



Fighting for Your Host Country: A Look at Non-Citizen Soldiers in Belgium

The Power of Diversity in the Armed Forces:
International Perspectives on Immigrants' Participation in the Military

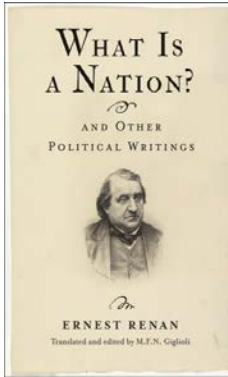
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Content

1. Belgian societal context
2. Evolution of military organizations
3. Why foreign recruitment with regards to domestic soldiers?
4. Perceptions among the military organizations

Belgian societal context



Starting point: modern states should rely on citizen soldiers for national Defence

“Nation: memory of a common past + reaffirmation of wanting to live together”

→ Quite problematic in the Belgian case

Traced back to the creation of the Belgian state (1830) and its more recent institutional arrangements (from the 70s) in a federal state (1993)



Belgian identity and culture fragmented by language

Military organization= one of the last national symbols

Centrality of the linguistic/bilingual dimension (which can refrain non-citizens soldiers to enter the military, mainly for Offr who have to be bilingual)



3 Belgian Regions: responsible for policy areas regarding language use and cultural policies, immigrant integration policies devolved from central-state to meso-level authorities → policy divergence

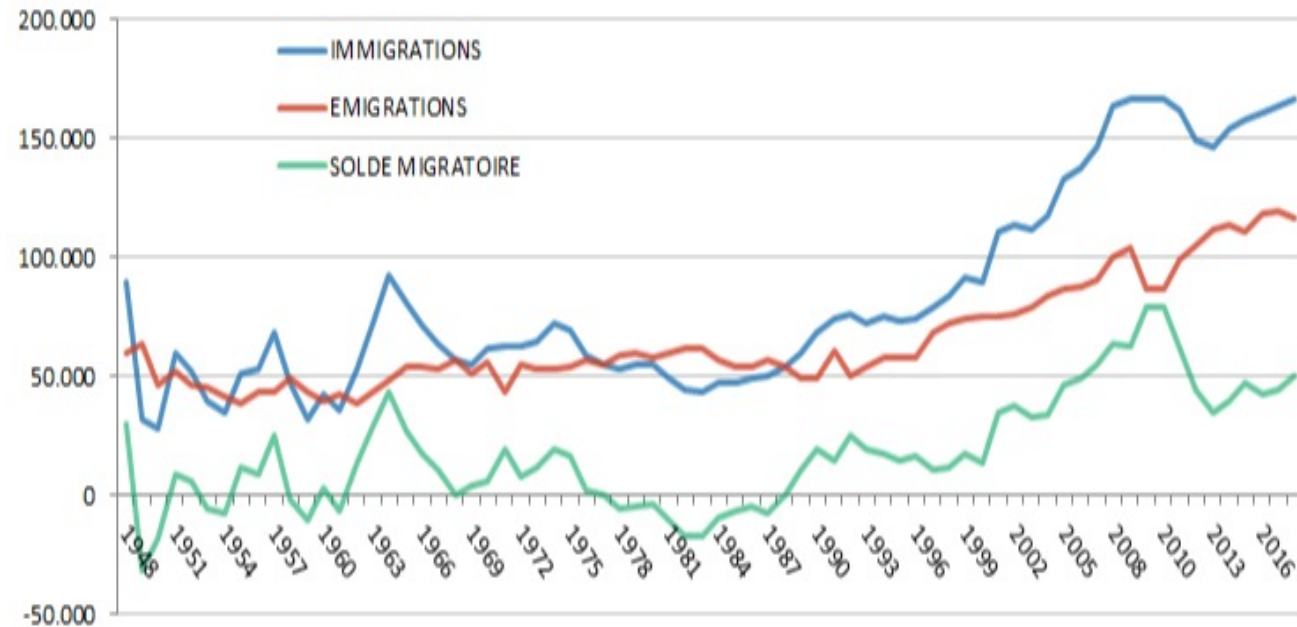
Assimilationist integration approach in the French-speaking part of the country (FR) versus multiculturalist approach in the Dutch-speaking part (NETH)

69.8% of the whole Belgian population identified as native, 16.5% as first-generation immigrants, and 13.7% as the second-generation immigrants

- Top-4 countries: Morocco, France, Italy and the Netherlands

- Mainly represented in Brussels, then in Wallonia and Flanders

Migratory balance in Belgium (1948-2016)



Source: <https://statbel.fgov.be/fr/themes/population/migrations>

Evolution of military organizations

Past (18th-19th century): citizen armies (rather homogenous societies)

Nation-state and nationalism as key motivation

Military seen as the « School of the nation »

Since the end of the cold war: post-modern armed forces

Professional armies

Public institutions so they should mirror the society they serve

Ethnic diversity in the military

Foreign recruitment of non-citizen soldiers is a reality in many countries (UAE, France, UK, ...) for several reasons:

- Specific expertise (Australia)
- Reinforce ethnic diaspora (Israël)
- Enough people in its ranks (Belgium)

Even if Belgium does have a historic reliance on the use of non-citizen labor (bilateral agreements after WW2 with Italy, Marokko and Turkey)

Topic rarely discussed before the nineties

Turning point: Somalia in 1993

+ 1995: suspension of the conscription



Several steps:



2003: Creation of a “Diversity Steering Group”

2003: Law concerning the recruitment of non-Belgian EU nationals

2006: Federal Administration’s Diversity Charter signed by the Bel Defence

2007: Application of the anti-discrimination law

2014: Diversity Policy

2016: Strategic Vision : the word diversity was not cited even once!

But new Strategic Vision expected by the end of this year...

**Table 1 : Distribution of Belgians and non-Belgian EU nationals among military personnel
(by year and nationality, 2019)**

	Belgians	Non-Belgian EU nationals
2015	29 542	139
2016	28 678	138
2017	27 697	144
2018	26 327	156
2019	25 345 Men: 23 153- Women: 2 192	183 Men: 153- Women: 30

Source: Annual report 2019, DGHR, MOD, Brussels

**Table 2: Distribution of non-Belgian EU nationals among military personnel
(by rank and nationality, 2019)**

Nationality	Officers	NCOs	Privates	Total
Netherlands	5	20	50	75
France	3	20	21	44
Italy	1	3	12	16
Spain		3	7	10
Germany			7	7
Romania		3	5	8
Portugal		1	4	5
Poland		1	3	4
Croatia			2	2
Bulgaria		1	1	2
Czech republic			1	1
Hungary		1	2	3
Latvia			1	1
Luxemburg			1	1
United Kingdom			1	1
Switzerland		1		1
Total	9	54	120	183 (153 men and 30 women)

**Table 3 : Distribution of Belgians and non-Belgian EU nationals among civilian personnel
(by year and nationality, 2019)**

	Belgians	Non-Belgian EU nationals
2015	1 698	11
2016	1 598	14
2017	1 520	15
2018	1 439	13
2019	1 444 Men: 796 - Women: 648	19 Men: 8 - Women: 11

Source: Annual report 2019, DGHR, MOD, Brussels

**Table 4: Distribution of non-Belgian EU nationals among military personnel
(by level and nationality, 2019)**

	Level A	Level B	Level C	Level D	Total
Poland			1		1
France	3	2	1	1	7
Italy	2		2	1	5
Portugal		1			1
Switzerland				1	1
Spain			1		1
Greece			1		1
The Netherlands	1				1
DRC				1	1

Very limited amount of non-Belgian military personnel (around 200 although the law was promulgated almost 20 years ago)

Military foreign recruits mainly from our neighbouring countries (Netherlands and France)

Less represented among high-ranked categories (officers and civilians level A)

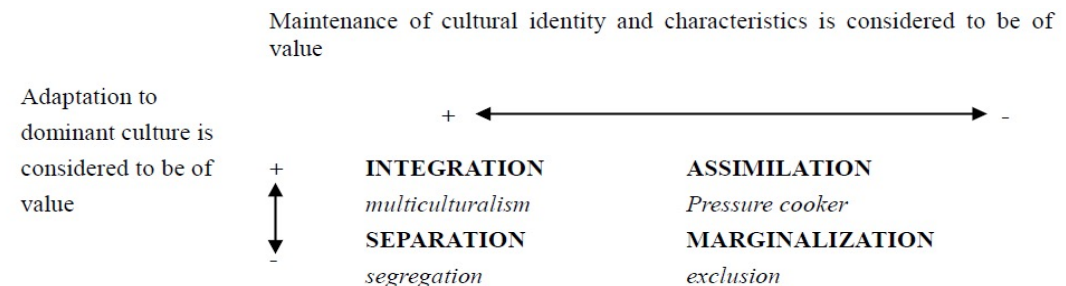
More women (16%) among military foreign recruits (><9% at the Belgian Defence)

4. Perceptions of ethnic diversity in the military

Survey conducted in **2009**:

In the public context, Belgian Defence employees (33%) were in favor of an adaptation of ethnic minorities to the dominant culture (assimilation strategy).

Less than one Defence employee out of ten (9%) believes ethnic minorities should maintain their own culture in a public/ professional content (integration strategy)



Source: Richardson, Op den Buijs & Van der Zee (2011)

Survey conducted in 2015

Belgian identity is still favored:

32% of the Belgian Defence employees rather agreed with the fact that *“Foreigners do not have their place at the Belgian Defence”*

Even more resistance towards non-EU citizens:

Only 14% agree with the fact that *“Belgian residents who are originally from outside the European Union should be allow to enter to the Belgian Defence”*

Limited representation of ethnic minorities at the Belgian Defence

Loyalty remains connected to citizenship and even more closely to native-born citizens

- « Divided loyalties » of immigrants while, when analysed, transnational loyalties seem to co-exist
- Potential risks of external influences (by foreign governments)

Cohesion is still very much associated with social cohesion (similarities and closed bonds) instead of task cohesion (complementarity and professionalism)

Conclusion

Implicit norm = modern states should rely on citizen soldiers for national defence

- Deep national ties as cohesive element

- Belgium fragmented by language

Foreign recruitment of non-citizen soldiers is a reality for years in many countries

Also legally possible in Belgium since 2003

- Normative justification? To fill ranks in a too rapid downsized military organization

- Very limited effect until now

Still some resistances among the military institutions

Thank you very much for your attention.

Questions?

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