



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

**Pillarized and Consociational-democratic Belgium: the views of Luc Huyse**  
Pijnenburg, B.

**Citation**

Pijnenburg, B. (1984). Pillarized and Consociational-democratic Belgium: the views of Luc Huyse. *Acta Politica*, 19: 1984(1), 57-72. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3452447>

Version: Publisher's Version  
License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)  
Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3452447>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

## Pillarized and consociational-democratic Belgium:

The views of Huysse

B. Pijnenburg

The central thesis of this article is that, when talking about a pillarized and consociational-democratic Belgium, two variants in theory should be distinguished: one being more political science focused, the other principally sociological.

The distinction between both analyses of pillarization is more than merely a difference in approach. Findings and conclusions are put forward that are not necessarily identical. Indeed, according to political scientists all factors seem to point in the direction of de-pillarization, whereas the sociological theory shows rather the opposite picture and explains why pillarization (still) can exist.

The theory of L. Huysse will be taken as a 'type-example' of the political science view on this matter. First a description will be given of the most important elements of Huysse's theory. This is followed by a critical evaluation. Next, as a third step, we will go into the possibilities of overcoming the flaws and weak elements in Huysse's theory. The potential solution that will be advanced is to complement the political science perspective with a perspective from sociological theorizing on pillarized and consociational-democratic Belgium, esp. the theory by Jaak Billiet.

### Political science theories of pillarized and consociational-democratic Belgium. Type-example: L. Huysse

Before beginning to describe the most important of Huysse's views on social and political life in Belgium, a brief introduction concerning the relation with Lijphart's consociational-democracy theory seems in place.

Huysse began his research and theory-construction by explicitly choosing the same starting-point as Lijphart<sup>1</sup>: how can it be that a society (and in particular its political system), which shows a number of severe cleavages and has subsequently become 'pillarized', nevertheless remains stable and intact? Later on, however, Huysse has developed an analysis which is different from the one Lijphart gives and, consequently, he arrives at essentially different findings. Huysse's aim is not to find a general theory with the broadest possible validity, but to explain 'the phenomenon Belgium'. This, inevitably, has immediate consequences for the structure and

character of his frame of analysis.

An essential difference with Lijphart is that Huyse does not assert that, despite the deep cleavages in Belgian society and the subsequent segmentation of the social and political system, the democratic quality of this configuration is nevertheless real and quite satisfactory. On the contrary, he actually disputes the reach and the nature of the Belgian variant of democracy. It is not the democracy of the Belgian political system that Huyse wants to explain, but its stability and equilibrium despite the underlying deep cleavages.

The second essential difference with Lijphart is that the main point of Huyse's explanation of that seemingly contradictory stability and vitality is due to the factor 'deep cleavages in the social and political system'. This is why in Huyse's analysis the emphasis is far less on the meaning and the influence of 'prudent leadership' by consociational-democratic elites, and why he almost entirely sets aside the 'various elements of a feeling of national identity', referred to by Lijphart.

At the outset of Huyse's analysis there is the assurance that Belgium is a pillarized society. Basis for his analysis is for instance 'pillarization in Belgium', as Lorwin<sup>2</sup> has sketched it.

'The ideologies are largely Privatsachen, to be sure. But they have left their structures of institutions and attitudes. The heritage is clearest in the institutions of Catholicism (...) A great complex of organizations asserts the positive values of Church and school, of Catholic social and political action. (...) It is possible to live most of one's life in a Catholic world: parish, school, youth movement, trade union or farmers' league or other occupational group, family association, consumer cooperative, friendly society, clinic and hospital, cultural organization, women's movement, and pensioners' organization. There are few meaningful personal contacts between most Catholics and non-Catholics. (...)

"People of each group know the people of the other group only through stereotypes. These are usually simplified and deformed images of reality, of which a chief aim is to disparage the people of the other group".'

At the end of the 60s, when Huyse developed the first version of his theory, three 'pillars' are thus said to be the dominating forces of social and political life in Belgium: the catholic pillar and, on the non-catholic side, a socialist and a liberal pillar. Huyse treats this phenomenon of pillarization as an established and generally accepted fact. His own analysis<sup>3</sup> is meant to present a more detailed and differentiated view of this pillarized and consociational-democratic Belgian society.

Huyse's first thesis concerns the fundamental social and political divi-

sions of Belgium. They have existed for ages and are threefold: religious-philosophical, the conflict of catholics versus the non-catholics; socio-economical, the working classes versus the higher classes; etno-linguistic, the Flemish-speaking versus the French-speaking part of the country. It is these divisions that, from 1830 onwards, were to become the basic cleavages of Belgian society.

In Huyse's opinion, these cleavages have not all affected the formation of Belgian society in the same way. The religious-philosophical cleavage of catholics versus non-catholics has left the deepest traces. Belgian pillarization has been primarily religion-related and this is the development that has marked most the historical dynamics of the Belgian social and political system.<sup>4</sup> As Huyse puts it, pillarized Belgium is 'a religious-philosophical separateness turned to stone'.

An explanation of the stability and viability of the political order of such a deeply divided society finds Huyse in the work of A. Van Den Brande<sup>5</sup>, especially in his thesis of 'crosscutting divisions'. According to Van Den Brande the philosophical-religious, socio-economical, and etno-linguistic cleavages in Belgium tend to impair one another's potential for conflict and centrifugal effect through a process of crosscutting. This criss-crossing of social and political oppositions is found on every level of society. On the micro-level of individual citizens it consists of a threefold quality and ditto solidarity – for instance: a catholic Flemish labourer. Analogue impairing mechanisms can be found on the level of the organizations and the elites at their top. This prevents, according to Van Den Brande, the total and permanent mobilization of such an organization along a single line of conflict. The same logic may be applied to the macro-level of the political and social system. There seems to be a succession of issues, problems and crises in such a way that conflicts pertaining to the 'catholic vs. non-catholic', the 'socio-economical inequality' and the 'etno-linguistic' divisions rarely or never coincide, and thus a merger into one over-all and fatal escalation is unlikely.

However, the over-all dynamic balance of Van den Brande's crosscutting cleavages not being perfect, there will always be a need for sufficiently experienced and skillful politicians, able to produce the required 'prudent leadership'. Consequently, the next step in Huyse's analysis is to turn to Lijphart's theory and introduce the notion of a 'pacification'-minded and pragmatic elite.<sup>6</sup> The influence of this pacification-elite lies primarily in the field of arbitration, deliberation, negotiating, arranging and bargaining. Huyse calls it: sofa-politics ('canapé-politiek').

'The stakes: neutralization of the threat hanging over the political regime; the result a surprising stability'.<sup>7</sup>

Against this background Huyse observes, with regard to the structure and operation of the pillar-system, some major changes in post-war Belgium, particularly relevant with respect to the means of influence and the conflict-controlling position of the pacification-elite. One of these changes, the highly increasing 'party-politicization' of the pillars in Belgium, is a direct offshoot of intrapillar heterogeneity. This intrapillar heterogeneity happens to be the complement of a social constellation full of criss-crossing cleavage-dynamics. Such a constellation also causes the pillars to show – each in their own way – cracks. The resulting intrapillar heterogeneity clearly put a mortgage on the unity of action and political combativeness. Reaching internal compromises is therefore not only inevitable but vital. This is said to be the reason why the political parties have gradually gained weight and have come to play an ever more crucial role within each of the three pillars in Belgium. The task of protecting and, if possible, reinforcing the solidity and cohesion of the pillars is primarily theirs. The political party has become each pillar's umbrella-organization.

The second important change in post-war Belgium is the institutionalization of the so-called 'pact-formula' as the proper way to deal with serious and extensive conflicts between the pillars. That pact-formula has, according to Huyse, brought about a weakening of the influence of the ideological factor on political life. It has contributed considerably to the degeneration of pillars into mere power-machines.

The next elementary notion in Huyse's analysis, and directly connected to the points mentioned above, is the predominating rule of proportionality. The idea of 'majority rule' is hardly ever applied.

The most characteristic examples of pillar-bound proportionality are found when the boards of semi-governmental institutions are formed, and when the many consultative and advisory bodies surrounding the policy-making in ministerial departments are set up. Even more striking is the tacit application of the rule of proportionality to the distribution of state-subsidies, and to the installation and promotion of government personnel.

All the elements enumerated so far, form what may be called 'the compromise-democracy'. The next part of Huyse's description consists of the same pillarized and consociational-democratic system but this time looked at from the 'bottom-up'. Huyse calls it: 'the tutelage-democracy'. This term refers to the impact and consequences at mass-level of the compromise-democratic system, in particular the reasons why in Belgium the common citizen is usually so tame and submissive. Two examples may clarify this point: the elections and the phenomenon of the 'amigocracy'.

According to Huyse, the elections are largely dominated by the political leaders: the highest level in each political party monopolizes the selection of

candidates for the elections; part of the MPs are chosen by co-optation; at election-day voters find themselves confronted with alternatives that have little or no programmatic content; moreover, the voters will in fact have no power whatsoever to decide which government should finally result from the elections. The second example of the 'amigocracy' refers to the phenomenon of 'services rendered' and patronage-like behavior.

'The amigocracy is a logical offshoot of compromise-democracy: the citizens should be kept at a certain distance, but should on the other hand be roped in. (...) With us the voter sooner or later becomes the client of a political mandatar from whom he consequently expect an individual rendering of services (old age pension, building permit, exemption of military services, appointment in the field of education, obtaining a job of civil servant)'.<sup>8</sup>

Since the first version of his theory ten years have past and Huyse<sup>9</sup> slightly changed his views, in the sense that he believes that during the 70s certain unmistakable signs of de-pillarization can be perceived. The social walls that make for the religious-philosophical segmentation are alleged to crumble down as a result of such factors as the opening up of rural regions, an increase in mobility (both social en geographical), the impact of television, the decreased importance of religion, and crisis-developments within the catholic Church.

Another symptom of de-pillarization is the weakening of organizational and individual ties. Organizations and groups seem to have acquired a greater freedom of movement or have simply drifted away from the world of pillars. Elections show a voting-pattern that is clearly less pillar-tied than it used to be. As a variety of research apparently confirms, the membership of a pillarized organization to an ever increasing number of people has been stripped of philosophical-religious considerations and is presently associated essentially with elements of 'service'.

The whole process of de-pillarization would, according to Huyse, prove to be a reorientation that leaves its traces especially in the field of conflict-control.

'Ever more problems originate outside of the traditional contrasts between catholics, socialists and liberals. (...) Such a situation proves to be highly disturbing for the political elite. These are problems that do not penetrate into the political arena in the usual way. They are therefore unpredictable and increase the burden of policy-making of the political leaders. (...) More and more interest-groups, small ones and large ones, now direct their demands straight to the government and the public authorities. The pillar is no longer the shock-absorber it used to be. Often parties and parliamentary fractions are

nothing more but service-hatches for private- and group interests. (...) This inevitably leads to the flourishing of corporatism'.<sup>10</sup>

What are the consequences of all this at mass-level? Other forms of ties between pillar-leadership and the rank-and-file are being created. Their major effect is that the rendering of social and political private services is broadened and intensified: 'pillars as social and political supermarkets'. There is a second phenomenon that stands out clearly: the considerably increased inclination to overemphasize the politician as a person. The original ideological contrasts are gradually replaced by 'the polarization of persons'.

In his most recent analyses Huyse<sup>11</sup> strikes a somewhat different note concerning the role and impact of the language-related cleavage in pillar-

In his most recent analyses Huyse<sup>11</sup> strikes a somewhat different note concerning the role and impact of the language-related cleavage in pillarized and consociational-democratic Belgium. He believes that the 'pacification' of ethno-linguistic conflicts, as it has been attempted during the last few years, radically changed the criss-cross dynamics of the three traditional cleavages in the Belgian political and social system which subsequently led to their mutual neutralization.

The pacification of the ethno-linguistic cleavage has finally led to a reform of the state. This has institutionalized the existence of in essence two distinct communities: French-speaking Wallonia vs. the Flemish part of the country. According to Huyse the most dramatic consequence of all this is that the problem of the balance of power (and thus the political and social stability) in its turn underwent a possibly far-reaching reversal. There are now two political and social systems, both of which have to try to find an equilibrium in their own way. This implies that especially the ethno-linguistic cleavage no longer contributes to the balance and stability within each of the two systems, as Van Den Brande originally described it for that single unity of 'the' Belgian society. From an ethno-linguistic point of view the people inside each of these two communities are now all the same: either all Flemish or all French-speaking. To this observation must be added the fact that in Flanders the catholic pillar is supported by the majority of the people. This christian-democratic CVP (Christian People's Party) is the dominant political force here. In Wallonia, on the contrary, the battle for political power is fought mainly in terms of the 'capital-labor' cleavage and there the socialists have the strongest party. Because of this type of parameters, the reform of the state may have eliminated fundamental components of, as Huyse calls it, 'the traditional subtle three-line dynamics' that until then had always guaranteed peace and

stability in Belgian politics.

The reform of the state entailed also a more sociological process of change: the difference between Flemish and Walloon people has hardened. These two 'peoples' already existed when the state of Belgium came into being. However, it would not be until the 1970s that, according to Huyse, in this sense the 'maturation process' has fully broken through. The culmination of this process came with the crucial step of reforming the state. Moreover, by institutionalizing the division of Belgium in two halves, space has been created to develop further the distinct character and particular identity of both communities.

### Critical evaluation of Huyse's theory

A first mean point of criticism against Huyse's analysis concerns its empirical foundations. The most disturbing factor in this respect is the lack of hard facts and unambiguous data. Huyse presents a grand theory and more than enough overwhelming ideas: no doubt about that. However, there appears to be very little empirical research to base it on.

Many of Huyse's views sound very nice and clever. Moreover, here is a theory that supports directly the general view on political and social life in Belgium that everybody with some common sense had already arrived at for himself: parties that radiate too much power; the unapproachable position of politicians and of the elite at the top of the large established pressure-groups in the country; back-stage decision-making and a subsequently pattern of bargaining, manipulation and all the wheeling and dealing that it entails; the entire sector of public services and administration being held together by amigocracy, the 'friend-at-court' system and favoritism; and the mechanical rule of proportionality through which public funds are used in various improper ways. What Huyse draws here, is a picture that anyone, or at least a vast majority, is only too eager to believe—the 'dirty business' cliché of politics. Precisely because of this overdose of 'acceptability', there should be all the more reason to substantiate this image of reality with solid empirical data.

However, it is also clear that in this respect Huyse has not made things easy for himself. Few of the concepts and theses of his theory are of such a nature that they can meet the test of empirical verification. Partly Huyse's theory is aimed that high, 'macro', that one may doubt whether empirical verification can be applied at all. For instance, his thesis that the inter-action between socio-economical, ethno-linguistic and religion-related cleavages excludes an irreversable total division that would be fatal to the system,

appears very difficult to substantiate through empirical research.

Besides, Huyse's theory is swarming with notions and statements that would defy empirical verification in a second way. The ideas of 'sofa-politics' or 'a back-stage operating elite' are by definition almost unverifiable. Through them Huyse is suggesting that we are constantly dealing with a reality that, however, is concealed and invisible. Is it then not also inevitably a reality that escapes any means of empirical observation? Precisely the same argument applies to his notions as 'the improper control and guidance of the press-media' or 'private favors to the benefit of the rank-and-file of voters'. These are once again phenomena that can hardly bear the light of day, and therefore seem to be also out of reach of empirical verification. This kind of 'immunization' undeniably puts a considerable mortgage on the scientific value of Huyse's entire approach.

Many of his statements and theses are often also value-laden. Huyse is far from happy with the phenomenon of pillarized and consociational-democratic Belgium. His judgement is not unique. The polemizing under-tone of the whole discussion on the pillarization-issue has become the rule in Belgium. 'Pillarization' has grown into a notion that can hardly be used in a neutral (let alone: positive) sense anymore. Consequently, the mentioning of the word 'pillarization' is often also condemning the social phenomena and processes thus indicated. The same can be said of new notions and words concerning political and social affairs in Belgium that have been added recently to the vocabulary of political scientists: amigocracy, party-craze, (neo-)corporatism. Each of these notions facilitates the tarnishing of the image of politics in Belgium.

The drawback of too little empirical proof does not necessarily need to be a point at issue in itself, if the final output of Huyse's theory would turn out to be an ideal-typical analysis with high heuristic value. Such an analysis would possibly not respond entirely and into detail to the concrete reality. It could even consciously present this reality in a slightly exaggerated and simplistic way. Nevertheless, it may have its own value because it sets in motion, stimulates and guides reflection, research and theory-construction, leading ultimately to empirical substantiation. One might ask oneself whether the value of Huyse's political-science work should be sought at this more heuristic level. The problem is that the answer is not evident either.

In fact, Luc Huyse linked his analysis initially with a pillarization- and consociational-democracy view that was focused on mass-level, on the majority of the common citizens. 'Passiveness, Pacification and Pillarization in Belgium' (1970) was one panel of a diptych. It was built on and was meant as the further theoretical elaboration of research that Huyse reported

on in 1969 under the title 'The Non-Present Citizen. Political Apathy Mapped Out Sociologically'. The central issue in Huyse's analysis, as may immediately be gathered from both titles, is 'apathy' and 'passiveness'. That is in fact what Huyse had set out to analyze and tried to explain: the ever widening gap between elite and masses. However, when one looks at how Huyse has since developed his theory, one will search in vain for a further elaboration of any perspective of the society as seen from below. Huyse concentrates his approach exclusively on the elite-side of reality. His theory on the mass-level has thus become mainly an analysis-per-negativum.

In Huyse's theory 'the masses' is a central notion, but in his analysis as such it is a non-entity. Huyse's attention is directed exclusively to the motives, attitudes, and behavior of the pillars' and consociational-democracy elites. Subsequently, he deduces 'per negativum' the motives, attitudes and behavior of the pillars' and consociational-democracy rank-and-file. He seems to reason that, as elite and masses are by definition each other's opposite, such a deduction is fully justified.

Remains to be explained then, how this system with its gap between elite and masses can endure. For Huyse the reasons are plain and simple: it is primarily a matter of 'patronage', of the attitudes of mutual commitment and of self-interests. Although they may be entirely different in character and quality for elite and masses, this does not prevent both categories of self-interest from coinciding. By presenting it this way, the bond holding elite and rank-and-file together is impaired considerably. Mere instrumentality and, accordingly, servitude plus all that comes with it in the way of manipulation and masquerade seem to prevail. It is the cynicism of politicians who know they can do with impunity as it pleases them to do, as long as they succeed in binding their rank-and-file. It is also the cynicism of the masses that do not care about more rights or opportunities for participation in decision-making, that are not bothered by the belief that politics is a 'dirty business', and that in their turn try to draw as much advantage as possible out of it.

Huyse's interpretation is 'a case too well put'. Given all Huyse mentions as elements and explanations of the power(-)position of the established political elite, and of the alienation and lethargy among the majority of the common citizens as well, one wonders why he even holds on to the notion of 'democracy'. One will also look in vain for an answer to the question how the political system in Belgium might eventually change and improve. Apparently the only development Huyse sees, is some sort of 'Verelendung'.

The picture political science gives of pillarization, contains at least three dimensions. There is (a) a particular distribution of political power between elite and masses, as well as (b) a particular way in which the structure of society has been built and has hardened. Thirdly, there is (c) the particular form of culture and ideological-philosophical-ethical affinities that can be found in a pillarized society. Beliefs, ethics, ideological-moral convictions, views of man and society, value-norm-idea allegiances: it is along this very dimension that the dividedness 'on a particular religious-philosophical basis or not' makes for pillarization. This dividedness guides group-identification, solidarity, loyalty and mobilization in such a comprehensive way that society develops into the confrontation of separate sub-cultures, opposing one another. Three dimensions of pillarization: this does not imply, however, that political scientists have attributed equal importance to each of them, or that these dimensions are equally well elaborated in all pillarization-theories. Through the years most attention has been given to the elite(-)layer and the rigid organizational appearance of the pillar-system. This has evidently been at the expense of the third dimension of pillarization, which pertains to values, norms, ideas, allegiances, and identity.

One factor that may help to explain the more recent versions of this 'non-cultural' political theory is that, no doubt, some kind of de-pillarization has occurred since 1970.<sup>12</sup> At the same time this process of change is not necessarily seen as having touched all three dimensions of pillarization. On the contrary, it is the elements of 'belief', 'ethics', 'ideological-moral convictions', 'views of man and society', and 'value-norm-idea allegiances', that are considered to be the worst affected (Huysse has described this process of change as 'de-pillarization of the mind'). From then on the logic leading to a non-cultural political theory is quite simple: there is supposedly an erosion of the religion-ideals-ethics dimension of pillarization; having lasted now for over ten years this eroding process may be assumed to be almost completed; so, since the religion-ideals-ethics dimension has nearly ceased to exist, it is automatically something which need not be studied any further.

Obviously this kind of 'non-cultural' approach has serious consequences for the heuristic value of one's theory. Two points spring to mind.

a. Given the fundamental process of change that the pillar-system would have undergone, viz. the loss of its values-norms-ideas basis, only two dimensions of pillarization would remain: the power-component, i.e. the consociational-democratic elite, with its firm (if not increasingly tightening) grip on politics, and the architecture-factor, i.e. the impressive organizational complexes upon which the entire social system is resting.

But this view inevitably leads to the question: can such a two-dimensional configuration actually still be called 'pillarized'? Would it then not be simpler – and from a heuristic viewpoint more gratifying – to let go completely of the concept 'pillarization'?

b. Developing this first point somewhat further, a second example of the potential low heuristic value of a 'non-cultural' theory is the configuration resulting from the elimination of the concept of pillarization and the attempt to base one's analysis solely on the alternative idea of (neo-)corporatism, as said to be particularly apt for assessing the catholic pillar after the de-pillarization period of the 70s. The catholic pillar has always been an amalgamation of interest-groups. The fact that it was not torn apart by antagonisms and conflicts between these interest-groups, in particular the socio-economic ones, could be attributed till a few years ago to the common bonds to Church and religion. Today, however, these bonds seem no longer to be present – at least, their role and influence is said to have been diminished severely. So, now that these crucial overarching loyalties have weakened, the original logics of an all-dominating and particularly stable conglomerate of organizations and institutions, and the subsequent position of an almighty elite at its top, have become ever less satisfactory. Consequently, the notion of 'pillarization' is exchanged for the concept of 'corporatism'.<sup>13</sup> Linked to the thesis of an increasing 'party-politicization' of the pillars in post-war Belgium, the 'neo-corporatism' idea implies a growing scepticism concerning the way political parties fulfil their central and determinant role within the pillar(-)system.

### What can be gleaned from sociology? The views of Billiet

An alternative analysis which takes more account of the cultural dimension can be found in Jaak Billiet's sociological theory of pillarization in Belgium. Characteristic for his thinking is the particular attention given to the lower sections of the pillars.

A central element in Billiet's analysis is the level of everyday formal and informal social relationships. What is called a pillar, is also a multitude of social relationships and networks that become a community through which subculture is made. One's religion, thinking, notion of mankind and view on society circulates and is guided along these lines of daily formal and informal subcultural relationships. In this way the feeling and the awareness of an own identity, group(-)bindings, loyalty, solidarity and unanimity, knowing to be part of a distinct subculture, are developed and reinforced.

'... identification with the "pillars" does not take place on macro- but on micro-level, i.e. along the daily social relationships in the various environments where people have their homes, jobs, and recreation. To its participants the "pillar" never appears as such, but indeed as a concrete whole of familiar institutions and services that are established in their close private environments. Therefore, the patterns of pillarization should be examined in their concrete socio-cultural context. These patterns differ according to specific situations, and yet mechanisms operate at the level of Belgian society creating various coherent "worlds"'.<sup>80</sup>

This view on the phenomenon of pillarization is a more dynamic one. Pillars are considered to be more than a given structure of society that people will just have to resign and adapt to. The basis for Billiet's approach is to start from the meaning that active people themselves attach to their behavior and their social functions.<sup>15</sup> These meanings and self-images guide all behavior—and that behavior is what constructs the social reality of pillarization. Viewed this way, pillarization is a permanently changing confrontation of meanings that at one time may run parallel to each other, and then again may intersect if not collide with one another.

Another basic feature of Billiet's analysis is his relativistic view on the distinction between secular and religious. There is no absolute and universal distinction that may be used as a sociological starting-point, he argues:

'According to the positions they occupy in society, people will define in different ways what is "religious" and what is "profane". In other words, what we are dealing with, is a social distinction. If one takes this distinction a priori as an evident starting-point, one disregards the interesting phenomenon of some people calling a certain function (e.g. education) "profane", while others will want to keep that same function within the sphere of influence of religion'.<sup>16</sup>

Billiet advocates the same relativistic démarche, when dealing with the notion of 'pillarization'.

'... what we are dealing with, are conflict-situations in which the various people involved, from their social position and their concrete interests (or elevated values) that should be defended, interpret and define reality differently. "Pillarization" is one such definition, used by people involved in a specific way. This definition contains ideas and convictions on what "is", and at the same time a moral judgement on what is "good" or "bad". (...) "De-pillarization" and "pillarization" are programs that certain groups in society try to realize, be it often under a different name. The concepts are labels with a judgement on the product concerned'.<sup>17</sup>

It is Billiet's opinion that, at least in Belgium, pillarization constituted an opportunity for the catholic majority which, under a regime of separation of powers between the Church and the State, failed to maintain its control of social life. Billiet takes as an example the historical development of the 'public vs. private education' controversy in Belgium.

'The School-pact includes, besides a factual one, also a principal recognition of "people with different ideas". This required a new legitimation to cover from then on this so-called quest for balance, instead of a search to dominate (...). Thus the identity of each recognized sub-group would explicitly be taken into account without threatening the other sub-groups. In each sub-group the right for the other sub-groups to exist is recognized (...)'.<sup>18</sup>

Together with K. Dobbelaere, Billiet has developed a theory to explain how the catholic pillar persists as a structure and a culture in spite of a fall in church attendance, and how it even manages to flourish.<sup>19</sup> 'Social-cultural catholicism' is the notion their argument is based on.

'The question then is in which way catholic pillar-organizations build up an identity, that also allows people that do not go to church and non-religious people to feel at home with them'.<sup>20</sup>

Billiet and Dobbelaere look for factors guiding and stimulating this alternative of social-cultural catholicism, and they distinguish the following ones.

(a) The religious-philosophical legitimation of the catholic pillar is lasting. The religious-philosophical cleavage is still real in Belgium. However, its legitimacy is now formulated in different terms: one is no longer speaking of 'catholic' but of 'christian'. A legitimation is thus created that can also appeal to those who in other respects attach no value to Church or religiosity.

(b) Typical for catholic organizations (schools, hospitals, trade-unions, mutualities) is the notion of 'better services' they are associated with. To this must be added the material interests represented by a complex of pillarized organizations such as savings-banks, insurance companies, social housing, the professional career of tens of thousands of personnel, and so on. Additionally there is the feeling of living in a separate world: one is used to a particular network of facilities and organizations, to the kind of goods and services it provides, and to the people that staff the network. It is a world one feels familiar secure with'.

(c) The pillarized social and political order is justified on four principles that are far remote from religion and are derived from the free-market-

economy theory: free choice, private initiative, subsidiarity, and profit.

(d) The lack of alternatives is still widely felt.

'Catholics cannot escape from "their" pillar without ending up in another one (...) When one changes over, "one falls from the frying-pan into the fire". This argument applies to each otherwise irrefutable criticism on one's own pillar-structures: "surely the others are no better, on the contrary"'.<sup>21</sup>

(e) Finally, there is the central role played by the political party within the catholic pillar-complex. What makes Billiet's and Dobbelaere's analysis once again so remarkable, is that, in contrast to what is usually done, their emphasis is primarily on 'culture' with regard to the nature and radiation of the party-political center.

'Central notions in that doctrine: democracy, pluralism, solidarity between classes and estates, and human dignity. This is all bound together by a personalistic philosophical vision on man and society, and it is expressed through a certain use of language that cannot be found with other pillars: "complete development of man's person", "equal opportunities to all", "economy serving man", "to any man a valuable existence".

"Man first" is the ideal played off against collectivism. And against neo-capitalism and liberalism, the christian-democracy seeks to find its place by advocating a broad control over political of economic power, in the name of social politics and the general well-being'.<sup>22</sup>

The way Billiet has proceeded so far in applying his more sociological approach to pillarization in Belgium retains flaws and weaknesses similar to those spotted our critical evaluation of Huyse's analysis with regard to 'realism' and heuristics. There is little or no improvement regarding the lack of hard facts and unambiguous data. This is, no doubt, in part simply due to the fact that Billiet is in his turn working with concepts and theses that are difficult to operationalize for empirical research, e.g. 'sub-culture', 'construction of reality', 'social milieu', 'a world one feels familiar with', 'a new christian concept of man and society'.

With its focus on value-norm-idea dimensions and processes of group-identification, solidarity, loyalty and mobilization at the lower-section level of pillars, Billiet's approach seems the perfect complement to Huyse's 'non-cultural' and excessively elite-oriented views. However, simply adding up Huyse's and Biliet's theories will not do. It is impossible to conceive of the integration of Huyse's notion of 'passive, apathetic and alienated rank-and-file' and Billiet's much more positive analysis of 'a

mass-level construction fo reality' into one single theory. The same applies to the concepts 'a debauching of elite-mass relationships through patronage and merely instrumentality-oriented commitments' (Huyse) versus 'a revitalization and a broadening of value-norm-idea affinities and -allegiances' (Billiet), or 'eroded pillars that have become social supermarkets' (Huyse) versus 'a new and durable legitimacy of pillarized structures through social-cultural catholicism' (Billiet).

To attempt to combine Huyse's analysis and Billiet's approach means that one will ultimately have to reject essential components as well as drastically readapt some other basic elements of both theories. How this 're-construction of theory' is to be achieved, and what the new and as such more complete Huyse-Billiet approach resulting from it will be, is a question that still remains to be answered.

## Notes

1. Lijphart, 1968-B.
2. Lorwin, 1966, p. 185.
3. Huyse, 1970, 1973-B.
4. Huyse, 1973-B, p. 10.
5. Brande, 1963.
6. Major features of top-politicians: usually working back-stage; in a position more remote from the voter than the average politician; acting mostly through horizontal connections (i.e. with leaders of other pillars); having a distinctly own political style of matter-of-factness, moderation, and pragmatism (plus certain characteristics of an 'esprit de corps').
7. Huyse, 1973-B, p. 28.
8. Huyse, 1973-B, p. 38.
9. Huyse, 1979-B.
10. Huyse, 1979-B, pp. 185-186.
11. Huyse, 1982.
12. Huyse, 1979-B, pp. 184-185.
13. Huyse, 1979-B, pp. 185-186.
14. Billiet, 1973, p. 93.
15. Billiet, 1974, p. 350.
16. Billiet, 1974, p. 354.
17. Billiet, 1974, p. 351.
18. Billiet, 1976-A, pp. 248-249.
19. Dobbelaere (1980) provides statistical data to substantiate the hypothesis of the vitality and possibly even further growth of the catholic pillar.
20. Billiet, 1976-B, p. 250.
21. Billiet, 1976-B, p. 253.
22. Billiet, 1976-B, p. 254.

**Lijphart *malgré lui*;****The politics of accommodation in the 'Indonesian Question'\***

J. Bank

On the 17th of August 1945 – just two days after the Japanese capitulation in the Pacific and some weeks before the arrival of the allied forces on Java – two well-known Indonesian nationalists, Soekarno and Hatta, proclaimed in Djakarta the independence of the 'Republik Indonesia'. This message proved an unwelcome surprise for The Netherlands, the colonial power in the area. The Dutch political elite had in fact prepared itself during the German occupation of Holland (1940-1945) for a new relationship with the Netherlands-Indies in the form of a Commonwealth but had not anticipated Indonesian independence. Indeed, it was some four years before the Dutch finally reconciled themselves to Indonesian nationalism. Four times between 1945 and 1949 – at the 'Hoge Veluwe', in Linggadjati, on the American troop-ship 'Renville', and in Batavia (the colonial name of Djakarta) and Djokjakarta – negotiations were conducted while Dutch armed forces also undertook two military campaigns against the Republic. Then, on the 27th December 1949, the sovereignty of the 'Republik Indonesia Serikat', the United States of Indonesia, was finally recognized.

In the present Republic of Indonesia the birth of the state is commemorated annually in terms of a national revolution. In Dutch historiography, however, the struggle for Indonesian independence is generally known as the 'Indonesian Question'. The reason to concentrate on that subject in this special issue and, in particular, on Lijphart's theory of 'consociationalism' can be related to its importance in the search for the *Politics of Accommodation* in Dutch modern history. Historical experience in the processes of decolonization actually shows us that the struggle for independence can provoke severe repercussions such as the collapse of the regime at the heart of colonialism. For instance, a direct connection can be discovered between

\* This paper forms part of the author's dissertation on *Katholieken en de Indonesische Revolutie* ('Catholics and the Indonesian Revolution' which contains a brief summary in English) (Baarn 1983). For an extensive survey of archives and relevant literature the reader is referred to that publication.