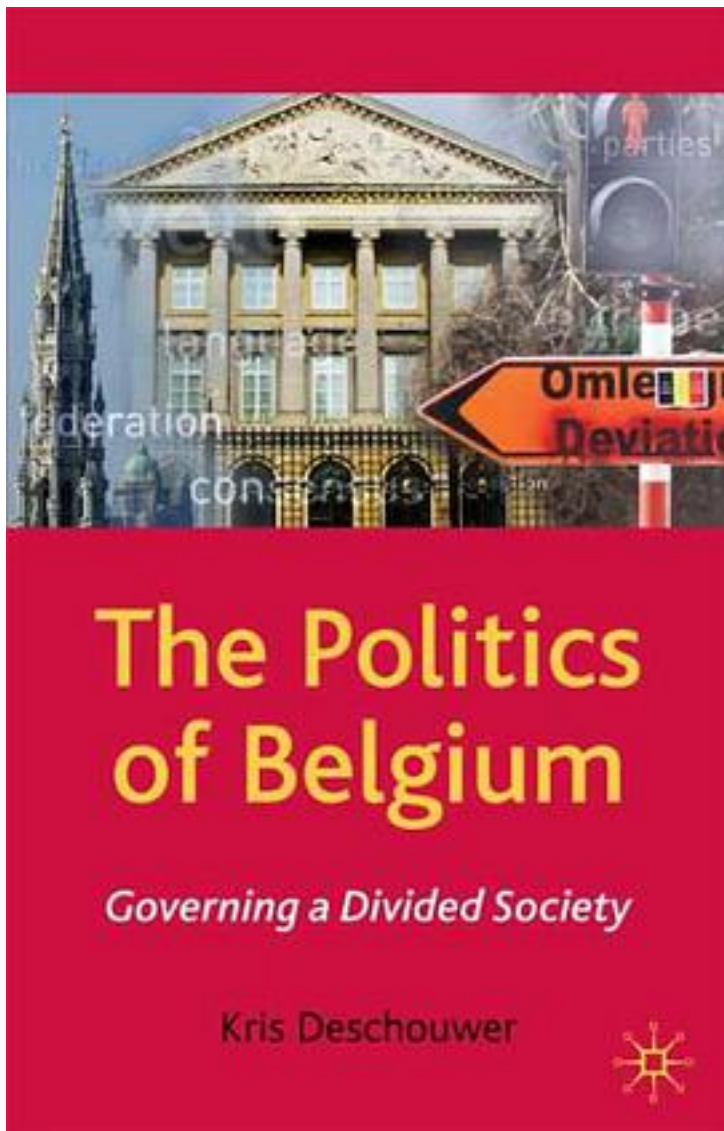


The Politics of Belgium



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著者:Brans, Marleen (EDT)/ De Winter, Lieven (EDT)/ Swenden, Wilfried (EDT)

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For too long Belgium remained an unexplored terrain by comparative political scientists. Belgium's politics were best known through the writings of Arend Lijphart, who considered it a model case of consociationalism. Over the past ten to fifteen years, the analysis of consociationalism has been complemented by a more detailed coverage of Belgium's spectacular transformation process from a unitary into a federal state, moving rapidly now to disintegration. Likewise, several peculiar aspects of Belgian politics, such as the record fragmentation of its party system, have been covered in edited volumes or international journals. However, given the complexity of the Belgian configuration of political institutions and actors, any inclusion of particular aspects of the Belgian case in comparative work calls for an in depth and integrated understanding of the broader political system. This is the first book which provides such an analysis. It brings together a team of 19 political scientists and sociologists who aim to explain the dynamics and incentives of institutional change and seek to analyze the intricate interplay between the main institutional components of the Belgian body politic. The sociological, political and institutional determinants and the consequences of the 'federalisation' process of Belgium is the central theme that links each of the individual chapters. This book will be essential reading for students who want to understand the politics of Belgium and for anyone with a strong interest in West European Politics, comparative politics and comparative federalism. This book was published as a special issue of "West European Politics".

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