner in London; the inquest was repeatedly set back by issues relating to examinable evidence.</p> <p>A public inquiry began on 27 January 2015, and concluded in January 2016 that Litvinenko's murder was an FSB operation, that was probably personally approved by Vladimir Putin.</p> <p>Both elements often go together. Starting by buying the services of, for instance, a high ranking official to gather some information soon leads to threatening the same official that his treason will be made public if he doesn't collaborate further. The refinement of these actions lie into making the treason of the individual gradually worse, up until the point of no return.</p> <p>Another method that is frequently used to compromise people was by threatening to leak their sexual preferences, or to send someone to seduce them into adultery that was recorded one way or the other.</p>
Theft of information and hacking	<p>Theft of information can go hand in hand with corrupting and/or compromising. However, other ways of theft of information are known. The tapping of phone lines, the placing of hidden microphones and cameras in offices, an undetected burglary during which information on paper is copied, etc.</p>
Investment control in key sectors	<p>Heather Conley's testimony during a US Senate hearing made clear that the Kremlin playbook seeks to manipulate other countries through economic penetration, heavily investing in critical sectors of the target country's economy to create political leverage. Putin's petro-politics uses Russia's control of natural gas to create political pressure on EU countries and Ukraine.</p>
Propaganda, fake news, trolls, bots	<p>Disseminating propaganda and fake news can help to achieve several goals: provoking riots or revolts against government, making citizens doubt their politicians, making citizens question their economic/banking system, etc.</p> <p>Methods are so refined these days, that it's becoming more and more difficult to see if a forward or a comment on a post on a social service is made by a bot or by a real human. Millions of tuned bots exist that are parameterized so to make you and I think that they are (for example) a Caucasian married handicapped male plumber of 32 years old with 3 kids, sympathy for the Democrats and living in West Carrollton City, Ohio. Looking up our plumber's profile on Facebook or LinkedIn will teach us that he 'really exists'. And if our plumber tells on Facebook that he witnessed police beating up a black person who just walked by. Who are we not to believe this statement? Especially if other city dwellers of West Carrollton City (also bots of course) start repeating and amplifying the story.</p> <p>A real-life example of the above is the fake story distributed on the internet on an explosion in Louisiana some time ago.</p> <p>As well propaganda as fake news are the sum of misleading, exaggerating and misinforming. Please note that the best fake news is based on reality and deformed afterward to suit another purpose.</p>

Tool	Comments / Examples
	<p>Example: In Germany, rumors started to spread that a young girl, Lisa Hass, of Russian-German nationality had been kidnapped by migrants from the Middle East, who allegedly had raped her for more than 30 hours. After some time, the local press took up the news, some regional papers reported the facts, and the rumor started an own live. It goes without saying that local people started to be more and more opposed to the governments asylum politics. As it seemed afterward, the news was spread as a hoax, and the girl had been with people she knew, and who didn't touch her at all.</p> <p>Example: Rumors started to spread that the US had deployed over 3500 tanks to Lithuania and Estonia to prevent an invasion of the Russians, or to invade Russia themselves. Reality teaches us that there were only 7 tanks deployed for a small combined exercise. However, the mere rumor could have lighted the fuse in the area.</p>
Shady business and/or financial relations	<p>Example given by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse in the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism on 8 May 2017: The question is if there's something fishy going on, or if the mere rumor puts President Trump in a weak position (or a combination of both)?</p> <p><i>"Russia exploits the dark shadows of economic and political systems. FBI Director Comey testified last week that the United States is becoming the last big haven for shell corporations, where the opacity of the corporate form allows the concealment of criminal funds, and can allow foreign money to directly and indirectly influence our political system. Since the Citizens United decision, we've seen unprecedented dark money flow in our elections from 501(c)(4) organizations. We don't know who's behind that dark money, or what they're demanding in return.</i></p> <p><i>Using shell corporations and other devices, Russia establishes illicit financial relationships to develop leverage against prominent figures, through the carrot of continued bribery or the stick of threatened disclosure. How about here?</i></p> <p><i>Well we know that President Trump himself has long pursued business deals in Russia. He is reported to have done or sought to do business there since the mid-1990s. As he chased deals in Russia throughout the 2000s, he deputized a colorful character named Felix Sater to develop real-estate projects there under the Trump name. Sater's family has links to Russian organized crime, and Felix himself has had difficulties with the law. Sater said in a 2008 deposition that he would pitch business ideas directly to Trump and his team "on a constant basis." As recently as 2010, Sater had a Trump Organization business card and an office in Trump Tower.</i></p> <p><i>Donald Trump Jr. said in September 2008 that he'd made half a dozen trips to the country in the preceding 18 months, noting that Russian investors were heavily involved in Trump's New York real estate projects. "We see a lot of money pouring in from Russia," he said. One Trump property in mid-town Manhattan had become, within a few years of opening, "a prominent depository of Russian money," according to a report in Bloomberg Businessweek.</i></p> <p><i>So here there are still big questions. Of course, President Trump could clarify questions by releasing his business and personal tax returns."</i></p>

Tool	Comments / Examples
Sponsoring	Since you don't bite the hand that feeds you, a sponsorship can influence as well political campaigns, banking decisions, dissemination of certain news and no dissemination of other news by certain organizations. Of course, it's not always clear where the sponsoring really comes from. After all, a lot of possibilities exist in Russia and elsewhere to create mailbox companies that are nothing more than a tool to funnel money from a shady organization or a countries intelligence service to an individual in another country without the individual knowing the real source of the money.
Timed leaks of damaging information	An example from the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism: <i>"Russian intelligence fronts, cut-outs, and sympathetic organizations like Guccifer 2.0, DCLeaks.com, and Wikileaks time the release of stolen victim data to maximize its political effect, manipulate public opinion, and thereby influence the outcome of an election. Longtime Trump associate Roger Stone admits to having interacted with Guccifer 2.0, and he foreshadowed releases of stolen data on Twitter in August and October 2016. Timing can matter: on October 7, just hours after the damaging "Access Hollywood" tapes of Donald Trump's offensive comments were made public, Wikileaks began publishing emails stolen from Clinton campaign manager John Podesta."</i>

The Russian way of thinking

In this digital age, Russia is convinced that it must rebalance the force equilibrium in Europe and the seas around it. They clearly see it as "*Cold War 2.0*"

On top of that, Russia, like the western countries, is convinced that a kinetic or a nuclear war would be suicide for both sides. Of course, all intelligence services are looking for methods that will help them win this second cold war without committing suicide. Russia (and on an economic level, China) has realized itself that they must change the "*politics of force*" into the "*force of politics*" to win this second cold war, whereas the western countries are still playing around with guns and rockets.

Of course, we still need the necessary equilibrium in classic and nuclear deterrents to keep everyone convinced that a kinetic and/or nuclear war is mutual suicide. But the real victory will be obtained on the battlefield of misconception, with arms like influence, propaganda, miscommunication, compromising, economic control over the other, influencing

elections, and what have you. It goes without saying that Internet and no longer ancient technology and methods will be used. On the one side, it's very cheap, compared to the cost of a nuclear submarine. On the other hand, it permits to obfuscate the real culprit by routing messages and data through servers around the world. Also, it's much easier to find individuals and groups that are willing, for money or for the cause, to help without even leaving their cozy living room. What used to be the platform for white collar criminality has become the place where the second cold war will be won or lost.

So, everything that the Russians need to do to break up NATO and the European Union is to translate the goals we've already mentioned into the following actions:

Action 1: Undermine citizen confidence in democratic governance.

Action 2: Erode trust between citizens and elected officials.

Action 3: Create political fractures.

Action 4: Undermine trust in information sources by blurring the lines between facts and fiction.

Action 5: Popularize Russian foreign political agendas with foreign populations.

Keep in mind that each and every one of the above-mentioned actions can be executed by using Internet, social media, press sites, bots, trolls, hacking, creating security breaches, etc. To prevent the above actions from succeeding, making sure that one's countries electronic security is as good as it can be is a first step, but doing only that would be too little too late. We must be more and more aware, as a country, that the organizational structure of the country and its government(s), the interactions between the political 'elite' and the population, the passing of correct information to the citizens and companies, and so many more issues must be arranged, streamlined and guaranteed to function in a way that it is not possible to abuse them to disturb the entire country. Because the goal of Russia (and other adversaries) is clear: they don't want

to steer one election, they want to disturb the good functioning of the entire country and create a situation where nobody believes any more in the benefits of NATO and of the European Union. Steering elections to bring right separatist forces to power is one step in the good direction. Stimulating and sponsoring the Oxford “old boys club” to become a Brexit is another step in the good direction. Bringing more Russia-minded political parties in government in countries like Lithuania and Estonia is yet another usefull step. Making Germans doubt the asylum management of their government is not bad either, and trying to influence the Dutch and French elections can have added value too. Of course, making people believe that during the next election, they have to choose between the plague and cholera will also undermine the trust of the citizens in their future government. And so forth...

The Belgian situation

International

Belgium is part of the NATO, and an active believer in the European Union. In fact, Belgium was one of the founding fathers of the European Union, which is understandable. As a small country on a territory that has been conquered during thousands of years, Belgium needs the necessary collaboration agreements and support agreements in order not to get conquered again. Also, as a small country, Belgium doesn't have the necessary resources to protect its frontiers nor its economy against international influences. The only way is the way forward towards a stronger Europe and an active participation in NATO. Of course, one can only spend one's money once, and NATO contributions are expensive.

A second element that is important to know is that the European headquarter of NATO is located in Belgium, as is one of the two headquarters of the European Union. Consequently, gravely disturbing the good functioning of Belgium would lead to the necessity to relocate

these headquarters, and would, even if only temporary, weaken both NATO and the European Union.

National

The organizational structure of Belgium is understandable, historically grown, the result of negotiations rather than wars, etc. But the fact stays that the organizational structure of Belgium is not the one that would get the prize for the best functioning idea.

On the one side, the language groups are floating apart more and more, because its politically more beneficial to demonize ‘the other side’ than to collaborate.

On the other side, Belgium has 5 government levels (give or take one). They all have negotiated packages of responsibilities that are not created by using a structured analytical approach (to say the least) and a SWAT analysis.

Consequently, the Belgian organizational structure has a schism in the length (cross-language) and in the depth (cross-government level). It seems also to be a typical Belgian attitude to solve every problem of communication between two or more entities with the creation of yet another entity. This doesn’t make things cheaper, nor more transparent of course.

The above makes Belgium very vulnerable on the following points:

- undermining citizens’ confidence in the democratic governance (the political elite themselves are demonizing ‘the other side’ and ‘the other government levels’),
- eroding trust between citizens and the elected officials.
- Of course, political fractures are inherent to the organizational structure too.

Limited resources are present. Belgium is a small country that has, for the major part, a knowledge economy. Raw materials are hardly present and heavy industry is more and more

leaving the country. The country is becoming more and more the highway between Germany, France and the UK.

The economic growth has stagnated during some time, but is bit by bit recuperating from this stand-still. The public debt, however, is huge compared to the gross national product, and the banking crisis has made things even worse on this level.

Consequently, all government levels must economize. It should be clear that 5 government levels cost a fortune, even if we only calculate the cost of the overhead functions and of the decentralization of functions. Taxes are sky-high and things are not better than they were when there were less government levels. Quite on the contrary.

The banking crisis is said to be under control, but a good observer will see that banks and bankers are in the same megalomaniac mood as they were before the banking crisis, which doesn't give the necessary trust in the financial system.

The above makes Belgium vulnerable on the following points:

- undermining citizens' confidence in the democratic governance (paying more for worse governmental services),
- undermining citizens' confidence in the financial system and in the will of the political level to structure the financial system
- eroding trust between citizens and the elected officials.
- political fractures are inherent when one needs to economize and to choose how.

The political elite seems (on average and apart from the positive exceptions) not to be aware of the daily problems of the citizens. They often behave immature and opportunistic, seen from the side of a citizen who must work hard to feed his children, and who is taxed at almost 50%. The middle class is being destroyed by the high taxes, and the only classes that

seem to co-exist are ‘the rich’ and ‘the others’. Unfortunately, politicians are seen (and often are) part of ‘the rich’.

On the one side, the citizens are no longer interested in the, often childish, discussions in the different parliaments and councils. Also, the citizens are taxed harshly, and have difficulties to accept the fact that the political elite cumulates many different functions, and gets paid multiple times for the same ‘hour’ they have worked. On top of that, several cases of corruption, or cases perceived as corruption (across all political parties) have surfaced lately. Money driven politicians are perceived to be more interested in their bank account than in situations where they have conflicts of interest, or in serving the population that voted for them.

This makes Belgium very vulnerable for the following points:

- undermining citizens’ confidence in the democratic governance and in the political elite,
- undermining citizens’ confidence in the organizational structure of the country
- eroding trust between citizens and the elected officials.
- political fractures are inherent when everybody blames everybody to be corrupt and/or money driven.

The press, who is the only remaining democratic guard-dog (since majorities in parliaments and governments are constituted of the same political coalitions) seems to be less and less fact-driven, and more and more oriented towards economic survival, populism and political coexistence. Consequently, the population can hardly count on the press to inform them about irregularities and abuses, about realizations, and about the real facts. Whereas the press used to follow up on situations and promises made by the political level, nowadays, facts are hardly mentioned, and follow up is inexistent.

On top of that, the press seems to evolve into a multimedia circus where only one-liners are broadcasted. In depth information interviews and documentaries are no longer 'sexy'. They are probably not economically sound. And then there is the Internet, which is even worse, since everybody can publish anything without people having the possibility to do fact checking.

This makes Belgium vulnerable for the following points:

- undermining citizens' confidence in the press as remaining democratic guard-dog,
- eroding trust between citizens and the elected officials.
- undermining citizens' knowledge of the real situations in the world, of the facts and figures behind these situations, and of the consequences of these situations.
- popularization of the political agendas of foreign nations
- undermining trust in information sources by blurring the lines between facts and fiction

Conclusion

Due to its international situation, its organizational structure, its limited resources, some rotten apples in the political basket and the lack of a real democratic guard-dog, Belgium is and will be very vulnerable during the next decade if nothing is done about the situation.

As long as security is solely tied to having tanks and fighter-jets, possessing some nuclear rockets, preventing physical terrorist attacks and hacking, Belgium will become more and more vulnerable during the next decade. More and more individuals, groups and countries will conclude that the new war is much less expensive, is much easier to launch, and can also have devastating consequences for a country, its population and the companies on its territory. The new war will be a combinational war, with kinetic elements, electronic elements and miscommunication elements to disturb the functioning of the country.

Hacking, launching viruses, and what have you will no longer be a goal on their own, but will be arms in a new war. This war may be economical or may be about power balance, may be against one country or against a cooperation of countries, but whoever the adversary will be, we'd better be prepared for the future if we want to survive as a country, as a democracy, as an open and social society where everybody has the right to freedom of opinion, speech, expression, religion, establishment, ... And if we want to assure ourselves of the benefits of the NATO and the European Union, we'll better make our fellow citizens, and our fellow countries aware of the fact that warfare will never be what it was before, and that nowadays, not so much the army, but the citizens are part of and targeted in the war. The times change, and we change with them, and so does warfare.

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