

1 **Will Belgium fall apart?**

2 (original at
3 [http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jun/14/belgium-new-](http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jun/14/belgium-new-flemish-alliance-general-election)
4 [flemish-alliance-general-election](http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jun/14/belgium-new-flemish-alliance-general-election))

5 The success of the separatist New Flemish Alliance party in Sunday's
6 Belgian general election will be seen by some as evidence that Belgium is
7 finally about to fall apart. But those who gleefully await the implosion of a
8 country at the heart of the European Union are likely to be disappointed.
9 Reports of the impending death of Belgium are much exaggerated.

10 The election results confirm that many in Dutch- and French-speaking
11 communities find the complexities of the present Belgian federal state
12 constitution frustrating. Also, the Flemish generally think they are
13 subsidizing the French speaking Walloons, who do not even bother
14 showing enough gratitude by at least trying to learn some Dutch. Then
15 there is the growing social tension over the consequences of the global
16 crisis, which has hit Belgium and left it with massive debt. But those
17 Flemings who want a complete break-up of Belgium with an independent
18 Flanders remain a minority.

19 The Flemish nationalists acknowledge that major policy areas such as
20 defence and justice should remain Belgian until they can be transferred to
21 the responsibility of a fully federal EU. Since this is an unlikely
22 development in the near future, the nationalists will, in practice, settle for
23 a further devolution of powers to the regions but within the Belgian
24 federal state. Negotiations to form the next government will be long and
25 difficult. Success or failure will probably come down to the thorny issue of
26 the status of the Brussels region and the extent to which social security
27 should no longer be a matter for the Belgian government but transferred
28 instead to the regions – anathema to the dominant parties of the left in
29 Wallonia.

Questions

- 1) Read through the entire article. Does it suggest that Belgium will indeed fall apart? Find the sentences which tell you the answer to this question.
- 2) Why are many communities frustrated at the present constitution of Belgium?
- 3) What are the other reasons for the electoral success of the separatists?
- 4) Do the separatist insist on Flanders having its own independent army?
- 5) What is the likely result of the separatists' victory in terms of the administration of Belgium?
- 6) What is going to be the most difficult issue of the negotiations to form the next Belgian government?
- 7) The Czechs also boast a history of co-existence with another nation in one state. Given the current problems experienced by Belgium, do you think that the break-up of Czechoslovakia was a good thing? Why/ why not?

Vocabulary

be about to do st. (lines 6 to 7) – be on the brink of doing something, be very close to doing something, be ready to do something

settle for something (line 22) – to be satisfied with (usually less than you have wanted before)

devolution of powers (line 23) – the granting of powers from the central government of a state to government at a sub-national level, such as a regional, local, or state level. The notorious example in the English speaking world is the granting of powers to parts of the UK such as Scotland and Northern Ireland under Tony Blair.

thorny issue (line 25) – a difficult question that is the cause of arguments

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, or <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

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Tým jazykové skupiny Spěváček:

