ONLINE APPENDIX TO

“Belgium’s historic beer diversity: should we raise a pint to institutions?”

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Institutional History of the Belgian Area between 843 and 1830.

The area that today comprises Belgium—itself only a country since 1830—experienced a geographically heterogeneous array of institutional regimes over the last millennium. The Belgian area was unified under Charlemagne’s empire until the Treaty of Verdun in 843, which splintered the empire into three kingdoms among the three surviving sons of Louis the Pious, the son of Charlemagne. These included East Francia (which became the largest component of the Holy Roman Empire); Middle Francia (the central portion of the empire) and West Francia (which later became the Kingdom of France). After several deaths and disputes, Middle Francia was divided under the Treaty of Meerssen (870) and the Treaty of Ribbemont (880). As a result, land west of the Scheldt River became part of West Francia. Still, the local Counts of Flanders achieved a large
degree of independence from the French over the ensuing centuries and the semiautonomous region thrived economically. The remainder of modern day Belgium—south and east of the Scheldt—eventually became under German rule in the Holy Roman Empire.

In the following centuries parts of the territory of current-day Belgium changed hands several times between the “French” and the “Germans.” For instance, in 1384, Flanders became part of the Burgundian Empire and Phillip the Good began to expand this empire to the south and east into more (but not all) of present day Belgium including Brussels. In 1482, after the death of Mary of Burgundy (who had been married to Archduke Maximilian of Habsburg) part of the Low Countries (at that time current-day The Netherlands, Belgium, Picardy, Artois and Luxembourg) came under the control of the Austrian House of the Habsburgs monarchy in 1493 as part of the Imperial Seventeen Provinces, a term applied to the Imperial states of the Habsburg Netherlands in the 16th century, which roughly covered the Low Countries plus most of the modern French region of Nord-Pas-de-Calais including Artois, French Flanders, and French Hainaut. In the mid-16th century, this area, while still nominally part of the Holy Roman Empire, effectively became ruled by the Spanish Habsburgs. However, areas in the north—mainly current-day The Netherlands but also some northern parts of present day Belgium—resisted Catholic rule of the Habsburgs and joined the Republic of the United Netherlands (or the Seven United Provinces) after the Eighty Years War (1568–1648). The southern part (which covers the majority of current-day Belgium) remained part of the Spanish Habsburgs and became known as the Southern Netherlands (or Spanish Netherlands).

At the beginning of the 18th century, the last Habsburg Spanish king Charles II died childless and a proposal was made to divide his global empire amongst other European royal
houses. A large part would go to the heirs and descendants of the French King Louis XIV (from the Bourbon dynasty) and another part to the Austrian Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I (from the Habsburg dynasty), both of whom were sons-in-law to Charles II’s father, Philip IV of Spain and grandsons of Charles’ grandfather, Philip III of Spain. However, an attempt to divide the Spanish Empire as such failed, and Charles II gave his entire empire to his grandnephew Philip, Duke of Anjou, the second-eldest grandson of King Louis XIV of France (from the Bourbon dynasty). Thus the area that is Belgium today came under French control. Still, it was feared that a dominant House of Bourbon would jeopardize the balance of power. Thus the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713) involved several European superpowers—the so-called ‘big alliance’—fighting the kingdom of France and the Spanish state so as to prevent the Bourbon dynasty from ruling over all French and Spanish possessions. This alliance succeeded and in 1713 the Treaty of Utrecht ceded control of the Spanish Netherlands—an area that included most of modern day Belgium—to the Austrian House of the Habsburg Monarchy, under the name of Austrian Netherlands

In 1789, inspired by revolutionary events in the United States and in France, Belgium declared its independence calling itself the United States of Belgium, however the Austrians quickly took back control of the area. Six years later, the French “liberated” Belgium from Austria and made it part of France. After the fall of Napoleon in 1815, the Belgian area was assigned to the Kingdom of the Netherlands to act as a buffer against France for the rest of Europe. Finally, in 1830, Belgium became a sovereign nation. On 7 February 1831, the separation from the Dutch was formalized via the Belgian Constitution.