

# *Peace in Flanders*

*Attitudes and commitments of Flemish  
people regarding peace and violence*

REPORT  
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# Preface

Surely everybody agrees that 'peace' is important. Without peace – certainly in the most elementary sense of peace being the absence of war – life as a societal or social expression is not possible. But how exactly do people think about or interpret peace? In a region such as Flanders, where for decades war has been an alien and absent feature, do people think of peace as a prime aspect of life, in other words, as a priority? Does the average Flemish citizen consider peace as a self-evident fact of life? Is peace something that one really should not have to worry about? And how do the Flemish people define the concept of 'peace'? Does it pertain, in effect, only to the peace that reigns amongst states, to the absence of war amongst nations: something that might be defined as 'International Peace'? Or is there, likewise, such a thing as 'Inter-personal Peace', which might be defined as peaceful co-existence? And do this 'International Peace' and this 'Inter-personal Peace' touch upon common ground?

These questions form the starting points for this survey report. The report contains the results of a systematic and expansive survey of more than 1,000 inhabitants of Flanders about their perception of peace, their attitudes vis-à-vis peace, and their active and potential commitment to the cause of peace. Aside from organising a broad public survey, the study also includes a number of focus groups consisting of people active in the field of peace.

The reporting of the results of this study was carried out by the research group Media, Movements and Politics (M<sup>2</sup>P) of the University of Antwerp. The survey itself was conducted by the research agency TNS-Dimarso. The research was carried out in close consultation with the Science Secretariat of the Flemish Peace Institute. Aside from new empirical material, this report also contains data that have been gathered from previous studies carried out by the research group M<sup>2</sup>P. These data constitute the broader empirical framework wherein the measurement and quantification of the precise peace conceptions and engagements of the Flemish population in the year 2007 are contained.

The Peace Institute hopes, with this study, to contribute not only to the scientific debate but likewise furnish an instrument to all individuals that wish to bring the peace agenda actively to people's attention. The study reveals not only a wealth of observations but also raises new questions. In the meantime, one observation is very encouraging: the study demonstrates that the Flemish citizen is favourably inclined to reflect on peace issues and that there indeed exists a great potential for the mobilisation of people in the cause of peace and against the use of force and violence.

Tomas Baum  
Director



Media, Movements & Politics, or M<sup>2</sup>P, is a research group attached to the Political Science Department of the University of Antwerp. The focus of M<sup>2</sup>P is the non-institutional side of the political process. M<sup>2</sup>P's research interests lie more specifically with three non-institutional actors within the political arena: social movements (civil society), mass media, and the public (public opinion and participation).

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# 1

*The study: research  
design and presentation  
of key variables*



# 1.1

## Public opinion

How does 'the Flemish citizen' think about peace? In order to be able to answer this question, it is important, first of all, to define how to interpret this conglomerate of citizens. This study will, in fact, deal with the 'Flemish public opinion'. The notion of 'public opinion' is not always used in the same uniform manner to express the same concept. This paragraph will deal briefly with a number of different notions of public opinion, and on how it is generated.

Glynn, Herbst, O'Keefe & Shapiro (1999) distinguish five different definitions for the notion of public opinion, which makes it immediately obvious that it hardly pertains to one single uniform meaning or interpretation. These definitions are very briefly shown in the following Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1** *Five concepts of public opinion*

1	Public opinion is the aggregate of individual opinions.
2	Public opinion is a reflection of currently ruling public thought.
3	Public opinion is evident in the clash between group interests.
4	Public opinion represents the opinion of the media and elite groups.
5	Public opinion is a fiction.

Let us start with the last notion that: *public opinion is a fiction*. This interpretation is true and not true. True, if with it is meant that there is not such a thing as, for instance, ‘the Flemish citizen’. Nonetheless, public opinion exists as a theoretical concept, which, on the one hand, always holds in a simplification of reality, yet, whereby, on the other hand, reality can be more closely examined and understood better. In the present study, public opinion will be interpreted as a combination of the first four concepts. In the first place, it represents the sum total of the individual opinions. Or, more *in concreto*, public opinion represents ‘the aggregate of answers to national representative surveys’ (Zaller, 1992: 276). Almost inevitably then, you wind up with the second interpretation, namely public opinion as representing those ideas or convictions that are being espoused by the majority of the population. Finding its origin in the ‘spiral of silence’ of Noelle-Neumann (1984), this notion places the emphasis on the fact that individual opinions are mostly conformist and will follow the opinion(s) in vogue, which makes it more difficult for individuals holding non-conformist views to effectively express such opinions. In other words, people holding non-conformist views will sometimes, under pressure by group conformism, keep their opinions to themselves. The third vision on public opinion, which is seen as the result of public discussions, grows out of the tendencies of purely single-issue opinion surveys, wherein no knowledge of the background and other opinions and preferences of the respondents is asked for, whereby the relative significance of a given opinion, as well as the question regarding the forming of an opinion, is kept secondary (Glynn e.a., 1999). This problem is obviated in our survey, since we are dealing with a broad-based questionnaire, whereby a number of specifically theme-related questions are complemented with questions about broader attitudes and socio-demographic characteristics. It should be pointed out that, when in this study we set out in search of the attitudes of the ‘Flemish citizen’ vis-à-vis peace in the broad sense, it does, indeed, pertain to the responses of a representative survey of Flemish individuals to a number of questions in the study. It is exactly the representative character of the survey that allows us, with attention to a later explained limited margin of error, to use it to make statements about the attitudes of the ‘Flemish individuals’.



## 1.2

# How is public opinion generated?

More important than the 'what' question is the question *how* public opinion is formed. In other words: if public opinion is the sum total of the opinions as expressed by the population, the question is how the people formulate their individual opinions. The answer to that question is based on the not as yet discussed definition of what constitutes public opinion: the public opinion that represents the opinion of the media and of elite groups. Obviously, this rather cynical description offers a broad distortion of reality, yet, in a nuanced form it does represent the essence of the manner in which political science currently views the notion. The starting principle in this – following in the footsteps of Lippmann (1925) – is *not* that people are ignorant or that they need to be led by a kind of enlightened oligarchy but, rather, that people simply do not have the time or energy to gather full information about state and other political issues, and therefore do not have the possibility to formulate a well-founded opinion on such matters. It is, for that reason, that, in many instances, and certainly at the moments when they are solicited, the opinions of the media and politicians are embraced. The latter, in their turn, profile themselves by the size of the support their policy receives from the public opinion. More nuanced is the influential view on public opinion which Zaller (1992) worked out in his RAS-model (*receive-accept-sample*), wherein also the individual political awareness is assigned an important role to play. In this fashion we do gain insight into the manner in which the combination of individual values and attitudes, on the one hand, together with the exposure to discourse by media and by the elite segments in society, on the other, lead to the individual formulation of opinion. We shall briefly address this point here. In line with Lippmann's idea, the basis of Zaller's thought process is that people do not just have one single opinion about a (political) issue, but that this opinion in most instances is expressed only when asked for. In Zaller's own words: '*most of what gets measured as public opinion does not exist except in the presence of a pollster*' (Zaller, 1992: 265). Which does not, however, mean that those opinions would not be genuine. What differentiates people is the significance and the consistency of their opinions, which, on the one hand, depend on their personal (political) values and attitudes, and, on the other, on the (volume of) information that reaches them. People form their opinions on the basis of information which they have *received*, which they have *accepted* or dismissed, and which, at the moment that they voice an opinion, has first entered their minds (*sampled*).

As already mentioned, people seldom have set opinions about a diversity of themes and topics, but they formulate these quasi on the spot, when they are asked for them. And they do so on the basis of those interpretations or ideas that strike them as most *salient*, in other words, the ideas that, as it were, come first to their minds or ‘spontaneously arise’. It is in this way that Zaller describes how people formulate opinions: by a combination of their own values and their *political awareness*, with external information about political topics. Through this outlook on personal opinion forming, we can also make a distinction in the formulation of opinions amongst people with a lower or a higher grade of political awareness. People with a high grade of political awareness will, by definition, process much more political information (*receive*), but they will also be more selective in what they themselves will take into consideration (*accept*), whereby their ultimate opinions are bound to be relatively consistent, both mutually and also with respect to their broader political values and beliefs. Less ‘aware’ individuals process less information and are less capable of finding rebuttals to that information, which makes their opinions less internally consistent and more variable.

Zaller’s model makes it clear that the combination of personal values and attitudes with information from the elite groups forms the basis for the construction of individual opinions. In Chapter 3 we will return in greater detail to the question about individual attitude formation, and, more in particular on the question of attitudes towards peace. And, further, before we discuss our survey of the Flemish population, we shall first in a following paragraph touch very specifically upon the relationship that exists between the public authorities (government) and the public opinion, and determine whether or not the standpoints of various national authorities with respect to a question with a very specific application to peace (the run-up to the 2003 war with Iraq) were reflected in the respective national public opinions voiced on the subject.

## 1.3

# Public opinion about peace and war: The case of Iraq

In the run-up to the Iraq war that began on 20 March 2003, EOS-Gallup Europe conducted an opinion poll in various European countries in order to gauge the respective public opinions vis-à-vis the prospects of the impending war. This survey encompassed in total 15.080 respondents aged fifteen years and older, and was carried out between 21 and 27 January 2003. At that moment, the debate concerning the need of an invasion was being hotly debated in the public arena. The publication of the British Iraq dossier in September 2002 had increased international pressure to reopen the UN weapons inspections in Iraq. Following the adoption of Resolution 1441 in the Security Council, the inspectors re-assumed their task in November 2002, after an absence of 4 years. End January 2003 – under the watchful eye of the gathered international press representatives – the first official report by the weapons inspectors was presented to the Security Council.

Europe appeared split into two camps: states that supported the USA in its call for an invasion of Iraq (for instance, Great-Britain and Spain), and states that favoured the continuation of the inspections in order to arrive at a diplomatic solution of the conflict (for instance, France and Germany). The data provided by the EOS-Gallup Europe allow us to examine whether or not these official standpoints were likewise reflected in the national public opinions.

**Table 1.2** Attitudes about the impending war in Iraq, in 8 European countries (January 2003) (in %)

Country <sup>1</sup>	UK	SP	IT	NL	SW	BE	GE	Total
Do you consider that it would be justified or not that our country participates in a military intervention in Iraq if the United States intervenes militarily in Iraq without a preliminary decision of the United Nations? (unjustified)	68	78	81	84	90	84	89	82
The United States should intervene militarily in Iraq even if the United Nations does not give its formal agreement. (disagree)	68	77	79	80	86	78	87	79
Oil is the main motivation for which the United States wants to intervene militarily in Iraq. (agree)	60	79	73	74	75	72	72	72
Do you consider that it would be justified or not that our country participates in a military intervention in Iraq if the Iraqi regime does not cooperate with United Nations inspectors? (unjustified)	32	56	49	47	73	55	64	54
Do you consider that it would be justified or not that our country participates in a military intervention in Iraq if the United Nations Security Council decides on a military intervention in Iraq? (unjustified)	15	43	33	29	66	40	52	40
Do you consider that it would be justified or not that our country participates in a military intervention in Iraq if the United Nations inspectors discover weapons of mass destruction in Iraq? (unjustified)	15	41	37	30	67	39	46	39
Iraq represents a threat to World peace. (disagree)	23	35	28	33	43	37	34	33
Total anti-war score (average)	40	58	54	54	71	58	63	57
N	507	502	500	515	500	501	500	3525

Source: EOS-Gallup Europe, 21-27 January 2003

<sup>1</sup> The United Kingdom (UK), Spain (SP), Italy (IT), the Netherlands (NL), Switzerland (SW), Belgium (BE) and Germany (GE)

What is striking in the first place is that, in the face of the (then likely) war with Iraq, national public opinions nonetheless diverge strongly. It is clear that, certainly in the extreme cases, Zaller's theory seems to stand up. In the United Kingdom, where government support for the coming conflict was total, public sentiment opposed to the war was the lowest. In other words, the British government in this instance seemed to have been most successful in convincing its citizens of the legitimacy of its stance vis-à-vis the conflict. Especially should weapons of mass destruction (WMD) be found, British public support in favour of their country's engagement was bound to be quasi unanimous, very much in the same way they would support a war backed by a vote in the UN Security Council. In addition, the British people appeared most convinced that Iraq presented a threat to world peace. In this instance then, it is very evident that the hand drawn by the British government to justify its future involvement has easily reached – with help from the media – and convinced the citizenry – although there are of course a host of intermediate, and even alternative, factors that might be adduced to explain the parallel courses followed by the government and public opinion. At the opposite end of the war spectrum, we find the Swiss (SW), who achieve the highest anti-war score on all surveyed items. In this country, the government's official stance rejected war and invoked Swiss historical neutrality. Even with the UN Security Council's blessings for the war, the large majority of Swiss people did not wish to see their country become embroiled in war. The Germans also appeared relatively adamant in their objection to a war. Given a government that proved itself one of the most prominent opponents of the war, we find here as well a parallel between the government's stance and public opinion. Somewhere in between, we find three countries that did not play an active role in the war initiatives but, nonetheless, to a lesser or greater extent actively supported the war: Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands. Also in these countries, public opinion can be explained in broad lines on the basis of Zaller's public opinion model. The only relative stand-out is... Belgium. Belgian public opinion vacillated equally between the official stance of pro-war and of anti-war countries. In Belgium, both the government and the opposition publicly disavowed the idea of war, while the Belgian government even formed an alliance with France and Germany in order to extend efforts along the diplomatic path in order to avoid an outbreak of hostilities. Nonetheless, amongst the Belgians, a war would have found relative public acceptance, especially if backed by the UN Security Council, a viewpoint that, in itself, was compatible with the prevailing official standpoint: the then minister of Foreign Affairs, Louis Michel, was in effect a prominent advocate of arriving at a solution via the UN.

It thus appears that Zaller's theory, in its broad outlines, stands up in our case: national public opinions about complex issues are determined by the standpoints that are voiced by the national elite. All the more reason then, we thought, to ask, over and above the telephone survey of a representative sample of the Flemish people, a number of these 'elite representatives' to voice their opinions about the central theme of this study: war, peace and non-violence. We brought them together in four focus groups. In the next section of this report we shall elaborate briefly on them. Following the explanation of the organisation of, and our approach to, the focus groups, we will zoom in on the data-gathering and present the most important explanatory (independent) variables that might be able to shed a different light on, and clarify attitudes towards, peace and non-violence. Besides a host of socio-demographic variables, we have, on the basis of the focus groups and a study of the pertinent literature, also submitted our respondents to a large number

of questions about specific attitudes and behaviour. All of these variables will be discussed within this chapter. The following three chapters contain the core of the study and attempt to arrive at answers to three major queries in the study: what does 'peace' mean for the Flemish people? How do Flemish people interpret peace in concrete and more practical terms? And, finally, to what extent are they actively engaged in the cause of peace and/or how prepared are they to continue (and extend) their efforts. In chapter six we try to fit these newly gathered data into a broad social framework, to arrive at a number of conclusions in chapter seven.



## 1.4

# The Focus groups

In order to allow us to delve even more deeply into the subject in the initial phase of this study, four focus groups were organised at the end of October 2006, with the participation of representatives of various peace movements in Flanders, the civil society, the Flemish political parties, the unions and industry. Focus groups are an ideal tool for an initial concept demarcation or for finding out what is happening amongst a number of 'privileged witnesses' around a given theme (Slocum, 2003: p.97). The practice is reasonably inexpensive and, in addition, a simple method, with a flexible structure where participants can question one another or elaborate further on each other's questions. Focus groups create a more 'natural' context, which stands the forming of opinions in good stead. A possible disadvantage is the rather limited control over the discussion process (ibid.). We opted, for that reason, to proceed on the basis of eighteen propositions in order to give the discussion a specific focus and, at the same time, steer it into a given direction. In attachment 1, we provide an overview of the propositions we employed.

The selection of our interlocutors was carried out primarily on the basis of their (in)direct involvement vis-à-vis the theme of 'peace and war'. The choice for members of the peace movements is, obviously, evident. They are manning the front lines in issues of peace or opposition to war. Candidates involved included, amongst others, Vrede vsw, Pax Christi, and VOS. For a second focus group, we looked towards representatives from broader civil society: in the first place, organisations such as 11.11.11 or Amnesty International, but, likewise, also youth movements that in their own way express a 'message for peace'. For the third focus group, made up of Flemish politicians, we restricted ourselves to representatives from those political parties that are represented in the Flemish Parliament and are thus able to define the 'peace agenda' there. For the fourth and last focus group, we included representatives of both the labour unions and of those firms whose commercial activities are related to the (arms)technology sector (such as, for instance, aerospace group Asco), or that are associated with activities in areas rife with conflict (e.g., the diamond sector or the bank sector when it pertains to ethical questions about investments). While in this regard we may, conceivably, play off employers versus employees, it appeared that their collective perspective, that is from the point of view of 'employment opportunities' is nevertheless reasonably compatible.

**Table 1.3** Overview of the participants in the Focus Groups about Peace in Flanders<sup>II</sup>

Focusgroup	Name	Organisation/function	Present
<b>Representatives of the peace movement</b>			
24/10/2006 9h30 – 11h	Kim Hertog	Pax Christi	X
	Ludo De Brabander	Vrede vzw	X
	Jan Rutgeerts	Jeugd en Vrede	X
	Nicole Van Bael	Forum voor Vredesactie	X
	Piet Chielens	Flanders Field Museum	excused
	Guy Leemans	Directeur Verbond VOS vzw	X
<b>Representatives of the political parties</b>			
24/10/2006 12h – 13h30	Herman De Vos	VLD	X
	David Geerts	sp.a	X
	Eloi Glorieux	Groen!	excused
	Jan Roegiers	spirit	X
	Roel Deseyn	CD&V	X
	Jan Loones	NV.A	excused
	Roland Van Goethem	VB	X
<b>Representatives of social civil society</b>			
25/10/2006 9h30 – 11h	Filip Reyniers	Amnesty International	X
	Jan Turf	Beleidscoördinator BBL	excused
	Rudy Demeyer	Studiedienst 11.11.11	X
	Leen Laenen	Oxfam Wereldwinkel	X
	Annemie Janssens	Algemeen Directeur KAV	X
	Hans Bouwen	Directeur Chiro	excused
<b>Representatives of industry and labour unions</b>			
25/10/2006 12h – 13h30	Wilson De Pril	Agoria vzw	excused
	Jef Maes	Asco Industries N.V.	X
	Marc Van Bockstael	Hoge Raad van Diamant	X
	Jeroen Roskams	Studiedienst ACV	X
	Marc Lenders	ABVV-Metaal	excused
	Wim Van Hellemont	Sustainability Researcher KBC	X

II At the start of the discussion, an explicit request was made that the participants address issues in the first place in their own name and only subsequently make an association with the party, organisation, or the business enterprise for which they work or of which they are a member. This was done in order to thwart to some degree any possible reticence during the conversations. This then means that the quotations attributed to these individuals throughout this report ought to be read and interpreted with the above in mind.

Potential participants were first contacted by telephone and were subsequently sent an 'official' invitation to attend. It was decided to select two dates and then, depending on the availability of the invitees, to contact other possible participants. Sometimes it happened that a substitute was sought within an organisation or a party. In order to guarantee the quality of the focus group, the number of participants per focus group was limited to minimum five and maximum eight people. Nonetheless, due to unexpected circumstances, the minimum participation was not achieved for every focus group. The focus groups met each time in the Frans Masereel hall at the Flemish Parliament. Table 1.3 offers an overview of the four different focus groups and their final participants. In this report, the focus groups are primarily used as illustration and in support of the findings of the survey. The quotations by the focus group members that have been included in this report have been read over and authorised by the persons involved.



# 1.5

## The survey

The representative survey was conducted by the scientific research agency TNS-Dimarso. The complete technical report may be found in attachment 2; following is a concise version thereof.

*The respondents contacted for the survey are all inhabitants of the Flemish Region, 15-years old or older, who possess sufficient proficiency in the Dutch language to respond to the questions.*

The respondents contacted for the survey are all inhabitants of the Flemish Region, 15-years old or older, who possess sufficient proficiency in the Dutch language to respond to the questions. The survey is based on telephone interviews, whereby the respondents have been contacted according to a gross sampling, with maximum geographic distribution. This gross sampling is composed of a population databank of fixed telephone numbers that lists all Belgacom and Telenet (the two main providers of telephone services in Belgium) subscribers. Furthermore, the targeted respondent within a contacted family is determined by a fixed random rule: one always asks for the family member who is older than 15 years of age and whose birthday is nearest. Per telephone number, in case of the absence of an answer or of the absence of the individual with the nearest birthday, TNS-Dimarso tries as a general rule to re-establish contact eight times before passing on to the next telephone number. First contacts were made during weekdays between 5.00 PM and 9.00 PM, or on Saturdays between 10.00 AM and 6.00 PM. To conduct a net number of 1.029 interviews, 3.196 telephone numbers were called. This led in 32.2% of the cases to a valid interview. Refusals form with a 54.3% rate the main reason why an interview could not be conducted. The percentage of non-contacts is 13.1%. All interviewers were thoroughly briefed in advance, with members of the research group M<sup>2</sup>P in attendance. The average time needed to conduct an interview was 36 minutes.

The age profile for the net sample deviates slightly from the population distribution. The sub-par representation of the 21 to 34 age group is due to the sampling method employed. The gross data file is based on subscribers with a fixed telephone line. Within the age group in question, as compared with the other age groups, between 20% and 30% of the subjects can be reached via GSM (cellular phone) only (Studiedienst van de Vlaamse Regering 2004). The decision not to contact the GSM numbers was a deliberate one. Since these respondents are recruited by TNS-Dimarso from a previously contacted sample, there is always the danger of an acquired (habitual) response distortion. These people are regularly contacted to participate in polls and are, as a result, quite 'well trained' in responding to telephone surveys. Table 2.2 shows the comparison of the sampling used with the Belgian population.

**Table 1.4** Comparison between the survey data and the data in the population sample

		Number in sample	% in sample	% in Flemish population
Gender	Male	509	49.5	49.0
	Female	520	50.5	51.0
Age	15-17	66	6.4	4.1
	18-20	41	4.0	4.1
	21-24	41	4.0	5.9
	25-34	120	11.7	15.3
	35-44	181	17.6	18.5
	45-54	209	20.3	17.0
	55-64	184	17.9	13.7
	65+	187	18.2	21.5
Education <sup>a</sup>	None/ elementary	135	13.2	23.23
	Lower sec.	164	16.0	19.92
	Higher sec	325	38.1	32.43
	Higher	68	22.6	16.41
	University	103	10.1	8.01
<b>Total</b>		<b>1029</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: TNS Dimarso, technical report, 22 January 2007.

Note <sup>a</sup>: The comparative population figures about education levels are taken from Instituut voor Sociaal en Politiek Opinieonderzoek (2004) p. 21.

We note that the respondents in our survey are, indeed, older than the average Flemish population. But it is especially the education factor that is distorted here, showing a higher schooling level in the survey than in the population. For that reason, we have decided to 'weigh' our data for these two background variables. In other words: respondents in their twenties with lower schooling are given the 'weight' that they should have in our study, based on the representative data for Flanders that we have at our disposal via ISPO surveys and the APS surveys. As from now on, only the weighted data will be reported, unless mentioned otherwise.



## 1.6

# Presentation of the dependent variable: the importance of peace the for Flemish people

As will further appear in Chapter 2, 'peace' is quite a multi-faceted notion, which makes a survey probing for its importance a very elaborate undertaking. Also the very question about the degree of importance that Flemish people attach to peace is, in itself, one of multiple import. For that reason, we have split the query into three distinct parts: what does 'peace' imply to the Flemish people (the perception of peace)? How do they think about peace (the attitudes vis-à-vis peace)? What are the Flemish people doing about peace, or what could they be doing about it (the behaviour with respect to peace)?

### **Perception**

What exactly is the meaning of 'peace'? How would Flemish people themselves define the notion of it? What do they associate the concept of peace with? How does peace relate to its opposite, namely war and violence? And what, in their opinion, are the most significant and telling causes for peace, war, and violence? We shall determine on the basis of those questions how the Flemish people interpret and perceive the notion of peace. Furthermore, we can in this section also examine the importance of peace in the eyes of the Flemish people, compared to their concerns about other social, economic, and political issues.

### **Attitudes**

Aside from the question as to what is meant by peace, it is meaningful to find out how the Flemish people think about peace. To that end, we have split peace into what we call the 'Inter-personal Peace' and the 'International Peace', and, likewise, their opposing counter-parts in 'inter-personal violence' on the one hand, and 'war and the use of force in an international context' on the other. How do the Flemish people think about war and international security? How important do they consider peace in comparison to other societal phenomena? To what extent does a relationship exist between these conceptions and their notions about violence and non-violence within their own society? And, finally, how 'peace-loving' is the Flemish individual?

## **Behaviour**

The third facet in the survey about the importance that the Flemish people attach to peace, is the question to what extent they themselves are active in trying to achieve a more peaceful co-existence and, thus, a more peaceful world, and to what degree they are prepared to commit themselves to become actively engaged in efforts towards peace. Here too we draw a distinction between the 'Inter-personal' and the 'International' peace.

Before we examine the Flemish perception of peace in the next chapter, we shall first elucidate a number of important independent explanatory variables. These are variables that can explain possible differences in the perception – and also attitudes and behaviour – of the Flemish people.

# 1.7

## Presentation of the independent variables

Not only peace itself is a multi-faceted notion, we may also expect that the manner in which peace and violence is thought about relates, and is tied, to a host of other variables. Aside from a number of more structural socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, and educational background, the manner in which the Flemish people think about peace likely relates to other broadly conceived and specific conceptions they have formulated. In this part of the study, we shall examine a number of those potentially explanatory variables.

### Socio-demographic variables

Table 1.5 shows a number of socio-demographic characteristics of the Flemish respondents.

**Table 1.5** *Socio-demographic characteristics (based on age and education) of the surveyed Flemish participants (N=1029)*

Variable	Categories	%
Gender	Male	48.9
	Female	51.1
Age	15-25	15.4
	26-35	15.7
	36-45	18.2
	46-55	17.2
	56-65	13.1
	66-75	14.0
	75+	6.4

Variable	Categories	%
Diploma	No/ elementary school	19.8
	Lower secondary school	17.3
	Higher secondary technical/vocational	20.5
	Higher secondary general	13.8
	Higher non-university education short type	14.0
	Higher non-university education long type	5.3
	University (also post-university)	9.3
Children	Yes	65.7
	No	34.3
Work situation	Not working	35.1
	Student	10.0
	Part-time	12.4
	Full-time	40.7
Job situation (current or previous)	Blue collar	36.2
	White collar	26.8
	Civil servant	11.3
	Independent worker	11.3
Work sector	Agriculture, industry, construction	30.3
	Services, trade, catering	30.7
	Education, research, welfare, health,...	19.2
Religion	Unreligious	15.1
	Free-thinking	10.1
	Protestant	1.8
	Christian but not catholic	29.3
	Catholic	40.4
	Muslim	1.4
	Other/don't know	1.7

Aside from these purely socio-demographic variables that are self-explanatory, we also inquired about large number of other attitudes and behavioural variables. More generally, it pertains, for example, to an interest in politics and a general acquaintance with political issues. Starting from a number of findings from previous research, for which we shall report further details in the various chapters, we also ask questions about a number of very specific notions, ranging from feelings of security to trusting your fellow men(women) to one's accumulated social capital. The following Table 1.6 shows us an overview of these second types of explanatory variables.

The first two rows in Table 1.6 represent some traditional predictors of political attitudes, behaviour, and participation. The degree of interest that is evinced in political questions, whether one considers oneself to the 'left' or the 'right' of the political spectrum, are both variables that are strongly explanatory of how people's opinions differ about all sorts of political themes, and likewise about their broader view on the world, on the future, and so forth. Approximately two out of three Flemish participants are either somewhat or strongly interested in politics; however, nearly

one in five of the Flemish people are wholly disinterested in politics. Judging from the left-right positioning, it appears that the Flemish population is, on the average, somewhat to the right of the centre.

**Table 1.6** *Specific independent variables (N=1029, unless mentioned otherwise)*

Variable	Categories	%
Interest in politics	Not at all interested	19.8
	Not really interested	15.7
	A little interested	45.6
	Very interested	18.7
Left-right positioning	Left (1-4)	23.5
	Centre (5)	33.7
	Right (6-10)	42.8
News	Daily news on tv	67.9
Informative programmes	Once a week or less	41.0
	Daily or several times a week	56.9
Network preference	één	40.1
	Canvas	14.1
	VTM	25.8
	Other commercial network	15.5
Newspaper reading	Once a week or less	41.8
	Daily or several times a week	58.2
Newspaper preference (mostly)	Popular (Het Laatste Nieuws, Het Nieuwsblad, Gazet van Antwerpen, Belang van Limburg)	61.2
	Quality (De Morgen, De Standaard, De Tijd)	13.1
	Other (Metro, Zondag, other...)	6.8
	Don't know / No response	0.3
Interest foreign news	Less than domestic news	40.0
	The same	48.8
	More than domestic news	8.7
Knowledge questions (% correct) <sup>d</sup>	Who is the current president of the USA?	93.7 (n=1029)
	Is Belgium member of NATO?	91.8 (n=1029)
	What is the name of the Basque separatist movement in Spain?	70.2 (n=1014)
	Years of tensions between India and Pakistan because of what region?	21.5 (n=965)
	In 2005 Mohammed El Baradei was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize? What organisation does he lead?	8.0 (n=764)
	What is Pyongyang?	6.7 (n=246)

Membership of organisation <sup>a</sup>	No	29.9 (42.5)
	Yes	70.1 (57.5)
Generalized trust % (fully) agree	In general people can be trusted.	33.3
	I only feel really good if I can dedicate myself to a common cause.	51.4
	In general people are honest.	32.8
	People can count on each other. Who does something for somebody else, can expect a favour in return.	49.2
	<i>Average (scale) <sup>b</sup></i>	41.7
Sociability	Having a chat with neighbours: once or more a week	68.3
	Meeting family: once or more a week	76.6
	Meeting friends: once or more a week	74.0
	<i>Average (scale) <sup>b</sup></i>	73.0
Social capital: have you ever... (% 'yes')	...welcomed new neighbours?	44.7
	...attended a play, quiz or other evening activity of a local school or organisation?	79.9
	...donated blood to the red cross?	28.2
	...helped somebody you did not know?	75.7
	...done volunteer work?	55.2
	<i>Average (scale) <sup>b</sup></i>	56.7
Authority scale (Cognitive rigidity) % (fully) agree	Honesty and hard work are insufficiently rewarded nowadays.	67.4
	Obedience and respect for authority are the two most important virtues children should learn.	78.2
	Our country would benefit more from a few powerful leaders instead of all the laws and talking.	50.4
	Nowadays parents give their children too much freedom.	57.3
	If people would talk less and work more, everything would be better.	46.3
	Young people sometimes have rebellious ideas, but when they grow up, they have to get over them and adapt.	56.4
	<i>Average (scale) <sup>b</sup></i>	59.3
Feelings of insecurity % (fully) agree	Nowadays it is unsafe to leave children alone on the street.	60.5
	In evening you have to be extra carefull in the street.	66.9
	The streets have become less safe in the last 10 years.	61.5
	The police is no longer capable of protecting us against criminals.	43.2
	In the evening and at night I don't open the door when somebody rings.	46.5
	<i>Average (scale) <sup>b</sup></i>	55.7



Materialism (M) Postmaterialism (PM) policy preference; first and second priority. <sup>c</sup>	Maintaining the order in our country (and fight crime) (M)	21.5 (22.5)
	Enhance the participation of citizens in the decision-making of the government (PM)	18.1 (21.9)
	Guarantee a stable economy: maintaining a high economic growth and counteract inflation (M)	36.8 (25.2)
	Guarantee freedom of speech (PM)	22.3 (28.0)
Views on future: rather/ very optimistic	Optimism about own future	74.5
	Optimism about future of coming generations	32.9
	Optimism about the state of the world	15.9
	<i>Average (scale) <sup>b</sup></i>	30.8

Note: In general: the presentation of a whole number of variables has been abridged for a number of categories, this in order to clarify the situation. For instance, the opinion variables reflect only the categories 'Agreed' and 'Totally Agreed', and for what concerns attention to the media, the frequencies 'Never', 'Less than once a month', 'Approximately one to two times a month', 'Once a week', 'Several times a week', and 'Daily' are represented in the Table in an abbreviated way as 'Weekly or less' versus 'A few times a week' or 'Daily'. In the further analyses, the complete variables will be generally used.

- <sup>a</sup> The first figures pertain to the membership in at least one of the following types of organisations: church or religious organisation; district committee; union; political party; environmental or animal activist organisations; 3rd world organisation; student organisation; youth movement; human rights organisation; peace organisation; sports and recreational organisation; arts, culture, music organisation. The figures in brackets represent the membership in at least one the above-mentioned kinds of organisations, with the exception of the final two types (the hobby associations).
- <sup>b</sup> Where possible, we have presented in this table the total averages of the related battery variables. In the further analyses, these will, however, mostly be treated as scales, where the scores per respondent are simply determined by the mean score on the various battery variables.
- <sup>c</sup> As a response to the question as to what would be considered the most important and the second most important government priority amongst these four possibilities. The values in brackets are thus the results of this second variable. The combination of, respectively, the first (which is the first priority of the government) and the second (which is the second priority) variable provides us with a scale of the following categories: 1) materialism – materialism (24.4%); 2) materialism – post-materialism (33.9%); 3) post-materialism – materialism (23.9%); 4) post-materialism – post-materialism (16.5%).
- <sup>d</sup> In order to receive an indication of the measure of the respondents 'awareness' of events, we asked them a series of questions to test their knowledge of (or familiarity with) international (peace) questions. When respondents were not able to answer, or could not answer correctly, two consecutive questions, they were not tested any further. This was done in order not to discourage a respondent, given the gradually increasing degree of difficulty in the questions. This then explains the diminishing number of Ns (a decreasing group of respondents). However, in the analyses, we shall use a knowledge scale that ranges from 0 (people that do not answer any question correctly (of the first two thus)) to 6 (people that answer all questions correctly). The division of this new knowledge variable thus works out to: 0: 1.7%; 1: 8.0%; 2: 22.0%; 3: 46.1%; 4: 12.8%; 5: 5.9%; 6: 3.4%.

In line with their political interests, the Flemish people regularly keep abreast of political issues: they frequently watch TV newscasts, watch informative programmes several times a week, and regularly read newspaper reporting. Their TV-viewing is primarily confined to public telecasts, but for what concerns newspaper preferences, our respondents are more interested in popular newspapers than papers offering more 'quality' content. In a subsequent section, we shall examine if this media use also influences the subject's knowledge of a number of international issues. Finally, important is the fact that 60 percent of the Flemish people profess an equal interest in, and pay attention to, foreign and domestic news. Four out of ten Flemish people state to be primarily interested in domestic news.

Social capital, sociability and 'generalized trust' – we mean by this the confidence and the belief in the honesty of other people in general – represent all three dimensions that reflect the social fraternity of the Flemish people and are, in turn, are significant predictors of broader political attitudes and behaviour. Traditionally, these variables are also linked to membership in organisations, which would positively influence the sociability variables. While, on a global scale, the Flemish people have accumulated quite a bit of social capital and score relatively high on sociability variables, their general level of trust appears to be rather low, especially in their estimation of the honesty and reliability of their fellow citizens.

Literature connects the authority or cognitive rigidity scale directly with the notions about peace and violence (see Chapter 3). Also from the insecurity scale we expect possible effects on the manner in which the Flemish people define violence and peace, while materialism / post-materialism would be related to the relative importance that is being attached to peace and non-violence. The last three variables in Table 1.6 replicate scale used in previous research.

Before we embark on a systematic study of the dependent variables and their relationship to the explanatory variables in the following chapters, we would like to point to the fact that the independent variables in this study are of course inter-connected and manifest a high degree of cohesion. We list a few examples in clarification of the point.

When we correlate the diploma variable from Table 1.5 with the other variables from the same table, it appears that practically all of them manifest a significant correlation with that diploma variable in question. This means that a rise in the diploma variable demonstrates a significant (in this instance with a 99% certainty that is not attributable to coincidence) cohesion with a rise or drop of the other variable. Logically, it appears from this analysis (not presented in the table) that the unemployed, blue collar workers, people that are occupied in the construction, agricultural, or industrial sector, have a significantly lower schooling. This is also the case with youths and students, which simply has to do with the fact that they were asked for their highest level of diploma *obtained*, and not for the diploma that they are still studying for. Full-time workers, white collar workers, civil servants, people that are employed in the public sector and in the 'softer' sector of education, research, health and welfare, have systematically enjoyed a higher education.

In conclusion, we examine the mutual relationship between the structured scales, as explained in footnote b and c of Table 1.6., and also how, in this case as well, diploma plays a role. We have presented the correlations in Table 1.7.

**Table 1.7** *Correlation matrix of some scales and diploma (N=1029)*

	Highest diploma	Authority scale	Generalized trust schaal	Insecurity scale	Social capital scale
Authority scale	-.305**				
Generalized trust scale	n.s.	n.s.			
Insecurity scale	-.380**	.515**	-.065*		
Social capital cumulative	.193**	-.062*	.128**	-.167**	
Materialism Postmaterialism scale	n.s.	-.175**	n.s.	-.144**	n.s.

Note: Sig. \*\*\*=.001 \*\*=.01 \*=.05. (2-tailed).

Here as well, education plays a major role: people with a lower schooling have more trust in and need for authority, experience a greater sense of insecurity, and can draw on less social capital. Education appears to be less obviously connected with a preference for material or post-material themes. Additionally, it is clear that general trust and social capital go hand in hand: the more one surrounds oneself with, and puts oneself out for others, the greater becomes the trust in those others, irrespective of one's level of education or schooling. Furthermore, the authority scale and the insecurity scale are negatively inter-connected with this social capital. The less one surrounds oneself with others, or the less one puts oneself out on behalf of others, the more anxiety is generated and the greater the need for authority. In conclusion, the cohesion between these last two variables, need for / trust in authority and sense of insecurity, is extremely large.

With this information in mind, we can now find out which of these variables best explain our three-part dependent variable: what constitutes peace for the Flemish people? How do they *in concreto* interpret this notion? And, what is their behaviour vis-à-vis the concept? It is to these three questions that we will be seeking an answer in the remainder of this report.

We will in this report often make estimates about ideas of 'large' and 'small' and related notions: for instance, the Flemish are relatively 'quite' convinced that violence and war ought to be prevented at all costs; at the same time, their personal active commitment to the cause of peace is relatively 'small'. The problem is that we can express ourselves about 'large' and 'small' and similar concepts only in terms of a comparative perspective. Only by *comparing* the perceptions, attitudes, and the behaviour of the Flemish people with those of other populations can we make some meaningful pronouncements about the concepts of 'large' and 'small' and similar notions. Within the context of this report, we cannot draw on such comparative data, which forces us to exercise restraint in our conclusions. As a result, we are not able in this report to provide insight on dynamic evolutions over time. We only have access to a picture for the year 2006. It is possible

that, in 2003, the Flemish people were more deeply involved in peace, or perhaps they defined peace in different terms. Perhaps the drive for peace in the Flemish population will have drastically increased by the year 2012. Research such as this, where a survey of the population's views on a given theme is conducted in the most careful fashion, creates an extra value especially when it can be carried out on several occasions in the course of time. In that case, one can make valid pronouncements about dynamics and evolutions based on a comparison of data.

# 2

*The perception of  
‘peace’ amongst the  
Flemish population*



## 2.1

# Peace, a multi-dimensional concept

Any study seeking to establish the importance of 'peace' in the eyes of the Flemish population obviously needs to start with an attempt to understand the inherent meaning of that concept. In this chapter, we shall, therefore, first examine a number of different interpretations of the 'peace' concept.

The most intuitive, and also the most widespread, notion of 'peace' that can be found in the literature is the rudimentary definition of it being 'a state of no-war'. This quite narrow definition rather quickly is found to be wanting by the recognition that, even in times of 'no-war', there still may continue to exist hostility and suspicions between various former or potential adversaries (Copi & Cohen, 1994), which is, in se, hardly compatible with the notion of 'peace loving' and may very well constitute in turn the basis for war. On the other hand, the absence of a state of war forms, indeed, an (implicit) basic condition for the more nuanced definitions. For instance, such a definition is given by Reardon (1988: 16), who defines peace as 'the absence of violence in all of its manifestations – physical, social, psychological, and structural'. Within this definition, peace is thus not only a condition that relates to states and/or communities, but also leaves the door ajar for individual experience and the 'exercise' of the concept of 'peace'. Yet, on the other side of the coin, here too we are dealing with a negative interpretation of the peace concept. For that reason, it is useful to have recourse to the distinction between 'negative' and 'positive' peace notions proposed by, respectively, Wright (1941), Galtung (1969) and Woolman (1985). But how are we able to define 'peace' positively, and in such a manner that it encompasses individuals and communities, as well as states? And whereby the peace notion can genuinely be linked to individual impressions and behaviour? Such a definition can be distilled from the definition of a 'culture of peace' (De Rivera, 2005). Peace can, in that sense, be interpreted as the occurrence of an aggregation of 'values, notions, and behaviour that reject violence and aim to avoid conflicts by tackling the problems at their roots and seeking their resolutions by means of dialogue and negotiations' (De Rivera, 2005: 53). This kind of conceptualisation significantly concretises the notion of peace and makes it dependent on the influence of multiple social (f)actors. De Rivera (ibid.: 53) likewise links to this viewpoint of peace a number of social conditions or social climates that introduce peace and non-violence into a society. This then pertains to: a climate of security

versus insecurity; a climate of caring, sympathy for women, and egalitarianism; a climate of trust and collaboration; a climate of confidence as a contrast to cynical alienation; a climate of an absence of anxiety when it comes to freedom of expression; a climate where the absence of fear, hatreds, and anger prevails, and a climate that banishes uncertainty.

What then, *in fine*, does this concept of ‘peace’ mean to the Flemish population? How would the people define it themselves, and with what terms would they associate it? We shall examine this important first question in this chapter. Only after we have found out what precisely the notion of ‘peace’ means to the Flemish individual can we hope to successfully explore the reasons why he or she holds his or her opinion about it and may we be in a position to explain the differences in the interpretations of peace and non-violence as voiced by the Flemish citizenry amongst themselves.



## 2.2

# The Flemish people and the concept of ‘peace’

The demarcation of the concept of ‘peace’ appeared anything but simple in our exploratory focus discussions with representatives from, amongst others, the peace movement, the civil society, industry, and the Flemish political parties. Nonetheless, there was a broad consensus that ‘peace’ cannot be condensed into a narrow and negative definition, namely the simplistic one of being a ‘state of no-war’ (see supra). *‘It is not because of the fact that the fury and the clash of weapons has ceased that we can speak of a peaceful situation’* (David Geerts, Focus Group Politicians, 24/10/2006). Furthermore, *‘the absence of armed conflicts between militia and citizens’* (Marc Van Bockstael, Focus Group Industry and Unions, 25/10/2006) is a whole lot more pertinent for some people. Yet, it does appear from the focus groups that peace is very often equated with such notions as security, democracy, well-being, the absence of structural inequalities, equal opportunity, and is also linked to inter-human relationships, dialogue, active expressions of non-violence, et cetera. Guy Leemans of VOS states, for example: *‘There are more gradations (than only the absence of war). It is not only a passive state of ‘no war’; it must also be pursued actively’* (Focus Group Peace Movement, 24/10/2006).

In order to formulate our first impressions of what ‘peace’ means for our Flemish respondents, we simply and openly asked them – obviously at the very start of the survey – for the notion that immediately came to their minds when they heard the word ‘peace’. This top-of-mind question in the pure Zaller-tradition brought us a series of divergent responses which we have compressed in some twenty categories. Table 2.1 offers an overview of these categories, how often they were voiced, and their ranking vis-à-vis one another.

**Table 2.1** Overview of categorised responses to the question: 'What is the first thought in your mind when you hear the word 'peace'?' (N= 1029)

Rank	Category	%
1	No war/no weapons/no violence	29.1
2	Tolerance/helpfulness/understandig/be good/friendly	10.3
3	'Agreements amongst all people'	9.3
4	Friendship/love/happiness	6.6
5	'Everything is good'/tranquility/satisfaction/no arguments	6.3
6	War (also specific)/violence/attacks	5.5
7	Peace is necessary/is not worked on enough	4.8
8	Symbols for peace (dove, white, christmas,...)	4.8
9	World peace/peace for everyone/peace for the 3th world,...	4.1
10	'Starts with oneself'/(in) family	3.8
11	Equality/freedom of expression/freedom	3.0
12	No answer/'nothing'/'peace'	2.5
13	Peace is a Utopia	2.5
14	Faith/hope	1.9
15	Blame: USA/politicans/immigrants	1.9
16	Poverty/hunger/food and accomodation	1.5
17	Specific actions, charity	1.4
18	Other	0.7

Intuitively, the Flemish respondents overwhelmingly think first of the narrow definition of peace: peace makes them think of 'no war', 'the absence of weapons', and 'no violence'. 5.5 percent of the people tend to think of the opposite when confronted with the word 'peace': namely, war, weapons, and specific conflicts and wars. Following the negative peace definition, a large number of people think of an array of 'positive' terms, including values, attitudes and states of mind such as tolerance, understanding, satisfaction, friendship, love,... One person in twenty associate 'peace' with its symbols or imagery: especially the (peace)dove is popular as a symbol, but also the colour 'white', 'the peace sign' and 'Christmas' are popular concepts. One person may associate peace with the 'Ijzertoren' – a Flemish peace symbol, or somebody else may think of 'a horse that is peacefully grazing in the field'. Likewise, for nearly one in twenty Flemish people, peace is something that is a necessity and which is not pursued with enough vigour. Then there is some four percent or so that draws on personal associations: peace starts with oneself, at home, it involves the family. About the same percentage considers that to be at peace is first and foremost everybody's right. Freedom and equality are the first notions that are conceived by three percent of the Flemish respondents when they hear the term 'peace', and for somewhat less than three percent, it is the utopian value of the term that forms their initial association. Faith (religious belief), poverty, and specific actions and worthwhile goals are spontaneous associations for some five percent of the respondents. A small two percent unhesitatingly lay the blame for an absence of peace and a surfeit of violence squarely on the shoulders of the United States, or blame politicians in general, or immigrants.

*Peace means an array of different things for the Flemish population, and its definition is now very broad, now very narrow; for some people it is something that lies beyond themselves, or something very abstract, while for others it is concrete and within their personal capabilities to influence.*

As one notes, peace means an array of different things for the Flemish population, and its definition is now very broad, now very narrow; for some people it is something that lies beyond themselves, or something very abstract, while for others it is concrete and within their personal capabilities to influence.

At the end of the questionnaire, we presented the respondents with a whole array of terms and asked them to what extent they thought these had any relation to the concept of 'peace'. Next, we asked them which of the terms that, in their opinion, were related to 'peace' best described for them the concept, and which notion was second-best in doing so. Table 2.2 shows the results of this query. While, in this case, a survey-effect might well enter into play – these respondents had already been given a half hour to ponder the question of peace – most of the Flemish people, when they are specifically asked to link the concept of 'peace' to a number of other concepts, consider that 'tolerance' is the one notion that is most closely associated with 'peace'. It is, in effect, the top choice of a quarter of the respondents; in total, forty percent named tolerance as their first or second choice. The 'absence of war' is the second most selected description of the peace concept, but when the second choice is added to the tally, it is readily overtaken by 'equal opportunities', which was named as the most popular second choice. Also 'justice' and 'consultation and dialogue' are oft-named terms. 'Democracy', 'economic equality' and 'human rights' appear to be less directly related to peace, as, in fact, is also the case with non-violence. For the Flemish people, then, peace signifies, in its negative definitions, 'International Peace' (no-war) rather than 'Inter-Personal Peace' (non-violence), while in the positive definitions, 'tolerance' towers head and shoulders above the rest.

*For the Flemish people, then, peace signifies, in its negative definitions, 'International Peace' (no-war) rather than 'Inter-Personal Peace' (non-violence), while in the positive definitions, 'tolerance' towers head and shoulders above the rest.*

While it is thus evident that ‘peace’ means a lot of different things to the Flemish people, some terms emerge clearly above others. It is also notable that, with respect to the query as to how closely each of these terms is related to the concept of ‘peace’, a clear distinction with respect to educational backgrounds is revealed: the higher the educational level, the more frequent the sense that all of the concepts in Table 2.2 are in some way associated with peace. But beyond that there are no significant associations between these concepts and education (or any other important independent variable). In other words, while there exist differences in the degree of importance ascribed to certain concepts, the same concepts are unwaveringly found of equal importance when it comes to describing the concept of peace.

**Table 2.2** Concepts that are rated first and second in their relationship to peace (N=1029)<sup>III</sup>

Concept	First	Second	1+2
Tolerance	26.6	14.4	41.1
The absence of war	12.1	8.6	20.7
Consultation and dialogue	10.8	10.5	21.2
Justice	10.6	9.7	20.3
Equal opportunities	9.7	15.8	25.5
Non-violence	6.2	7.2	13.4
Human rights	5.7	7.3	13.0
Economic equality	5.6	7.3	13.0
Democracy	5.4	9.0	14.4
Harmony	3.7	4.3	8.0
The absence of fear	2.2	2.9	5.2
Don't know	1.3	1.7	2.9

III In all item series where the order of the items was of no importance, the ranking of the various items (as, for instance, in Table 2.2 and Table 2.4) was at random determined by the computer. In this way, any possible survey-effect, whereby respondents are rather given to, for instance, naming the first or the last-mentioned item, is levelled out. In the Tables, however, the items are listed in the order of the percentage numbers of the responses.

## 2.3

# The concept of ‘peace’ and the link with organisations

We have by now found that the Flemish people have a relatively clear, yet varied, idea of the concept of ‘peace’. But the Flemish respondent is less sure about what kinds of peace organisations are working in the field to promote ‘peace’. We asked them to name a first and then a second national or international organisation that is actively involved with peace in Flanders in some way or another. The results of that query are presented in Table 2.3. It is notable that nearly one out of two Flemish respondents are unable to identify even one of such organisations. Amongst those that are able to do so (in the first or second instance), Amnesty International is most often named (19%). It is notable as well that also the second and third most commonly named organisations (respectively Vredeseilanden and 11.11.11), like Amnesty International, by their own definition are not primarily peace organisations but rather organisations involved in human rights and development issues. This is similar for UNICEF, which places its focus on children’s rights and the development of children, instead of peace. The sole pure peace organisation in the top five ranking is Pax Christi (8%). The listing of the organisations in the following table reflects, aside from the undeniable reputation of some of these bodies, also the diversity of definitions of peace offered by the Flemish respondents, and, by extension, also the diversity of the paths one can take in order to reach the peace objective.

**Table 2.3** Overview of responses to the question: ‘Name two national or international organisations that in Flanders are actively involved with peace in one way or another’ (N=1029)

Name organisation	% (1st + 2nd)
Amnesty International	18.6
Vredeseilanden	14.0
11.11.11.	11.5
Pax Christi	8.4
UNICEF	7.6
Artsen zonder Grenzen	5.9
Oxfam   Wereldwinkels	4.3
Greenpeace	3.2

Name organisation	% (1st + 2nd)
Het Rode Kruis	2.8
Gaia	2.1
Broederlijk delen	1.1
VN	1.1
Child Focus	0.8
VAKA	0.6
Damiaanactie	0.5
UNESCO	0.4
Witte Beweging	0.3
NAVO	0.2
de Kerk	0.2
Handicap International	0.2
Vrede vzw	0.1
Vredesactie	0.1
Jeugd en Vrede	0.1
Mothers for Peace	0.1
Other organisation	1.6
Don't know/no answer (on 1st question)	45.2
Don't know/no answer (on 2nd question)	23.4

## 2.4

# Causes of war and violence

Aside from the explicit question pertaining to ‘what’ is peace, the question pertaining to the causes of the opposite of peace, namely violence and war, also offers us a window on how the Flemish people think about peace. In order to find out the answer, we asked our respondents twice to choose from amongst five different possible causes for war and violence – also in this case always queried in alternating sequence. While a bit arbitrary, we could describe the two series as, on the one hand, encompassing the rather concrete and direct, and, on the other, the more general (abstract) causes of violence and war. Table 2.4 shows the choices for both series of causes. For well-nigh one Flemish respondent in three, the battle for natural resources forms the most concrete cause for war and violence, closely followed by rivalry between different population groups. One Fleming in five attribute war and violence as primarily caused by the bellicose aspirations of the political leaders themselves. Battle for political autonomy and territory are each identified by some nine percent of the Flemish respondents as the principal cause of war and violent conflict.

**Table 2.4** *Causes and ‘deeper’ causes of violence & war (N=1029)*

Causes of violence and war	%
The battle for natural resources	30.0
Rivalry between different population groups	28.9
Bellicose leaders	21.1
Battle for territory	8.9
Battle for political autonomy	8.6
Don’t know	2.5

Deeper causes of violence and war	
Religion	35.9
The absence of equal opportunities	19.8
Economic inequality	18.5
Language and cultural differences	14.3
The lack of democracy	10.1
Don't know	1.4

*We clearly distinguish herein a duality in the Flemish appreciation of what are the causes of war and violence; the one rooted in the conception of 'being different', the other based on inequality or on the absence of conditions that create equality.*

When we now probe for the general or deeper causes of war and violence, 36 percent of the Flemish respondents hold to the opinion that the principal cause of war is religion; about 14 percent of the respondents see language and cultural differences as the principal cause of war and violence. This then means that at least half of Flemish respondents look upon origin, language, and religion as the main causes of war and violence. According to the remaining 50 percent of the Flemish, the causes reside in the absence of economic equality, equal opportunities, and the lack or failure of democracy. We clearly distinguish herein a duality in the Flemish appreciation of what are the causes of war and violence; the one rooted in the conception of 'being different', the other based on inequality or on the absence of conditions that create equality, with the latter view enjoying a somewhat smaller following. At first sight, however, this dichotomy does not appear to originate in differences in broader visions of society, values, or socio-demographic factors. Only gender appears to play a significant, yet nonetheless minor role, whereby women are more inclined to look at the general causes of war and violent conflict in terms of inequality and the absence of conditions that would generate equality (figures are not shown in the Table). No doubt, this simple duality is somewhat too rudimentary to reveal really major and significant differences; in the following chapters, it will be shown that the above-mentioned independent variables do indeed reveal major and logical differences about how the Flemish respondents think about peace and the absence of violence.



## 2.5

# Conclusion: how do the Flemish people define peace?

*Generally, the Flemish people agree that peace is in any event something of positive value, something that is worth pursuing.*

The concept 'peace' knows of many definitions in literature, and how it is variably defined is linked to an array of societal circumstances plus individual characteristics. Peace also means many things for the Flemish population. When the concept is mentioned, it spontaneously evokes an array of things, the most important of which appears to be the absence of war and of violent conflict. Some people, in turn, define the concept in a broader ('agreement amongst all peoples'), abstracter ('the peace dove') or quite concrete ('peace starts within oneself' or 'peace and tranquillity starts within your own family') sense. Generally, the Flemish people agree that peace is in any event something of positive value, something that is worth pursuing. The question now poses itself: how do the Flemish people think about war, violence, and peace in very concrete terms? Are these rather descriptive observations equally valid when they are set against an array of other variables? For instance, what is the role really played by gender and education in a serious consideration of these concepts? And to what extent do the Flemish people contribute a personal effort to the creation of a better and more peaceful world? And to what extent are they prepared to engage in greater personal activity in that respect? We shall in the following chapters of this study seek an answer to such queries.



# 3

*What do the Flemish  
people think about  
'peace'*



## 3.1

# Forming an attitude about peace

Before we address the question as to what the Flemish people think about peace in the year 2006, we shall briefly discuss the relevant literature and previous studies in that respect. In Chapter 1, we already discussed in general terms what guides public opinion. In this chapter, we delve more deeply into the individual characteristics that likewise contribute to shape a peace attitude.

The sense of peace, or the senselessness of it, as well as the need for the use of violence and war as the solution to a problem are not experienced in equal measure by all people. In the literature on the subject we find – albeit a very limited – number of general indications about the ways in which people think about peace, in most cases defined in this case as being a state of no-war. Multiple research has shown that significant gender differences colour people's thinking about peace and war: without delving more deeply into possible reasons for this divergence, the fact is that women appear in general to be quite a bit 'more peace-loving' than men (see, i.a. Rosenbaum and Rosenbaum, 1973; Elshtain, 1985; Lester, 1993; Peterson and Runyan, 1993). Likewise, the same significant gender difference appears for what concerns interpretations of violence and non-violence (Goss 2001). Yet, this gender difference is not universal, as appears from a study by Tessler, Nachtwey and Grant (1999). In a comparative study of the beliefs of males and females about the Israeli-Palestine conflict in a number of countries /regions in the Middle East, the gender differences did not stand up, whereby a possible explanation may well be sought in the proximity to – and the involvement in – the conflict. The closer the conflict hits home, the more men and women think alike about peace and war; thus, also the daily significance of these concepts determines people's thinking to a large extent.

Likewise, a number of typical personality traits are traditional predictors of attitudes in questions about peace and war, such as, for instance, hostility, stubbornness, and the need for order; nonetheless, replicate studies have demonstrated that their relevance is not permanent over time (Lester, 1993). Bothwell and Kennison (2004) have conducted a study in the variations in the attitudes of the American people vis-à-vis the impending war with Iraq, begin 2003. They build further on a previous study from which it appeared that individuals who were raised in an

authoritarian environment rather favoured war in contrast to individuals that were raised in an egalitarian atmosphere. Based on the characteristics of 'dogmatic personality', as propounded by Milton Rokeach, and which itself was a fine-tuned version of the Adornos 'authoritative personality', Bothwell and Kennisson (ibid.) developed a scale of 'cognitive rigidity', based on the findings of Rokeach (quoted in Bothwell and Kennisson, 1994: 467) who posits that an authoritarian education leads to narrow and primitive beliefs (closed-minded value system) about matters such as:

*whether the world we live in is friendly or hostile, what the future has in store for us, the adequacy of the self, and what must be done to alleviate feelings of inadequacy. It is assumed that the more closed the system, the more will the content of such beliefs be to the effect that we live alone, isolated and helpless in a friendless world; that we live in a world where the future is uncertain; that the self is fundamentally unworthy and inadequate to cope alone with this friendless world; and that the way to overcome such feelings is by a self-aggrandizing and self-righteous identification with a cause, a concern with power and status, and by a compulsive self-proselitization about the justice of such a cause.*

Bothwell and Kennisson (1994) used these beliefs to pose a number of questions that collectively constituted the 'cognitive rigidity scale', and related that scale with responses to questions from which a war-attitude scale was construed. Conclusion: both of these scales manifest a clearly significant link. For instance, the authors establish the link between personal feelings of insecurity, a paranoid world vision, a sensitivity to threats and a heightened support for war. This is a link that, in effect, is stronger in males than in females.

Let us move to a real case by referring to actual reality: the attitude of the Belgian population vis-à-vis the war with Iraq. In Table 3.1, we look at a few individual variables that could be relevant with respect to the theory of the individual attitude prediction and attempt to explain anti-war (or pro-peace) sentiments. The dependent variable, the anti-war scale is made up of the sum total of a number of different propositions about the war (see Table 1.2), which are re-coded in 0, corresponding to a pro-war position, and 1, with a stance against war. The small number of explanatory variables lies at the basis of the lower explicability of the model as a whole, but we can nonetheless distinguish clearly which personal characteristics are playing a role in the positive or negative attitudes towards the war with Iraq.

**Table 3.1** Linear regression to the prediction of anti-war sentiment in Belgian public opinion during the run-up to the war with Iraq, February 2003 (N=507)

Anti-war sentiment predicted by:		$\beta$
Gender	male – female	.159***
Age	in years	n.s.
Education	in number of years	n.s.
Living in an urban centre	no – yes	n.s.
Not religious	no – yes	.151**
Left-Right position	Left-right 1 to 7	-.155***
Optimistic about:		
Own future	Very optimistic (1) – very pessimistic (5)	n.s.
Future next generations	Very optimistic – very pessimistic	n.s.
Current state of the world	Very optimistic – very pessimistic	n.s.
Current possibility of a terrorist attack in Belgium	Very large – very small	.175***
	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.092

Noot: Sig. \*\*\*=,001 \*\*=,01 \*=,05.

Source: EOS-Gallup Europe, 21-27 January 2003

First of all, it appears that also in Belgium, women adopt significantly more anti-war standpoints than men with respect to the war with Iraq. This confirms, at least in Belgium, the gender difference for what concerns a preference for peace. Age does not play a role, young and old held approximately equally divergent opinions pro /anti an impending war, which indicates that there is no general trend towards an increasing / decreasing anti-war sentiment as people grow older. Education too proves not significant: people with a lengthy education were not any more opposed to the idea of war than those with fewer years of schooling. Education is, therefore, no condition to foster a deeper pro-peace sense. Likewise, living in a (major) urban centre has no significant impact on one's opinion. In contrast, significant is the religious attitude, where, surprisingly enough, it is the non-believers rather than the believers that appear to be the more peace-loving of the two. But when one considers religious faith as a yardstick of conservatism, then the connection becomes evident. Anti-war sentiments are further also significantly more pronounced with people that are ideologically left-centred than in people with a right-wing orientation.

Notable are the three variables pertaining to optimism about the future of the individual himself or herself and of future generations, and the current state of world affairs. In contrast to what we might expect from the 'cognitive rigidity scale', none of the three variables is of any distinct consequence in the explanation of anti-war sentiments. In other words, people who are disposed towards war with Iraq are no more pessimistically inclined with respect to these three issues than people who are more opposed to the idea of war. But what is of importance is the degree in which the chance of a terrorist attack in Belgium is considered a real possibility. The more pronounced this idea, the more an impending war is deemed justified. Consequently, people are more inclined to support a war to the degree that their personal feeling about 'international insecurity' is more pronounced, in which case war might be seen as a possible remedial solution.

In summary, public opinion concerning a real impending war is formed both on the macro and on the individual levels. From Chapter 1 we recall that public opinion vis-à-vis a war against Iraq in broad lines followed the prevailing official government position (see 1.3). This attitude is fine-tuned at the individual level according to gender, one's political position, religious beliefs, and feelings of insecurity. The concrete data about the war with Iraq suggest only a portion of the determinant factors by which individual opinions regarding peace and war are formed in general. In the remainder of this study we shall further detail these determinant elements.



## 3.2

# General views about war and violence

In the first place, we wish to determine how the Flemish people view violent conflict and war. To that effect, we consciously presented respondents with combined propositions about 'Inter-personal Peace' (the absence of violent manifestations) and 'International Peace' (war) in order to determine in how far they are seen to actually relate to one another. In other words: to what degree do the Flemish people make the connection between such notions of 'Inter-personal' and 'International' peace? To the Flemish politicians that were queried in the focus group, these distinctions are clearly two sides of the same phenomenon: *'It is like the micro- and macro economy on the various peace levels which we complement or re-enforce'* (Roel Deseyn, Focus Group Politicians, 24/10/2006). Or, in the words of Katrien Hertog of Pax Christi: *'It represents the same kind of energy'* (Focus Group Peace Movement, 24/10/2006). For Rudy Demeyer of 11.11.11, there are close similarities, yet the two concepts are two clearly distinct entities: *'tolerance, no resorting to violence, preventative action, no tangible inequality, no major frustrations,... these are valid issues in one's own country as they are at the international level, but they are not identical'* (Focus Group Civil Society, 25/10/2006). Jef Maes of Asco Industries N.V., in his turn, finds no connection: *'War can destroy your economy and the workings of your democratic system. But problems pertaining to non-violence within one's own society do not at all affect that economic value'* (Focus Group Industry and Unions, 25/10/2006). For him, these are two totally separate phenomena.

**Table 3.2** Degree to which the Flemish people agree with the propositions about violence, war, and peace (N=1024)

		Disagree	Neutral	Agree
1	The governments must make sure that this and future generations are informed about the madness and horrors of war	6.2	9.0	84.2
2	As long as there are people, there will be war	9.1	7.3	83.3
3	Physical violence can never be the solution for problems	15.8	6.9	76.9
4	Violence is a sign of powerlessness and frustration	15.2	11.6	72.5
5	Peace can not be enforced by violence	19.2	9.7	70.7

		Disagree	Neutral	Agree
6	I can personally contribute to a non-violent society	23.4	18.8	57.2
7	I can personally contribute to a peaceful world	24.5	20.1	54.4
8	Peace is a luxury problem. I'm already happy I can take care of myself and my family	34.9	15.2	48.8
9	Protest and demonstrations against war have never achieved any result	36.4	18.2	44.8
10	The death penalty should be reintroduced	57.7	9.9	32.0
11	War is 'far away from my bed'	46.7	22.8	29.5

Note: The categories for these propositions were recoded as follows: 'Disagree' = disagree totally + rather disagree; 'Neutral' = neither agree nor disagree; 'Agree' = rather agree + totally agree; Not listed is the percentage 'do not know/no response'

We presented our respondents with an array of propositions (Table 3.2). The responses we received from them are evidence of opposing viewpoints. One set of respondents considered war as an unavoidable and inevitable condition. More than 8 out of 10 Flemish respondents are agreed with the postulate that 'as long as there are people, there will be war' (proposition 2). On the other hand, we find an equal number of people who are of the opinion that governments must inform their citizenry about the horrors of war (proposition 1). A large majority of the Flemish respondents (between 71 and 77%) reject the use of force or do not consider violence as a means of enforcing or imposing peace. From a factor analysis, a statistical technique to check to what extent different propositions measure one underlying phenomenon, it further appears that these propositions about violence (3-4-5) adhere closely to proposition 1. This makes it evident that the Flemish population does not look upon violence and war as disjointed phenomena but rather as the same, implicit, dimension.

The large majority of people reject war and violence as condemnable and unproductive, but nonetheless as phenomena that are ingrained into our world. The Flemish are strongly divided on the question about the extent to which they personally can contribute to the opposition to war and violence. Approximately 57% are of the opinion that they can personally contribute to a non-violent society; a slightly lesser percentage (54%) further believe that they can also contribute to a peaceful world. In contrast, 49% of the people consider peace as a 'luxury theme'. A difference of opinion appears most pronounced about the sense of peace demonstrations and protests: according to 45% of the respondents, such manifestations are pointless and have never achieved anything; 36% do not agree with this contention. Peace movements and organisations such as 11.11.11 or Amnesty International, which we invited to join the focus groups, are obviously not in agreement. For them, success depends on what kind of result is aimed for: *'In the matter of preventing an armed conflict from happening, or nuclear weapons from being installed, the achievement is, indeed, minimal enough. Yet, I believe that the peace movement has often succeeded in placing certain issues high on political agendas, and in keeping it there for further consideration, with a possibility of success in the future'*. Ludo de Brabander, Focus Group Peace Movement, 24/10/2006). Also others from the Civil Society point to the pressure that is exerted by the peace movement protests on politicians, and, likewise, to the creation of a platform to draw public attention to their efforts. *'The war with Iraq has happened, it is true, but because of the strong opposition*

*movements in many countries, people have started to look much more critically upon war'*  
(Rudy Demeyer, Focus Group Civil Society, 25/10/2006).

From the already mentioned factor analysis, it appears that considering peace as a 'luxury theme' and dismissing street protests are closely allied. These also are the opinions of people that readily dismiss war as a 'show far enough removed from their own person' (proposition 11). All three propositions point to a sense of indifference and impotence vis-à-vis war in the world. This feeling is more pronounced in older and lower educated respondents. Notable, however, is the fact that these 'claims of impotence' are also very strongly related to the proposition that the death penalty be reintroduced (not in Table).

*The large majority of people reject war and violence as condemnable and unproductive, but nonetheless as phenomena that are ingrained into our world.*

Later on in this chapter we shall discuss in greater detail how the Flemish population views its own contribution to peace. In Chapter 5, we shall elucidate the Flemish people's potential and effective willingness to engage in action with reference to war and violence. But first we shall go more deeply into the attitude of the Flemish citizen vis-à-vis personal violence and military intervention.



## 3.3

# Personal violence and military intervention: (un)acceptable?

### Personal violence

The earlier discussed propositions teach us that war and violent manifestations are generally rejected by the Flemish population. This does not, however, signify that they cannot be considered as a legitimate recourse in any situation. We therefore asked the question in which situation the Flemish citizen would consent to the use of violence and under what circumstances he or she would consider military action acceptable.

*Only a small minority of the Flemish respondents (6%) reject the use of violence under any circumstance.*

Only a small minority of the Flemish respondents (6%) reject the use of violence under any circumstance. More than eight out of ten Flemish people would consider the use of force to protect their partners or children; two-thirds will consider violence when one is threatened or assaulted. The rest of the proposed situations are less frequently mentioned. To be angry or insulted is generally no reason for resorting to violence. Nonetheless, four out of ten Flemish respondents do not exclude recourse to force when it pertains to protecting their possessions. In that respect, they deviate from what our legislation prescribes, namely that the use of force is only justified in case of legitimate self-defence.

**Table 3.3** 'In what circumstances would you yourself use force?' (N=1022)

		% % agree
1	If my partner or children are threatened	83.1
2	If I'm physically threatened or assaulted	65.0
3	If my personal belongings are threatened	39.7
4	If I'm treated unjust	18.3
5	If someone insults me or my loved ones	16.4
6	If I'm really angry	11.5
7	Never	6.0

When we tally the various situations in Table 3.3, we arrive at a scale ranging from people that would never resort to violence (6%) to those that in any of the (proposed) situations would consider the use of force (4%). Half of the number of questioned Flemish respondents would resort to violence only in one or two circumstances. We can now by means of a statistical analysis determine whether certain characteristics in people would lead them to resort to the use of violence more quickly or very seldom. In Table 3.4, we note that the differences in socio-demographic characteristics are very small. It is, however, a fact that as people age, they are less inclined to resort to the use of force. It is notable that gender does not make a significant difference: women are inclined to use force as often as men. This does not, however, signify that they would effectively *engage* in the act of violence, but only that the inclination towards using force is present with them. A somewhat larger number of women than men would never resort to violence, but, likewise, more women deem violent action not out of the question in the six proposed situations.

**Table 3.4** Linear regression to the attitude vis-à-vis personal violence. (total score of the number of situations in which one would personally resort to the use of force) (N=1026)

	Attitude towards personal violence
Gender (male – female)	-.022
Age	-.095**
Education (lowly – highly educated)	-.058
Authority (low – high)	.136***
Generalized trust (low – high)	.041
Feelings of insecurity (low – high)	.040
Social capital (low – high)	-.055
Materialism – postmaterialism	-.011
Left-right position (left – right 0 to 10)	.110***
Explained variance (adjusted R <sup>2</sup> )	.046

Note: The coefficients represent the standardised Betas and their significance in a linear regression to the attitude vis-à-vis the use of personal force as dependent variable. Sig. \*\*\*=.001 \*\*=.01 \*=.05.

This finding appears indeed to negate the stereotyping of ‘males being more inclined to violent behaviour than women’. How can one explain this? Partly, the explanation might be sought in the fact that males and females conceive the notion of ‘violence’ in a different light. When women broaden their interpretation of violence beyond that of men, this then may result in their considering the use of violence in just as many (actually in more different) situations. In the telephone survey, however, only a definition of peace was asked for.

We can partly fill in this lacuna by making use of information gathered in a survey of some 10.000 Flemish respondents that were polled via the Internet in March 2007. This particular survey is not, however, representative because of a pronounced over-representation of young respondents with higher levels of education that position themselves rather to the left in the political spectrum.<sup>IV</sup> Nonetheless, the information garnered via these panel respondents can be useful as an initial indication. We asked them to indicate in a limited list of 14 possibilities what they considered expressions of violence. In Table 3.5, we have classified the results from the most to the least elected violent actions, with a distinction between male/female. In the last column to the right, we present the level of significance in the difference between men and women by means of a so-called Mann-Whitney U test. When this test renders a significant result (that is, smaller than .05), we may with very great certainty (95% certainty) maintain that there exists a difference of opinion between men and women.

**Table 3.5** ‘Which of the following do you consider as manifestations of violence?’ (in %) (various responses possible)

Manifestations of violence		Male	Female	Sig. M-W U test
1	Threatening with a firearm	97.3	98.6	.000
2	Threatening with a knife	96.5	98.0	.000
3	Beating and kicking	91.5	94.5	.000
4	Using a knife	88.0	87.5	.427
5	Intimidate others	74.6	83.2	.000
6	Pulling somebody’s hair	73.1	69.7	.000
7	Pester others	65.8	73.0	.000
8	Spitting	65.9	63.1	.008
9	A racist remark	54.5	67.5	.000
10	Pushing and pulling	52.2	56.2	.000
11	Yelling and cursing	48.7	57.2	.000
12	Sexist remarks	43.0	58.1	.000
13	An inappropriate joke	12.7	13.7	.141
14	Tap your own child if it did something wrong	11.9	13.9	.006
Scale (average)		8.7	9.3	.000
N		6781	3111	

Note: the scale is a summary of the number of selected items (0=‘none of the items is an expression of violent behaviour’; to 14=‘all items are expressions of violent behaviour’)

IV For more information about the Internet panel, see an earlier research memo on [www.m2p.be](http://www.m2p.be).

The results in Table 3.5 do, indeed, offer us a first indication that women entertain a systematically broader view on violence than men: on the average, they select 9.3 items, versus 8.7 for men, a difference that (with 99% probability) is not due to chance. In ten of the twelve items where the Mann-Whitney U test renders a significant divergence, women also on the average mention more often that it pertains to an expression of violence. For instance, pestering others is more readily identified by women as a form of violent behaviour. Consequently, in the future it is certainly advisable in any survey on violence to take account of the possibility of a different interpretation of the concept by both sexes.

Let us now return to Table 3.4., which is based on the representative telephone survey. Aside from the socio-demographic variables, the other attitudes and notions held by the Flemish respondents in turn do not appear to offer a strong explanation for the (potential) use of personal violent behaviour. Only the right-left positioning and the so-called 'law abidance' tendency of the Flemish population appear as significant coincidental factors with the attitude vis-à-vis the use of force. People that adhere more to a strict education, to the dictates of the authorities, and to leadership see themselves as more likely to use force in more situations. In general, we manage to explain barely 5% of the variance. This means that the potential use of personal force in a variety of situations is difficult to attribute to one single group of people. In what follows, we examine whether this, in fact, is the case for the attitude vis-à-vis 'the use of force by the state', or 'military intervention'.

### **Military intervention**

In very general terms we may hold that the Flemish respondents find military intervention somewhat less acceptable than personal violence in the threatening situations as described above. This naturally is related to the manner in which the questions are put, meaning that queries about personal use of force pertain implicitly to the respondent and his or her attitude towards self-defence, while questions about 'military actions' deal primarily with others. Nearly 10% of the Flemish respondents find military action unacceptable under any circumstance (Table 3.6). However, it should be pointed out that no proposition very explicitly referred to a situation where our country was actually attacked. 58% of the Flemish respondents find military action justified in order to prevent terrorist attacks, and 52% when very serious abuses of human rights are perpetrated by a country. For the rest of the situations, support for military action drops below the 50% mark of the population. That these percentages are relatively low may be owing to coverage of the war with Iraq where the deficiencies of, and problems related to, the US military intervention are almost daily exposed in the media. The majority of the Flemish respondents appear at this moment clearly opposed to a so-called 'pre-emptive strike'. Seventy percent of the respondents cannot accept the fear of possible future acts of war as a reason for military intervention.



**Table 3.6** 'In what circumstances would, in your opinion, the use of military intervention be justified?' (N=1026)

		% akkoord
1	To prevent terrorist attacks	57.6
2	When very serious abuses of human rights are perpetrated	52.3
3	If a country invades or occupies another country	45.2
4	If a country is suspected of fabricating weapons of mass destruction	41.0
5	Out of the fear of possible future acts of war by another country	31.0
6	Uit angst voor toekomstige oorlogsdaden van een ander land	30.2
7	Never	9.8

When, as we did for personal violence, we draw up a total tally of the situations where the Flemish people consider military intervention justified, we arrive at a very equal distribution, ranging from the belief that military intervention is 'never' justifiable (10%), to military intervention is justified for all of the six above-mentioned reasons (8%). Just as with the statistical analysis to explain the attitude vis-à-vis personal violence, few variables appear to be significant (Table 3.7). We thus find that men are no more quickly inclined to justify military intervention than are women, which contradicts the results of the previously sketched-out survey at the beginning of this chapter. Furthermore, the Flemish sense of law abidance here again explains the people's attitude vis-à-vis military intervention. It is, nonetheless, notable that a more left-wing ideological leaning does not influence the attitude towards military force. In contrast, a certain knowledge of international politics does make a modestly significant contribution: respondents that score more highly on the scale on 'being informed' (see supra) are less in favour of the use of military force. All in all, the explained variance remains at 7% very limited. However, when, beside the variables in the first model, we introduce into a second model the earlier construed scale variable that relates to personal violence, the explained variance rises to 19% (see Table 3.7, model 2). The personal violence variable is strongly significant. People that see themselves in a larger number of situations as having recourse to personal violence, also more often favour military intervention. The relationship between personal violence and force used by the authorities is very strong indeed. May we thus also deduce from that fact that a society which is more inclined to condone violence will more quickly resort to military action? These data certainly do not appear to contradict that deduction. Yet, it is likewise not to be excluded that multiple military invention may increase personal violence within a society. Further study on this point seems advisable to clarify the direction of the relationship.

*People that see themselves in a larger number of situations as having recourse to personal violence, also more often favour military intervention.*

**Table 3.7** Linear regression to the attitude vis-à-vis military intervention  
(sum total of the number of instances where military intervention is justified). (N=1020)

	Model 1: Attitude vis-à-vis military intervention	Model 2: Attitude vis-à-vis military intervention
Gender	.027	.039
Age	-.060	-.029
Education	-.066	-.049
Authority (low – high)	<b>.120**</b>	.073
Generalized trust (low – high)	.054	.040
Feelings of insecurity (low – high)	.071	.058
Social capital (low – high)	-.022	-.003
Materialism – postmaterialism	-.063	-.059
Left-right positioning	.065	.027
Knowledge of international politics	<b>-.090*</b>	<b>-.078*</b>
Attitude vis-à-vis personal violence	–	<b>.355***</b>
Explained variance (adjusted R <sup>2</sup> )	.070	.189

Note: The coefficients stand for standardised Betas and their significance in a linear regression to the attitude vis-à-vis the justification for military intervention. Sig. \*\*\*=.001 \*\*=.01 \*=.05.

### Military intervention and the Belgian armed forces

Closely tied to the notion about military intervention is the attitude of the Flemish population towards their country's armed forces. Again we are faced with quite divided opinions about the future of the Belgian army (see Table 3.8). Almost nobody advocates disbanding the Belgian armed forces (5%), but, likewise, the number of those that favour a stronger army is rather small (18%). The large majority of the Flemish population opts for maintaining the current status quo (26%), for an army concentrating on humanitarian actions (25%), or for integrating our forces into a European army (26%).

*Many Flemish people thus still find a role to play for our army, but rather in a humanitarian capacity or as part of a broader, international context.*

Many Flemish people thus still find a role to play for our army, but rather in a humanitarian capacity or as part of a broader, international context. The fact that nearly half of the Flemish people are of the opinion that only the United Nations can give the go-ahead to the use of military force against another country is consistent with this (Table 3.9). Likewise, most of the focus group participants look upon the UN ideally as the only body that can sanction that go-ahead. In contrast to the Flemish politicians, the participants from the peace movement and the civil society offered the opinion that a possible sanctioning by the UN today does not legitimise war politically: *‘When you consider the arm-twisting, the suspension of aid that is going on behind the scenes in order to force countries to vote in favour of certain standpoints in the Security Council, then the UN is nothing but a balancing act.’* (Rudy Demeyer, Focus Group Civil Society, 25/10/2006).

**Table 3.8** *‘What do you think is the best future direction to take for the Belgian armed forces?’*  
(N=1018)

		%
1	The Belgian army should stay how it is now	25.8
2	The Belgian army should be integrated into a European army	25.7
3	The Belgian army should only occupy itself with humanitarian actions	24.7
4	The Belgian army should not be cut down on, Every country needs a strong army	18.2
5	The Belgian army should be disbanded	4.6
Total		100

**Table 3.9** *The degree to which the Flemish people agree with the proposition about war and peace in an international perspective (N=1024)*

		Disagree	Neutral (+don't know)	Agree
1	Europe should specialise in the diplomatic solution of conflicts.	10.3	14.6	74.8
2	The United Nations are the only body that can give permission for using military violence against countries.	32.8	19.7	47.3
3	Our country does not mean anything on the international level, and therefore has no impact on international conflicts.	48.6	19.9	31.5
4	Because of the political history of Flanders, the Flemish people are less inclined to support a war than other peoples.	26.8	28.2	44.7

It is not clear, however, whether those Flemish that are of the opinion that the UN is not the only body empowered to permit the use of force (33%), also think that countries must be able to decide on this question independently or that, for instance, the EU also has the authority to make that decision. There does, indeed, exist a very large majority (75%) of people that see Europe playing a diplomatic role in settling conflicts. The roles reserved for the UN and Europe do not, in the opinion of almost half of the Flemish respondents, exclude the small country that Belgium is, from playing an important part in international conflicts; rather not so much in a military capacity, but, instead, in keeping with the Belgian tradition of consultation and seeking compromise. This is a position that was seconded by the participants from the peace movement and broader civil society, albeit with the rider attached that we are able to assume such a role only because we are but a small player: *'As a small country we are not in a position to become involved in major power politics.'* (Filip Reyniers, Focus Group Civil Society, 25/10/2006). *'We are therefore not seen as a threat, which very quickly will get you into a position for seeking compromises.'* (Rudy Demeyer, *ibid.*). Another way of looking at this focuses on the absence of a distinct Flemish and a Walloon army: *'The fact that one was never able to establish one's own army may mean that methods other than military had to be explored to resolve conflicts'*, thus says Nicole Van Bael (Focus Group Peace Movement, 24/10/2006).

*Nonetheless, the idea of the 'peace loving' Flemish is endorsed by no fewer than 45% of the respondents.*

Coupled to this so-called Belgian tradition to 'talk out' conflicts, there exists the oft-mentioned proposition that, much less than other populations, the Flemish people have throughout the whole of their political history been inclined to support war. Jan Roegiers, for instance, is convinced that *'the desire for tranquillity and peace is partly imbedded in our genes since, throughout the ages, Flanders has figured as the battleground in a lot of wars'* (Focus Group Politicians, 24/10/2006). For other politicians this seems more disputable, just as it is, in fact, for people from the peace movement. Although some look at it in a rather practical sense *'There are a number of arguments you use as a peace movement: 'we have the responsibility, if it is only when you think back to the Yser. Arguments you use, for instance, in issues such as dealing with the land mines.'* (Nicole Van Bael, Focus Group Peace Movement, 24/10/2006). This is with a nod to the widely recognised historical references (the Yser, but also WO I and WO II) that make it easier to elucidate the importance of certain issues. The 'practicality' lies herein that, in your communication with the target group, you join its specific cultural background and history. Flanders' history offers quite a few cogent reference points that expose the senselessness of war rather than inspire illusions towards might and power. The representatives of industry, in contrast, see this 'desire for peace' confined to only the *'vociferous few'* rather than its being widespread throughout the entire population (Jef Maes, Focus Group Industry and Unions, 25/10/2006). Nonetheless, the idea of the 'peace loving' Flemish is endorsed by no fewer than 45% of the respondents.

## 3.4

# A new World War or a terrorist attack: (un)realistic?

Most Flemish do not exclude military intervention, preferably to be undertaken within the context of an international force. But does this likewise mean that they are actually fearsome of a new (nuclear) war or frightened of a terrorist attack? Annemie Janssens, general manager of the KAV, observes that *'9/11 – but also in more general terms the phenomenon of globalisation, which has turned into a tangible presence inside the family living room – has resulted in creating a perception in people that today's world is no longer a place of peace'* (Focus Group Civil Society, 25/10/2006). 57% of the Flemish are of the opinion that, since the attacks of 11 September 2001, the world has become a whole lot less safe, and even somewhat more than half of the respondents consider a new world war not unthinkable. A strikingly large group of Flemish people (44%) envision a conflict between Islam and Christianity world as the cause of a war of worldwide dimensions. Surely not by coincidence do the responses in this latter proposition strongly relate to the proposition about the increased insecurity following the assault on the WTC-towers in New York City. Those respondents that believe in the possibility of a 'religious war' are situated generally to the right of the political spectrum, feel a greater sense of insecurity, and score particularly higher on the law abidance scale.

*57% of the Flemish are of the opinion that, since the attacks of 11 September 2001, the world has become a whole lot less safe, and even somewhat more than half of the respondents consider a new world war not unthinkable.*

**Table 3.10** The degree to which the Flemish population agrees with respect to the threat of war and insecurity in today's world (N=1022)

		Disagree	Neutral (+don't know)	Agree
1	Belgium can not have nuclear weapons on its territory	22.3	10.4	67.0
2	Since the attacks of 11 September 2001 the world has become a whole lot less safe	28.5	14.4	57.1
3	A real world war is now no longer unthinkable	53.5	19.0	27.5
4	The next world war will be one between Islam and Christianity	29.7	25.9	44.0

International terrorism (Table 3.12) is seen by the Flemish population as the international problem number 1 (38%), outscoring the proliferation of nuclear weapons (23%), world dominance of one country (19%), and illicit arms trafficking (18%). Nonetheless, the large majority of respondents consider the possibility of a terrorist attack on our country to be minimal. Only 18% rate such an occurrence in Belgium at this point in time (rather) on the high side (Table 3.11). Terrorism is thus considered a serious threat in the world, yet not quite something that we should be particularly worried about in our own country. For most of the Flemish then, terrorism is something of an abstract notion, something which they believe is not likely to happen to them. Nonetheless, this does not prevent their being of the opinion that terrorism is by far the most threatening international problem. Possibly, many Flemish people adhere to the assumption that our government's opposition to the war with Iraq has reduced the threat of a terrorist act against us.

*Terrorism is thus considered a serious threat in the world, yet not quite something that we should be particularly worried about in our own country.*

Besides terrorism, the proliferation of nuclear weapons is seen as a serious international problem. It is quite certain that the recent international discussions and conflicts with Iran and North-Korea have influenced such a perception. It is notable in this respect that two-thirds of the Flemish population oppose the presence of nuclear weapons on Belgian soil (Table 3.10). It demonstrates that a large public platform has been created for the many 'bomb-spotting' actions by Vredesactie and Bomspotting, which during the past few years have been undertaken in and around Kleine Brogel, a military base where allegedly nuclear missiles are stored.

**Table 3.11** Possibility of a terrorist attack in Belgium today (N=1029)

Assesment of possibility of attack in Belgium	%
Very low	14.6
Rather low	40.1
Neither low nor high	26.0
Rather high	13.7
Very high	4.1
Don't know	1.5
Total	100

**Table 3.12** Prioritising international problems (N=1029)

	% akkoord
1 International terrorism	38.4
2 The proliferation of nuclear weapons	23.3
3 The world dominance of one country	19.1
4 Illicit arms trafficking	17.6
5 Don't know / no answer	1.6
Total	100





## 3.5

# War and peace: who can do something to minimize the one and promote the other?

It is self-evident that government leaders and international organisations bear a heavy responsibility vis-à-vis peace in the world. But, likewise, the Flemish people see a role reserved for the Belgian lawmakers, industry, *and* for themselves. From the introduction of this chapter, it appeared that the Flemish people believed themselves able to make a contribution to a non-violent society (57%) and to a more peaceful world climate (54%). We confronted our respondents with a number of ways in which one can contribute to the cause of peace (Table 3.13). A mere 1% of the Flemish are of the opinion that there is nothing they can contribute to the cause of peace by means of the suggested methods. A very large majority of people believe that a contribution can be made by being respectful towards others (87%) and by raising children in a proper manner (79%). This is notably more than those who respond positively to the contribution to a 'peaceful world'. We do note, however, that Chapter 2 has demonstrated that many people entertain a very broad interpretation of the notion of 'peace', even to the extent of considering it as a kind of (tolerant, peaceable) attitude. With this in mind, we should not be surprised to find that a fairly large group of Flemish believe that they can make a personal contribution to peace by immersing themselves into the customs and the history of other peoples and cultures. In contrast, with regards to the notion of a 'peaceful world', people tend to think more readily of international conflicts.

*A mere 1% of the Flemish are of the opinion that there is nothing they can contribute to the cause of peace by means of the suggested methods.*

**Table 3.13** 'In which way or ways do you believe you yourself can contribute to peace?' (N=1029)

		% agree
1	By being respectful towards others	86.9
2	By raising children in a proper manner	79.2
3	By going into the habits and history of other peoples and cultures	39.7
4	By consciously not consuming goods from belligerent countries or conflict areas	33.8
5	By not joining a bank that invests in companies who enrich themselves – directly or indirectly – with arms	32.8
6	not	1.1

The more political means (propositions 4 and 5) score considerably lower; nonetheless, one in three Flemish people consider that they are able to make a contribution to peace by a conscious control on their consumer habits or by their engaging in ethical banking (see also 4.4). By constructing a simple total score (see also supra), we get an idea of the Flemish attitude vis-à-vis a number of concrete ways in which to contribute to peace, ranging from 0 'in not a single way' (1.4% of the respondents) to 5 'in every conceivable way' (14%). A statistical analysis in Table 3.14 demonstrates which factors can explain why certain people see themselves making a contribution to peace in more situations than others. Once again, we do not note a significant difference between men and women. Older individuals, people that have greater trust in others (model 1 only), and, especially, respondents with rather left-wing leanings in their political adherence, indicate in more situations their ability to make a contribution to peace. This is also the case for people with a lot of social capital and for 'post-materialists'. The explained variance of the first model is, however, very small (4%). But if we add in a second model the earlier discussed attitudes vis-à-vis the use of personal and military force, the explanatory weight rises notably (26%). Yet, the 'effect' of the opinion about personal and military force takes a completely different direction from the one we would anticipate. People that *more often* consider the use of force or justify military intervention prove themselves also *more often* prepared to take up the cause of peace. This runs counter to what we logically would expect and it is difficult to explain. Is it a question of a concession to a socially desirable response? Possibly, the fact that we are not probing here for an actual engagement but rather for a *potential* reaction may play a part. Further on in the report it will become evident that making an *effective active* effort towards peace is, in fact, allied with a non-violent attitude (see Table 4.3). We should also point out that, by adding the attitude vis-à-vis military force and personal violence, suddenly also other variables contribute more strongly to the explanation of who sees himself or herself making a personal contribution towards peace.

**Table 3.14** Linear regression to making a contribution to peace (total score of the number of ways in which one believes to be able to make a contribution towards peace). (N=1020)

	Model 1: Contribution to peace	Model 2: Contribution to peace
Gender	.026	.023
Age	.075*	.115***
Education	.022	.057
Authority (low – high)	-.060	-.133***
Generalized trust (low – high)	.080*	.052
Feelings of insecurity (low – high)	.029	-.005
Social capital (low – high)	.079*	.098***
Materialism – postmaterialism	.068*	.094**
Left-right positioning	-.116***	-.163***
Knowledge of international politics	.026	.066
Attitude vis-à-vis personal violence	–	.215***
Attitude vis-à-vis military violence	–	.367***
Explained variance (adjusted R <sup>2</sup> )	.036	.257

Note: The coefficients stand for standardised Betas and their significance in a linear regression with the number of ways in which one believes to be able to make a contribution towards peace as dependent.

Sig. \*\*\*=.001 \*\*=.01 \*=.05.



## 3.6

# Peace and arms export control: Flanders as top student in the (European) classroom?

Most Flemish people believe that they can personally contribute to peace but also remind industry of its responsibilities in that respect (76%) (Table 3.15). This is evident, and more pronounced, with people from the civil society and the peace movement in particular, with this rider, that a strong directive and controlling role by governments is a necessary adjunct: *'for what concerns the aspect of moral responsibility... naturally they are morally responsible, but that in itself means very little without the presence of the necessary legal instruments to accompany it.'* (Filip Reyniers, Focus Group Civil Society, 25/10/2006). *'A company is mandated to make a profit, whatever the area or sector of operations may be, that is what the shareholders demand. Ethical considerations are merely secondary. There may be ethics in play, but the big consideration is making profit, that is the function and purpose of business. For that reason, legal restrictions must be imposed by the authorities. The fact is that, as of the moment you leave ethics to be determined by the so-called code of conduct that companies must adhere to as part of their remit, nothing much will come of it.'* (Ludo De Brabander, Focus Group Peace Movement, 24/10/2006). Katrien Hertog is of the opinion that there is certainly room for ethics: *'business enterprises do certainly give thought to ethics but rather as an exercise in PR than from genuine concerns wherein sustainable development and peace are central considerations.'* (Focus Group Peace Movement, 24/10/2006). Yet, politicians expect a lot from the companies themselves. Arms export control is a fact and must be respected. Arms export is judged permissible or not on a case-by-case basis. Nonetheless, for what pertains to dual-use technology, politicians remain very vague about introducing much-needed legislation. Notable is that industry, for precisely the same reasons as the peace movements, is of the opinion that it cannot impose a deontology code on its own: *'You should not try to be more Catholic than the Pope. France is one of the largest exporters of arms and technology. They would like nothing better than us doing nothing. You really can't tether business.'* (Jef Maes, Focus Group Industry and Unions, 25/10/2006). Jeroen Roskams of the ACV cannot agree with this assessment: *'I do not agree that competitive strength is everything. There are other values and other issues that are quite a bit more important. For instance, democracy and human rights can in certain instances be much more important. I absolutely do not share the opinion that competitive strength represents the sole touchstone by which to measure whether certain technologies ought to be produced or executed.'* (ibid.) Neither competitiveness nor employment must be considered an alibi for violations of human and democratic

rights. For that reason, Jeroen Roskams pleads the case for converting the defence-related industry in Flanders and in Belgium to the production of goods and services that are not designed to serve military applications and purposes.

Two thirds of the Flemish population express opposition to the export of arms to countries that are engaged in war, even at the cost of lost jobs. This then means that the Flemish are prepared to pay a price for their conviction, although people are hopeful that European legislation on arms and weapons will avoid such drastic results. This is also the opinion expressed by Jef Maes: *'Industry must try to maintain its competitive position, worldwide and in a sensible manner, but where there is unfair competition – which there is – then you cannot leave the question of deontology to industry. For that reason, I am in favour of a government-imposed deontology. But this needs to be done on the European plane, for there is a different deontology for the Walloon and for the Flemish sectors, let alone between France and ourselves.'* (ibid.). With reference to the export of arms to countries at war, and when this is or is not permissible, Marc Van Bockstael places the final responsibility at the doorstep of the UN Security Council: *'For me this is a very simple matter: I personally have no say in this – maybe I have some preferences that I would like to see implemented, but realistically I accept that these issues ought to be settled in the UN Security Council. And it is the parties there that, ideally, ought to determine who are the good guys and who the bad guys.'* (ibid.).

*Two thirds of the Flemish population express opposition to the export of arms to countries that are engaged in war, even at the cost of lost jobs.*

Only one third of the Flemish people favours strict arms export control, even without the cooperation from the rest of Europe. In principle, industry is not opposed to this, but, let it be stressed again, only when their competitive position is not in jeopardy: *'when you let opportunities pass you by at the cost of employment, the Unions are clamouring on my doorstep. We have to accept the fact that we are operating in a society of rules and regulations, and these are to be kept equal for everybody. I do not intend to be more Catholic than my neighbour.'* (Jef Maes, ibid.)

The greatest challenge for what concerns regulations appears to be the determination of a uniform definition of what is meant by 'weapons', certainly in the light of the export of technology and products that are meant to be components of larger weapons systems. The divisiveness amongst Flemish on that point is striking: 43% of the Flemish respondents continue to have qualms about that type of export to countries that are at war, 34% have no such reservations, and 23% are undecided. Jef Maes graphically illustrates the problem: *'(...) An axe is meant to cut trees, but it can also serve for killing your mother-in-law...'* (ibid.). This pronouncement seems to suggest that the building-in of a greater number of guarantees related to the end use of technology and products might well be an initial step into the right direction.

We may conclude that the Flemish population demands also from industry a show of effort and responsibility but is also conscious of the fact that this can best be achieved on the European plane and, in the first place, requires a cautious approach to arms export to countries that are at war.

**Table 3.15** Propositions about the role of business and arms legislation (N=1029)

		Disagree	Neutral (+don't know)	Eens
1	Flemish arms export control legislation should not be stricter than that of other countries.	32.3	12.6	55.1
2	Flemish legislation on arms export has no point. This has to be dealt with on a European level.	17.4	13.7	68.8
3	Companies also have a responsibility with regard to peace.	9.9	14.1	75.9
4	Our companies can not export weapons or military material to countries at war, even if this means the possible loss of jobs here.	18.6	13.8	67.6
5	Technology, such as visualisation screens, night vision equipment or aircraft components, are not weapons and can thus unlimited be exported to countries at war.	42.7	23.0	34.2





## 3.7

# Conclusion: What do the Flemish people think about peace?

*Authorities should inform people about the horrors of war  
and mediate in international conflicts.*

The Flemish population conceives of war as an inescapable reality in our present world. Nonetheless, for many people this does not mean that we are completely powerless and cannot do anything about the situation. The authorities have to inform people about the horrors of war and mediate in international conflicts. (Authorities should inform people about the horrors of war and mediate in international conflicts) People expect from industry that the latter will assume its responsibilities and not export weapons to countries at war. The majority of people believe that it is possible to make a personal contribution to the cause of peace, primarily by assuming a respectful attitude towards others and by raising children in a proper manner.

Many Flemish people find war in the world not entirely removed from the practice of violence in our society. Violence is rejected and only a minority looks upon it as a means for solving problems. Yet, a notable number of Flemish people admit that in certain circumstances they themselves would resort to the use of force. Primarily to defend themselves or family, but almost 40% of respondents consider violence acceptable to protect personal possessions. Women see themselves using violence as readily as men. This is an observation valid for nearly all findings in this study: the ideas that women entertain about peace and non-violence are generally barely different from the opinions of men. That violence and war are, in essence, identical phenomena may be deduced from the Flemish attitude towards military intervention. The more quickly one would resort to personal violence, the more quickly one also considers military intervention acceptable. In general, the Flemish people are not readily inclined to justify military action. It does appear that the war with Iraq and the problematic situation now prevailing in that country have influenced public opinion in that respect. This standpoint is difficult to substantiate because of the absence of any research data that pre-date the Iraq war and that we can compare with new, recently gathered material. Nonetheless, the fact that the Flemish people rejected the war with Iraq, that the predicted successes were not forthcoming, and that media-attention for the war

was exceptionally great, makes us suspect that the said war may well have influenced the opinions of the Flemish people about war in general. It further appears that people with a deeper understanding of international politics are less often inclined to sanction military actions.

Nonetheless, the majority of the Flemish people find that, ever since the 9/11 assault on the WTC-towers in New York City, the world has become a less safe place. The threat of international terrorism is seen as the most pressing concern, although only a small minority is of the opinion that our country is a potential target for terrorist activity. Aside from terrorism, there is also a degree of anxiety about nuclear weapons, no doubt triggered by the international debates about the nuclear programmes in Iran and North Korea. But also the presence of nuclear weapons on Belgian territory is considered problematic by two out of three respondents.

And, finally, it is notable that many Flemish people consider the question of peace in a wider European and international context. For instance, many of them look upon the United Nations as the only body with a right to legitimately sanction military intervention and they expect from Europe that, as a mediator in conflicts, it will exert its influence and power to the fullest degree. Also on the legislative plane, most Flemish respondents perceive a European influence as a great benefit, including in the area of arms legislation. But should the international community not wish to cooperate, one in three participants in our survey feel that Flanders should then set the tone and point the way. Is this a telling example of the substantial inclination towards peace that the Flemish population has developed in the course of its history? Nearly half of the Flemish population believes that such a historical bias does indeed exist, even though a great number of politicians and advocates in the peace movement tend to be sceptical about it.

# 4

*What are the Flemish  
people contributing  
towards 'peace'*

In the previous chapters we examined how the Flemish population defines the concept of 'peace' (perception) and what they think about peace and non-violence (attitudes). Yet, what people think and what they actually do are two different things. In this chapter, we shall take it one step further and examine what actions the Flemish population has already effectively undertaken to promote peace and what they claim they intend to, or would do in the cause of peace. Where peace is concerned, citizens can engage in all sorts of actions, both in daily life and in a political context. In the questionnaire that we presented to the respondents, we included a number of questions about their actual and potential behaviour in the areas of peace and non-violence. We first asked the respondents an array of questions that pertained to possible actions to promote peace and non-violence. Furthermore, we also asked to which associations or organisations they belonged and whether they thought these bodies did indeed support the cause of peace and non-violence. We report in this chapter, first about the activities, then about the memberships. In every instance, we examine what the best 'predictors' are of that commitment, and whether the perception and attitudes contribute to a commitment to the cause of peace and non-violence. In addition, in this chapter we also put the focus on the reasons why people do not actively become engaged in the cause of non-violence, even though they are often inclined to do so. What are the barriers that separate wanting and doing? We conducted this latter part of the study using data about participants and non-participants in two mass marches against violence in Belgium that took place sometime in the spring of 2006, namely the marches against the racially inspired murders in Antwerp, and 'the March for Joe' in Brussels. Before we start with this, however, we shall first attempt, theoretically, to gain a bit more insight into the phenomenon of peace activism and we shall further work out the case of the opposition against the war with Iraq.

## 4.1

# Peace activism

One step beyond just having an opinion about an issue – as already discussed in the previous chapter about the Flemish population's attitude towards peace – is to make that opinion explicit by means of political action. This may range from simple membership in an organisation, either passive (cheque book activism) or active, to refusal to purchase certain products for ethical reasons, to the signing of a petition, participation in demonstrations, and other, more specific, forms of action. Yet, this type of becoming active is not just the automatic consequence of having outspoken opinions. Naturally, this is a basic prerequisite, but it needs to be complemented by satisfying a whole lot of conditions, as well as conquering an array of psychological and physical barriers, if people want to actively express their political preferences, certainly outside of the institutional arenas.

Briefly and simply expressed: people participate in collective action because they are *able to do so*, because they *want to*, and because they *were asked* to participate (Verba, Schlozmann & Brady, 1995). People become politically active when they are able to. In other words, when they possess adequate knowledge and ability for it, and when they can devote sufficient free time to it (sociologists sometimes speak of 'biographic availability' which, as an example, can be related to age). People need thus to also have the time to become actively involved in political activism, a condition that, very broadly, relates to age, professional occupation, and the presence or absence of children (see, amongst others, Shusmann & Soule, 2006). Briefly, the more time people have and the more competencies and abilities they possess, the faster they feel inclined to take an active role in supporting a cause that happens to be close to their hearts. Which brings us immediately to the second aspect of activism: people are recruited into an organisation or mobilised to participate in political activity simply because they are willing to do so. But also that element of '*being willing*' is a complex factor. In the first place, it pertains to a similarity in the way the organisers of an 'activity' think about an issue and the personal norms and values embraced by the potential activist. The latter go from party preference and leftwing / rightwing ideology within the political spectrum, including broader general values (for instance, materialism versus universalism), to political and social trust (Barnes & Kaase 1979; Norris, 2002). Put in another and very simple way: the way the theme is thought about has to fit the broader notion embraced by the

individual. Conversely, the manner in which the theme is thought about is partly defined by that way of thinking. In the first place, activists often experience a sense of injustice: this may encompass feelings of moral indignation; the fact that certain principles held to be 'untouchable' are actually encroached upon; a sense of illegitimate inequality or a 'suddenly imposed grievance', a feeling of impotence or dissatisfaction caused by sudden, unexpected occurrences (ranging from an explosion in a nuclear station to senseless acts of violence). Yet, in themselves, such elements are not sufficient: not all people who think about a theme in the same way and assign it the same level of importance and feels indignant about what is happening will actively take up the cause as a result. A second requirement is that people must actually be convinced of the usefulness of their personal commitment and of the engagement of the group to which they will pledge their support. Thirdly, this further means that there has to be a group feeling, expressed as a collective identity that can best be understood as an oppositional consciousness: an identification of 'those', that are the cause of a problem versus the 'we', that hold the key to its solution. Once those three conditions have been fulfilled, there can be question of an individually embraced *collective action frame*: the whole complement of collective convictions whereby participation in collective action makes good sense. Yet, neither that is, as a rule, quite enough to get people motivated: as Klandermans & Oegema (1987) put it; one needs to move from *consensus mobilisation* (the three afore-mentioned elements) to *action mobilisation*. In the first place, people need to become the subject of mobilisation or recruitment or, in other words, they need to become aware that collective action is happening, or that there exists an organisation and that members are recruited into it. Besides the more 'open' channels of mobilisation by means of media attention and poster campaigns, it is the formal and, especially, the informal networks that play an important role in this. Particularly, contact with others of similar convictions proves highly persuasive. Moreover, action mobilisation consists also in pointing out to potential participants the collective group interests, in maximising individual interests by bringing down the costs of participation, and in stressing the positive actions undertaken by other significant parties. When all these conditions are fulfilled, people will not only agree with the action (*consensus mobilisation*) but also participate in collective action, or sign up as members of a social or political group or organisation.

With this theoretical consideration in mind, we present, as an introduction to this chapter, the public opinion data about the impending war with Iraq in seven European countries and we compare those public opinion data with the actual participants in the worldwide protest day against a war with Iraq in February 2003. These demonstrations, which witnessed millions of people taking to the streets worldwide, took place on 15 February 2003, right after the EOS Gallup poll that asked the citizens of the 7 countries for their opinions, and at least a month prior to the start of the invasion of Iraq. In those same afore-mentioned European countries, and assisted by an international team of researchers, we simultaneously approached people, by means of a common questionnaire, that had participated in the various national demonstrations against the war. In this manner, we are able, albeit in a rudimentary fashion, to draw a comparison between those people that *declare* to be opposed to the war and those that have in fact *actively* expressed their opposition by rallying to the cause.

It appears first of all from Table 4.1 that the anti-war feelings are not equal for all of the demonstrators in the various countries. In Spain and Italy, both being next to the United Kingdom the most 'bellicose' nations, the demonstrators' anti-war feelings are the most vociferous (see the summary scale in the second-to-last row in the Table). In the Netherlands, the third officially designated member nation of the *coalition of the willing*, the anti-war feelings are considerably less pronounced. Likewise in the United Kingdom, the major European pro-war advocate, the demonstrators' anti-war feelings are relatively subdued. Belgian and Swiss demonstrators are inclined to join their South-European counter-parts, while the Germans are rather moderate in their anti-war sentiments and hover around the average. The Table in one way or another points to the fact that opinions do not automatically lead to actions, since we find relatively widespread divergences amongst countries. When we compare Table 4.1 with Table 1.2 (see chapter 1), it appears that people that actively took to the streets on 15 February 2003 do not represent a pure and uniform reflection of the anti-war advocates. There exists a gulf between *being* against the war and *actively* expressing opposition by taking to the streets.

**Table 4.1** Anti-war attitudes of the demonstrators on 15 February 2003 (in %)

Country	UK	SP	IT	NL	SW	BE	GE	Total
The USA are on a crusade against Islam. (agree)	43	49	45	46	44	45	39	44
War is justified to bring down a dictatorial regime. (disagree)	75	84	85	77	85	81	84	82
A war against Iraq is justified given the formal agreement of the United Nations. (disagree)	62	74	84	67	77	74	76	73
The USA want to invade Iraq to ensure their own oil supply. (agree)	84	95	91	80	84	92	86	87
This is a racist war. (agree)	40	27	33	25	37	31	31	32
Saddam Hoessein and the Iraqi regime represent a threat to World peace. (disagree)	46	53	50	28	45	50	33	44
War is always wrong. (agree)	44	89	87	69	81	78	76	75
The Iraqi regime has to be brought down to stop the suffering of the Iraqi people. (disagree)	54	60	42	77	58	41	47	54
Total anti-war score (average)	51	61	63	50	59	59	56	57
N:	1129	452	1016	542	637	510	781	5772

Source: International Peace Protest Survey, M<sup>2</sup>P, 2003

In the way that, earlier, we have examined the individual predictors of anti-war feelings with the Belgian population, we can do the same thing within the group of Belgian demonstrators in order to determine whether the people who, *amongst* the anti-war demonstrators, are more opposed to the war differ from people that are not as adamant in their anti-war feelings. In a similarly construed anti-war scale, here too variables like age and schooling do not appear to make a difference, just as in this case it is also true of religious beliefs, the absence of such beliefs, interest in politics, and social trust. The only two significant predictors of an anti-war attitude are, once again, gender ( $\beta = .218^{***}$ ) and leftwing-rightwing leanings ( $\beta = -.259^{***}$ ). Even within the group of active Belgian anti-war demonstrators, who, by definition, are against the war, women appear significantly more opposed to the war than men. Also, people that position themselves to the left of the political spectrum display a more pronounced anti-war attitude than the relatively more right-wingers amongst the demonstrators. Gender and ideology thus appear to be the most robust individual predictors of positive peace attitudes (or negative anti-war feelings). Later on we shall see if that is also the case for the general attitudes about peace within the Flemish population as a whole.



## 4.2

# Active and potential peace engagement

*Donating cash is the most popular form of people's commitment to peace.*

Table 4.2 shows the results of a question about six different political forms of commitment to peace or non-violence. One form of commitment is the so-called cheque book activism, namely to contribute to a better world by giving money to organisations dedicated to improving existing conditions. More than half of the respondents claim to have given money at one time or another to organisations that are, either directly or indirectly, engaged in peace activities. This makes cash donations the most popular form of people's commitment to peace. (Donating cash is the most popular form of people's commitment to peace). We obviously do not know what organisations are meant by the respondents, but one assumes it pertains to a whole series of third world organisations and NGOs and not, in any case, to only the 'pure' peace organisations. In the next section we shall return to this point in our discussion of memberships in organisations. It is interesting to note that the untapped potential of people that say they are prepared to donate money for the cause of peace but have not yet actually done so is relatively small (14.3%). This is the logical outcome of the fact that many people claim they are already donating money to peace. The second type of political activity that people claim to engage in is the signing of petitions against violence and war and pro peace. This also is a rather facile activity that requires only a modest commitment or effort. Not only widespread active involvement in this is reported but there also remains a very large potential. Many people state that they have never signed such a petition but would be prepared to do so. All in all, nearly three-quarters of the Flemish population feels positively disposed towards these sorts of actions for peace. For the organisations that are preparing these petitions, it is especially important to effectively reach this target group. A more 'costly' form of action, also in a literal sense, is the question of purchasing or boycotting products on the grounds of ethical or political considerations. This query does not target only products that, in a strict sense, are somehow related to peace but it also encompasses a very broad spectrum of 'ethical consumption'. A lot of people claim that they actually are engaging in this already, and also a fairly large group of people say they might well do this in the future. To proclaim oneself

opposed to war and an advocate of peace by displaying a relevant poster in the window is also a method that has at one time or other been undertaken by one in six Flemish people. The potential of this form of action is, however, quite a bit greater, as one in three Flemish claim they are prepared to possibly take this route. Here also, there is once more a great deal of potential and it is a question for organisations to successfully reach out to those people and convince them.

*There is a great deal of potential and it is a question for organisations to successfully reach out to those people and convince them.*

The last two items in Table 4.2 relate to actual and potential demonstration activity for peace or against violence. To take to the streets is the preferred way used by the Flemish and Belgian people to voice their displeasure and to defend their political interests. This is also borne out by our survey. Although to take to the streets is, in essence, a 'costly' business that demands time and effort, nonetheless a fairly large percentage of the Flemish population claims to have at one time or other participated in peace rallies (11%), or to have participated in one of the silent marches against violence that have been organised since the great White March in October 1996 (7%). These are quite surprisingly high numbers. In total (not reported in the Table), 31 percent of the Flemish respondents claim to have taken to the street for any cause whatever. A very substantial portion of these demonstrators, nearly 40 percent, claim to have participated in street marches for peace. This then means that some 4 out of 10 Flemish people who have ever taken to the streets have done so (amongst other causes) as part of a rally in support of peace. This figure makes 'peace' undoubtedly one of the major mobilising themes in recent Belgian political history. We do not know whether Flemish people attach much more importance to peace than the populations in other countries, but it is evident that the Flemish are quite inclined to rally into the streets in the cause of peace. Nonetheless, one should take these self-reported figures with a grain of salt since a certain degree of desirability plays a part in the responses to the questions, certainly in a questionnaire the focus of which is unremittingly about peace; yet, these remain high figures. Also the 7 percent of people that claim to have already participated in a silent march lies on the high side. Prior to the White March in October 1996, the phenomenon of the white marches was as good as unknown. Marches against violence came into 'vogue' only following the Affair Dutroux. Within a decade, the phenomenon grew into one of the most frequent forms of manifestations in Flanders and Belgium – in 2006, we also witnessed the March Against Racial Violence in Antwerp and the March for Joe in Brussels. It is further notable that there still exists a great potential store of new recruits for pro-peace and anti-violence demonstrations.

*4 out of 10 Flemish people who have ever taken to the streets have done so (amongst other causes) as part of a rally in support of peace. This figure makes 'peace' undoubtedly one of the major mobilising themes in recent Belgian political history.*

Many people who have not done so say they are prepared to march in protest against violence or for peace. This means that the potential of the ‘white’ marches appears to be still somewhat greater than that of the peace demonstrations (37% versus 29%). In this instance, the high potential really ought to be put into perspective. For what concerns both peace (mass demonstrations against the war with Iraq in 2003) and non-violence (mass marches Against Racial Violence and for Joe in 2006), we witnessed during the period prior to the survey a real rise in the number of organised demonstrations. Many potential demonstrators thus missed out on a great opportunity to rally to the cause while the circumstances for them to do so were favourable. Consequently, the likelihood appears remote that, in the years to come, they will be ready to participate in street marches for peace and against violence without strong mobilisation efforts on the part of the organisers. Nevertheless, they do admit that they are prepared to possibly do so, thus at least proclaiming their positive inclination to participate.

**Table 4.2** *Have you ever participated in the following activities or would you ever consider taking part in these activities (in %)*

		Actually done	Consider (yes)	Actual+potential
1	Donating money to an organisation working (in)directly on the promotion of peace and non-violence	50.9	14.3	65.2
2	Signing a petition for peace, against violence or against war	41.9	40.9	82.8
3	Buying or boycotting products out of ethical or political motivations	26.9	18.6	45.5
4	Hanging up a poster in the street window for peace, against violence or against war	16.2	33.7	49.9
5	Participating a demonstration or manifestation for peace or against war	10.7	29.0	39.7
6	Participating in a demonstration, silent or white march against senseless violence	6.5	37.3	43.8
N=1029				

With respect to their participation in peace rallies, we asked the respondents how much time had passed since they last took to the streets for peace. This offers us the opportunity to find out where they found the incentive for their commitment. The data clearly show us that the action of participating in street demonstrations for peace depends very strongly on external circumstances. In the case of an international conflict, efforts to mobilise mass demonstrations are intensive, but such mobilisations are spot processes and of short duration. In the literature about social movements, such mobilisations are referred to as ‘protest cycles’. Out of a total of 123 respondents that claimed to have participated in street demonstrations for peace, 33 did so during the

period when the opposition against the war with Iraq spilled out into the streets in large numbers (2003-2006). The opposition to the second Gulf War in 1991 brought, in that one year and during a very brief period of protests, 11 peace demonstrators into the streets for the last time. Going back still farther in the past, towards the eighties with the prolonged battle against the installation of nuclear weapons, we note very clear evidence of such demonstrations, with again 33 of the peace demonstrators that at that time, twenty years ago (1980-1986), took to the streets for peace for the last time. This then shows us that rather more than half of the peace demonstrators participated for the final time in a rally during one of the three major recent political conflicts about peace and security.

We can centralise the various political activities that people undertake in the cause of peace and non-violence into one simple scale of political peace activism. When a person has participated in all of the activities, he or she scores the maximum on the scale (=6) (0.6% of the Flemish population); if there is no participation in any of the activities, the score is the minimum one (=0) (29% of the Flemish population). We can then again, as we did in the previous chapters, rate this new variable in a statistical multi-variate analysis. The results of this rating are shown in Table 4.3.

Both regressions, model 1 and model 2, once with the three attitude-scales developed in the previous chapter (model 2), and once without these attitude-scales (model 1), render fairly high explained variance. This means that we are quite able to determine who is and who is not committing to peace and non-violence via a number of political activities. The younger one is, the more inclined one is to get involved in peace causes; people with a higher education get much more politically involved in peace issues than those with lower schooling. These are all features that we could indeed expect, based on our available knowledge about political engagement in general, and engagement for peace in particular. The different attitudes which in the introductory chapter we considered capable of conditioning the peace attitudes and peace commitment of the Flemish population are nearly all living up to expectations: authoritarian people are less inclined to take up the cause of peace; social capital and sociability are strongly predictive of political peace activities; the greater the left-wing leaning, the greater people's political involvement in peace; post-materialists are more active in the cause of peace than materialists; left-wingers do more to promote peace than right-wingers. Frequent viewing of TV newscasts has a positive effect on what people will undertake in the cause of peace and, furthermore, the same holds true for a knowledge of international politics. The greater one's knowledge of international politics, the greater the possibility that one will also become politically involved in the cause of peace or non-violence. The three developed peace attitudes wholly fulfil expectations: they are significant predictors of past participations in, or abstentions from, political peace activities. When one finds that personal violence is appropriate in many situations, when one agrees with the use of military force in many circumstances, and when one finds but few possibilities in one's personal life to engage in peace activities, the chances of becoming politically active in the cause of peace are much reduced. This appears all very logical. But with such analyses that attempt to predict a given behaviour on the basis of attitudes, one needs to be circumspect about the direction of the causality. The model is built up from the idea that peace attitudes will determine one's peace behaviour. Naturally, the reverse reasoning is also possible: by appropriating a given behaviour for oneself, the attitudes will follow. Nevertheless, in any case, the analyses do indicate that peace attitudes and peace behaviour are strongly allied.

**Table 4.3** Linear regression to the number of participations in political activities for peace or non-violence (N=1026)

	Model 1: Political peace activities	Model 2: Political peace activities
Gender	.059	.055
Age	-.081*	-.108**
Education	.140***	.125***
Authority	-.141***	-.107**
Generalized trust	.057	.054
Feelings of insecurity	-.067	-.060
Social capital	.230***	.211***
Materialism – postmaterialism	.092**	.075*
Left-right position	-.110***	-.078*
Frequency of watching news and informative programmes	.082*	.090**
Knowledge of international politics	.087*	.068*
Attitudes vis-à-vis personal violence	–	-.079*
Attitudes vis-à-vis military violence	–	-.117***
Number of ways of contributing to peace	–	.143***
Explained variance (adjusted R <sup>2</sup> )	.234	.255

Note: The coefficients stand for standardised Betas and their significance in a linear regression to the number of political activities for peace and non-violence engaged in as dependent. Sig. \*\*\*=.001 \*\*=.01 \*=.05.

*The best predictor by far of participation in political peace activities is the social capital that people possess.*

What we learn from the regression in Table 4.3 in particular is that engagement in political peace activities does not happen in a vacuum. A true political engagement for peace springs from a complex set of people's characteristics, attitudes, and forms of behaviour. An important factor in this is that peace *behaviour* is strongly related to *positions* and attitudes one holds vis-à-vis peace. But the best predictor by far of participation in political peace activities is the social capital that people possess. Anyone engaged in volunteer work, who donates blood, has an occasional chat with the neighbours, welcomes newcomers to the neighbourhood, and that sort of thing, has much more possibility for getting politically involved in the peace issues. Because of the comparability with the above-mentioned analyses, we have not included it in the analysis, but, likewise, membership in organisations is a most reliable predictor of political peace activities. This tells us that mobilisation by organisations remains very important for turning attitudes about a certain theme, in this case war and peace, into active behaviour and action. Individuals that, because of their attitudes, are inclined to take up the cause of peace need also to receive an impetus on the part of organisations that can point out a number of action possibilities open to them.

In the above paragraphs, we have simply gathered together the political activities for the 'International' and 'Inter-personal' peace. We started from the premise that the types of people that commit themselves for peace and against war in the world are the same as those that are opposed to violence and promote non-violence in their own society. It may be that such a relation has more or less been proved on the basis of our findings in the previous chapters – personal non-violence and the importance of non-violence and the attitudes about 'distant' peace in the world are closely associated – yet, it may very well be that the people who commit themselves to a peace policy are nonetheless of a different type than those that are especially concerned about violence in their own society. In order to verify that point, we systematically compared two types of 'active' people: those that claim to have participated in pro-peace and anti-war street demonstrations, and those that claim to have participated in demonstrations, silent or white marches against senseless violence. This, naturally, pertains to a relatively small group of people in our survey (N=172), yet, within this group of people who either participated in demonstrations for peace, or, at one time or other, participated in a white march, there are interesting differences to record between both groups of demonstrators. Multi-variate analysis teaches us that the peace demonstrators are significantly more highly educated than the anti-violence demonstrators, males predominate there, they possess a greater store of social capital, they find that there are many more ways in which one is able to personally declare and actively engage oneself in the peace process, and they see themselves in far fewer circumstances inclined to personally resort to the use of force. That latter point is actually somewhat remarkable. People that take to the streets against the use of violence in their own society say that there are more circumstances in which they personally, within their own social environment, would use force than people that are taking to the streets to oppose the 'distant' use of violence in the world. Thus, peace demonstrators are less inclined to resort to force than anti-violence demonstrators; as stands to reason, both are less inclined to use force than the rest of the Flemish population, as we have already demonstrated supra.

*People that take to the streets against the use of violence in their own society say that there are more circumstances in which they personally, within their own social environment, would use force than people that are taking to the streets to oppose the 'distant' use of violence in the world.*

## 4.3

# Membership in peace organisations

Aside from our explicit question about the political action means and resources to promote peace, we asked our respondents also a host of questions about their membership in organisations, which is also a form of political behaviour. We did not only ask them whether they were active, passive, or executive members, but also each time whether they found that the organisation to which they belong is actively involved in the promotion of peace. We did so since we started from the premise that people cannot just consider their membership in 'pure' peace organisations alone as a form of peace commitment. We are, however, quite conscious of the fact that the repeated questioning of every organisation about the latter's active engagement in the cause of peace can lead to a strong questioning effect. People eventually will, in fact, answer that an organisation to which they belong is indeed involved in the peace issue. Therefore, what we are reporting below is, no doubt, an over-estimation. Table 4.4 shows the memberships per type of organisation and the estimation of the peace engagement on the part of these organisations.

In the first place, it is notable that the '*pur sang*' organisations, that is to say the peace organisations purely engaged in peace issues, count only a minuscule portion of the population amongst their members. Amongst all of the listed organisations, the peace organisations register by far the lowest membership count. This is offset by the fact that more than 86 percent of the members of these organisations, not surprisingly, say that their organisation 'is engaged' in the issue of peace. Actually, one would have expected a 100 percent engagement, since, after all, it pertains here to organisations explicitly committed to the peace process. A solid 13 percent of the respondents that are members of a peace organisation state that the organisation in question is not engaged in peace activities. As the membership of the various listed organisations grows – we ranked the organisations in the Table according to their peace orientation – their commitment to peace drops. Sports and recreational organisations count by far the largest number of members but the commitment to peace of these organisations is seen as very limited by their own members (11.3%). The list of organisations provides us with a nice cross-section of the kinds of organisations, and their membership numbers, that could commit themselves to the cause of peace. Next to the peace organisations, there are other typical new organisations involved in social movements such as groups that occupy themselves with human rights and third world issues. Also the

church, still an organisation with a relatively large membership, is clearly seen as an organisation to promote peace initiatives. This is remarkable, since it appeared from one of the previous chapters that the differences in religious beliefs are considered to be one of the major causes of war; here, it appears that the own (Catholic) church is seen by many believers as a force for peace. Also political parties and youth movements – both can count a relatively large membership – are considered by their members as organisations that are in some way concerned with peace. The list shows a distinctly less ‘peace orientation’ on the part of the labour unions: a mere one-quarter of union members (26%) consider their membership in the union as a potential commitment to peace. It is further notable that typical environmental organisations, which are also to be considered part of the new social movements, are not perceived as being engaged in peace issues.

**Table 4.4** Membership in organisations and the question: ‘is this organisation actively engaged in peace issues?’ (N=1026) (in %)

	Member board	Active member	Passive member	Organisation engaged in peace issues (yes)
Peace organisation	0.0	0.4	2.4	86.7
Human rights organisation	0.0	0.3	3.5	80.9
Third world organisation	0.2	1.5	5.4	72.1
Church or religious organisation	1.3	5.6	7.0	68.1
Political party	0.6	2.3	7.1	66.4
Youth movement	1.3	4.2	1.4	49.2
Labour union	1.0	5.0	22.9	26.4
Student organisation	0.1	0.9	1.9	24.3
Environmental or animal rights organisation	0.3	1.8	8.5	30.1
Residents association	0.7	4.4	2.8	23.4
Arts, cultural or musical association	2.0	7.4	4.4	18.3
Sports or other hobby club	2.1	29.2	6.2	11.3

In order to globally analyse the peace commitment of the Flemish people by means of their membership in organisations, we created a new scale variable wherein we count per respondent the number of different engagements in types of organisations that are engaged in peace issues. For instance, when a respondent is an active member of a Union but says that the Union is not engaged in peace issues, this is then discarded. When a respondent states that he is a member of a sports organisation and he claims that this organisation is engaged in issues pertinent to peace, we consider that as a peace engagement. The thus created scale variable goes in theory from 0 to 12 (total number of different organisations) but in practice this is only from 0 to 6. Table 4.5 describes this process.



**Table 4.5** Number of different memberships in types of organisations that (according to the respondent) are engaged in peace initiatives

Number of memberships	% of Flemings
0	69.2
1	17.8
2	8.5
3	2.9
4	0.9
5	0.5
6	0.1
N	100 1026

Seven out of ten Flemish people are not members of any organisation that is engaged in peace initiatives. When they happen to be members of an organisation, this generally involves only one single type. The number of actively engaged people drops off rapidly as it pertains to more types of organisations. Precisely one single person out of the total of 1029 Flemish individuals questioned states to be a member of six different types of organisations that are involved with peace issues (0.1%).

We can in turn try to explain the scale of the organised peace engagement by means of a multivariate analysis, as we already did above for the political peace-promoting activities in which the Flemish people participate. The results of this exercise may be found in Table 4.6. The analyses provide us with a picture that confirms much of what we said before. Without entering peace attitudes and other behaviour geared towards peace (political activities) into the model (Model 1), membership in what we here for simplicity's sake will call 'peace organisations' is very difficult to explain. The low explained variable tells us volumes in this respect (0.080). By far the strongest predictor of membership in peace organisations is the one that tells if the individual has in the past ever participated in a political action or campaign for peace (demonstration, petition, poster display, ethical consumer behaviour...). This appears logical. The more one becomes actively involved in peace, the more inclined one is to take out membership with organisations that are involved in that activity, but the causality probably lies rather in the reverse direction (from membership to activism). Nonetheless, a number of other variables prove to be significant predictors of engagement in a peace organisation; most of these variables have already in earlier reported analyses proven their discriminating value. Women appear significantly more inclined to take out membership in peace organisations than men (only model 1); older individuals seem slightly more inclined to take out membership (only Model 2); individuals with a more authoritarian attitude are significantly less inclined to take out membership (only Model 1); the more one trusts in one's neighbour, the more one is inclined to take out membership in organisations that are engaged in peace efforts (only Model 2). The same holds true for people possessed of a lot of social capital and for people with post-materialist attitudes. These are, in fact, results that are to be expected and that merely confirm and re-enforce our previous findings. Education does not

play a significant role in this; likewise, the sense of insecurity, the frequency of viewing TV news-casts, left-wing leanings, or the knowledge of international politics appear not to influence membership in peace organisations. We should once again reiterate that the collected results have been obtained by taking together all organisations which, as the people (members) themselves state, are engaged with peace issues (amongst other issues), and, therefore, this includes parties, student organisations, churches... The number of members of the purely exclusive peace organisations in our sampling is too small for use as a multi-variate. It might well be that such an analysis would render different results, but the aggregate of the result which we report herein is, in any event, consistent with and confirms the foregoing.

**Table 4.6** Linear regression to the number of memberships in types of organisations that are (amongst other endeavours) engaged in peace issues (N=1026)

	Model 1: Member organisation engaged in peace issues	Model 2: Member organisation engaged in peace issues
Gender	.088*	.060
Age	.063	.078*
Education	.034	-.012
Authority	-.083*	-.022
Generalized trust	.086	.067*
Feelings of insecurity	.006	.032
Social capital	.188***	.110***
Materialism – postmaterialism	.119***	.091**
Left-right position	.000	.051
Frequency of watching news and informative programmes	.003	-.029
Knowledge of international politics	.066	.030
Attitudes vis-à-vis personal violence	–	-.073*
Attitudes vis-à-vis military violence	–	-.004
Number of ways of contributing to peace	–	.032
Number of participations in political activities for peace	–	.338***
Explained variance (adjusted R <sup>2</sup> )	.080	.177

Note: The coefficients stand for standardised Betas and their significance in a linear regression to the number of memberships in organisations that are (amongst other endeavours) involved in peace issues as dependent.

Sig. \*\*\*=.001 \*\*=.01 \*=.05

## 4.4

# Obstacles between ‘wanting to act’ and ‘acting’ for peace and non-violence

### **Boycotts and ethical banking: more info please**

In paragraph 3.5, we already noted that no fewer than one third of the Flemish people believe themselves able to make a contribution to peace, either by boycotting products imported from warring nations or by refusing to deal with banks that invest in businesses profitably engaged, either directly or indirectly, in the arms trade. In a previously mentioned non-representative panel survey of some 10.000 Flemish people, we probed in March 2007 via the Internet for the reasons why people do not boycott products or do not engage in ethical banking practices. The results of this survey are presented in Table 4.7.

*One third of the Flemish people believe themselves able to make a contribution to peace, either by boycotting products imported from warring nations or by refusing to deal with banks that invest in businesses profitably engaged, either directly or indirectly, in the arms trade.*

The percentage of panel participants that have at some point in the past boycotted a product is remarkably high (53%), more than twice as high as for the sampling of Flemish respondents in the telephone poll (see Table 4.2). As mentioned above, the Internet panel demonstrates a clear over-representation of younger, highly educated males that think of themselves as being to the left in the political landscape. This represents a specific group of Flemish respondents that is just significantly more occupied with activities such as product boycotts, signing petitions, and similar actions (see Table 4.3). The other half of the respondents have never yet boycotted a product. The most important reason given for this: *I simply don't spend time/attention to that*. Three out of ten respondents admit that an absence of information explains in the first place why they do not boycott products. In principle, they are not opposed to this political action, and an effective information campaign might well induce them to engage in (more) discriminate purchasing habits.

**Table 4.7** Reasons why people do no boycott products (N=5498) or do not bother with ethical banking (N=9417)(several responses possible)

Have you ever boycotted a product out of ethical or political motivations?	%
YES	53.2
No, I don't spend attention/time to that.	49.7
No, I'm insufficiently informed about what products I could boycott.	29.4
No, boycotting products is useless.	27.2
No, I don't know anybody who does.	5.5
No, I believe it is a lot more expensive that way.	3.9
Have you ever practised ethical banking?	%
YES	18.2
No, I'm insufficiently informed about this.	60.8
No, but if my bank would propose it I would strongly consider it.	22.8
No, but if it would not cost me anything I would like to participate.	12.7
No, ethical banking is useless.	11.7
No, nobody in my surroundings does this.	4.3
No, ethical investing and banking is in any case a lot more expensive.	2.2

Note: data from the Internet panel, wave 1 March 2007; both to the question about reasons for their not boycotting products and about ethical banking practices, approximately 88% offered only 1 reason, 10% offered 2 reasons, and 2% 3 or more.

Official figures about the number of Flemish people that practise ethical banking are not available to us, but 1 out of 5 participants in our Internet panel engage in the practice, which is once again clearly an over-estimation. However, it is interesting to note that an absence of information about ethical banking practices is the most commonly quoted reason. Also the next two most commonly quoted reasons point indirectly to this shortage of information. Twenty-three percent of the respondents are of the opinion that, if the banks themselves were to offer the possibility for ethical banking, this could influence them positively. Thirteen percent want to first receive more information about possible extra costs that banks will charge for this. We furthermore learn from additional statistical analyses (not included in this report) that people who are active in a larger number of organisations, federations, or committees, who have enjoyed a higher education, who see themselves as left-wing sympathisers within the political spectrum, and who were part of one of the recent silent marches against senseless violence, are inclined to boycott a product based on ethical or political considerations or engage in ethical banking practices more readily than their counter-parts.

#### **The cases of the 'March Against Racial Violence' and the 'March For Joe'**

On 23 April 2006, tens of thousands of Belgian demonstrators participated in a march against violence, this in response to the so-called MP3-murder of Joe Van Holsbeeck in Brussels. On 26 May, a few weeks later, a similar march was held after the racially inspired murders in Antwerp, with, this time, nearly twenty thousand demonstrators participating. Both cases were rallies against violence and for a non-violent society. In the same 2006 panel survey that we mentioned earlier, we this time approached more than 22.000 Flemish respondents, asking questions,

amongst others, about their participation in these marches, about their reasons for participation, and, especially – and this is within this context the most interesting aspect – about the reasons for the *non-participation* of those individuals that were otherwise in sympathy with the objectives of the marches. Table 4.8 shows the information about the reasons for participation.

**Table 4.8** *Principal reason for participation in the march against violence (in %)*

		March for Joe	March against racial violence
1	I was particularly concerned about safety in the street	10.7	1.0
2	To avoid that similar things happen in the future	11.7	11.3
3	To pressure politicians	3.2	1.6
4	To express my solidarity and support	8.8	11.5
5	Because I'm against racism	9.7	31.4
6	Because I'm against all forms of senseless violence	55.8	43.1
Total		100	100
N		308	609

It is notable that, in both instances, opposition to senseless violence is the uppermost concern. These marches, then, were indeed true manifestations against violence; all other motives lag far behind. It is further noteworthy that political motivations – like putting pressure on politicians – do not (or barely) enter into the picture.

In both instances, a very large majority of our Internet panel participants fully agreed with the objectives of both these marches against violence (70% agreed with the march inspired by the racially inspired murders in Antwerp, while 82% agreed with the March for Joe), yet only a fraction of the people that said they agreed with the objectives of the marches against violence actually showed up and took an active part in the demonstrations. We asked the ones who agreed with the objectives of the March for Joe but who didn't participate in this event, why they had *abstained*. This is a way to illustrate the obstacles between thinking and doing, or, in technical terms, between consensus mobilisation and action mobilisation. Table 4.9 shows the responses.

**Table 4.9** *Reasons for non-participation in the March for Joe, despite agreement with the objectives of that march (N=8200)*

		%
1	Nobody wanted to come along	3.3
2	Nobody I know was going to the march	16.8
3	Nobody asked me to go	8.9
4	Eventually I think the theme was not all that important	6.7
5	The march was too political	10.2
6	The march was no political enough	2.7
7	I never demonstrate	26.8

		%
8	I believed there would only be a small number of people	0.3
9	I believed sufficient people would show up	8.0
10	Marches like that are pointless	28.4
11	Was not aware of the day, place and hour of the march	3.7
12	I had other obligations	33.8

It is possible to divide the reasons given to justify the non-participation – not surprisingly, these are in part rationalisations *post facto* – into different types: reasons to do with the mobilisation of people, intrinsic reasons to do with the event’s content, questions about the effectiveness of the event, and practical reasons. The first three reasons given in the Table have to do with the aspect of mobilising people and the absence of a suitable ‘network’ to serve as a frame within which people can be mobilised or to assist people in making their own arrangements for participation. In total, nearly one-third of the absentees proffered that kind of reason: I was on my own, nobody I know was going and nobody asked me. Somewhat fewer people, more than twenty percent, resorted to a reason of ‘content’ to explain their non-participation, although they were, in principle, in agreement with the event: I didn’t think it was all that important and the content of the march was too political, or not political enough (reasons 4-6 in the Table). The motives 8 to 10 in the Table refer to the effectiveness of the march: it made no sense to participate since the march was not going to achieve its objective, or, it would achieve its objective even without my presence. More than one-third of the non-participants offered that as their reason. Then there were the practical objections: people cannot find enough free time or they don’t know enough about the march to be part of it. These practical barriers account for one third of the respondents. Finally, there are also a fairly large number of people who state they never participate in street demonstrations.

*The thresholds between being in agreement with the objectives of non-violence and actual participation in actions for non-violence are many and diverse.*

All in all, the responses of the panel participants indicate that the thresholds between being in agreement with the objectives of non-violence and actual participation in actions for non-violence are many and diverse. There are many reasons why people do not actively become engaged themselves: it also happens frequently that they do not altogether agree with the precise goal or the tenor of the action or the activity, because they believe that action is pointless and that any effort they might make would be wasted, they are not approached to participate and thus lack a stimulus to do so, or, for practical reasons, they cannot take part. All such types of thresholds have a cumulative effect and thus generate an enormous difference between ‘being prepared to take action’ and ‘active participation’, with only a fraction of the people who profess agreement ready to follow it up with effective action. In the instances under discussion, the march held to protest racial violence (Antwerp) attained a *success rate* – the term is to be understood as the effective conversion of consensus mobilisation (to be in agreement) to action mobilisation (active participation) – of 27 percent, in contrast to the barely 2 percent for the March for Joe.

## 4.5

# From wanting to actually doing: a brief profile of potential and active participants in peace demonstrations and white marches

We can further narrow the gulf between ‘wanting to do something’ and ‘actually doing it’ by determining whether there exist certain personal character traits that noticeably differ between those that look favourably upon the peace or non-violence theme, but for one reason or another have not (yet) taken the step to convert this into hard action, and those that have, in effect, taken that step. In addition, we shall briefly pause to look at the importance of certain mobilisation venues and the social and organisational networks that, as has become apparent earlier, are by far the most important predictors of actual engagement.

In the period between February 2003 and May 2006, questionnaires were distributed to the participants in various peace demonstrations (the anti-war demonstrations in 2003, 2004 and 2006)<sup>V</sup> and the already mentioned silent marches (in Brussels in memory of Joe Van Holsbeeck and in Antwerp following the racially inspired murders in the spring of 2006). In total, 2103 respondents were contacted. A number of relevant socio-demographic factors are shown in Table 4.10 for this group of active demonstrators (from earlier surveys of protest demonstrations) and for those Flemish respondents that mentioned they would participate sometime in the future in a demonstration for peace or against violence (these have not yet actively participated) (data garnered from this survey).

*It is thus not so much a question for organisations that are planning peace demonstrations or silent marches to tap into new segments of the population but rather, firstly, to keep existing segments loyal to the cause.*

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<sup>V</sup> A detailed methodological description may be found in Van Aelst & Walgrave (2001).

From Table 4.10 we may deduce the following points. A notably large number of characteristics between potential demonstrators and those mobilised into active participation coincide. Both amongst the potential and the active demonstrators that took to the street against senseless violence, women predominate to a small extent. Also with respect to age (rather the younger individuals against war, and rather the more mature, middle-aged against senseless violence) and employment (primarily full-time employed people, retirees, and students), the coincidences between both groups are substantial. It is thus not so much a question for organisations that are planning peace demonstrations or silent marches to tap into new segments of the population but rather, firstly, to keep existing segments loyal to the cause. We shall return to this in our further discussions on the importance of organisations in the mobilisation of people, in particular, with reference to silent marches where not the organisations but rather mass media play a crucial role.

**Table 4.10** *Profile of active and potential participants in peace demonstrations and protests against senseless violence (in %)*

		Potential for peace	Anti-war protesters	Potential against senseless violence	Participants silent marches
Gender	Man	47.5	54.5	47.5	44.7
	Vrouw	52.5	45.5	52.5	55.3
Age	15-25	18.8	29.7	23.0	13.2
	26-35	15.0	18.0	12.8	13.9
	36-45	16.3	15.9	21.4	19.7
	46-55	15.0	19.4	18.5	28.7
	56-65	12.5	11.7	12.3	17.4
	66-75	15.0	4.5	8.4	6.2
	75+	7.5	.8	3.7	.9
Working situation	Student	13.3	24.6	15.5	11.0
	Full time	30.7	35.5	40.5	49.3
	Part time	14.7	16.3	14.7	13.8
	House man/wife	12.0	1.3	6.6	4.6
	Unemployed	8.0	6.3	3.7	6.1
	Retired	21.3	15.9	18.9	15.2
N		82	1084	387	1019

Note: Potential participants = respondents that answered 'yes' to the question whether they planned ever to participate in a demonstration for peace or against senseless violence (data garnered from the peace survey); Active participants = participants questioned during, respectively, the Anti-War demonstrations in 2003, 2004 and 2006 and the two protest marches in memory of Joe Van Holsbeeck, on the one hand, and the victims of the racial attacks in Antwerp, on the other.



Nevertheless, the profiles of the active and potential demonstrators do diverge in certain aspects. This may point out that a certain group of Flemish people is far more prepared than others to take to the streets. For instance, a substantial number of seniors and housemen/wives indicate they want to participate actively in peace demonstrations. But these represent the smallest group amongst the anti-war demonstrators. We note a similar trend with the younger group (and students) who say they will participate in a protest march against senseless violence but, so far, have not done so.

While many characteristics between active and potential demonstrators coincide, we nonetheless note that between both groups – peace demonstrators, on the one hand, and demonstrators against senseless violence, on the other – there do indeed exist a number of differences. The difference between both mobilisations becomes more evident when we examine via what types of venues people were enlisted to the cause and were issued with information about the demonstration, and with what person(s) one made an arrangement to participate.

**Table 4.11** *Most important info channel about the demonstration/march and accompanying co-participants in the event (in %)*

Information channel for demonstration	Peace demonstrations (N=1088)	White marches (N=1023)
Radio/TV	10.6	47.6
Newspapers	6.4	30.6
Advertisement, flyers	7.5	.9
Posters	10.8	.6
Membership magazines	2.3	1.0
Family/friends	22.7	10.5
Colleagues/students	2.0	2.1
Co-members of an organisation	18.0	1.8
Website of an organisation	7.4	1.7
Email listing of an organisation	12.4	3.3
Total	100	100
<b>Company on the demonstration (multiple response)</b>		
Alone	11.4	26.8
Partner <sup>a</sup>	26.6	34.4
Family	36.7	42.6
Friends	49.9	38.3
Colleagues/students	14.4	9.0
Co-members of an organisation	34.4	11.3

<sup>a</sup> For the peace demonstrations, data are available only for the event in 2006

Table 4.11 shows us that the so-called ‘white marches’ against violence are, proportionally, more of a family affair than the peace marches: people, in essence, participate within family context.

This differs somewhat for peace demonstrations: aside from informal participation (friends and acquaintances), organisations (formal networks) assume a far greater role. In addition, with the ‘white marches’ one has to underline the significance of the mass media. Earlier, Walgrave & Manssens (2000) have shown that the mass media played a crucial part in moulding public opinion into a mass preparedness to participate (see also Walgrave & Verhulst 2006). This may partly explain the high number of ‘solo participants’ in the white marches (27% state they demonstrated on their own): many people are not mobilised and enlisted through a social network but rather by the media and, therefore, enter the scene not as a part of that network but rather as sole individuals. All of the above indicates, therefore, that mobilisation for the ‘International’ peace and ‘Inter-personal’ peace is really something distinct. The dynamic and the infrastructure underlying this is of a different kind. If you wish to mobilise people to take to the streets to support causes that are far removed from touching them personally and concern other countries, one needs to have organisations in place. To get people to take to the streets in support of causes that are of greater and more pressing relevance to them – since they are being played out within their own immediate environment – there is less of a need for organisations and for informal networks to work at mobilizing participants; calls to action via the media are in many instances all that is needed to prod people into action.

*If you wish to mobilise people to take to the streets to support causes that are far removed from touching them personally and concern other countries, one needs to have organisations in place. To get people to take to the streets in support of causes that are of greater and more pressing relevance to them there is less of a need for organisations and for informal networks to work at mobilizing participants; calls to action via the media are in many instances all that is needed.*

## 4.6

# Conclusion: the peace engagement by the Flemish population

In this chapter, we dissected two kinds of active peace engagements by the Flemish people. We examined to what degree the Flemish population participated in what we labelled political peace activities (signing petitions, displaying posters, ethical consumption practices, demonstrating...), and we surveyed to what extent the Flemish take out memberships in organisations that, in their opinion, (also) are involved in peace activities.

Both probes pointed into the same direction. While we do not possess data to draw comparisons, either from the past or from other countries, we cannot escape the feeling that a rather substantial number of Flemish people profess to be personally engaged, in one way or another, in support of the cause of peace. Nonetheless, we ought to take this assumption with a grain of salt. Our respondents were questioned for an average of 36 minutes about all sorts of aspects related to their perception, attitudes, and behaviour vis-à-vis peace and non-violence, which must inevitably have resulted in the fact that, certainly by the end of the interview, their willingness to agree with questions about peace has artificially increased. Consequently, we ought to be circumspect in our acceptance of the reported figures as being an exact reflection of the actual reality. Nonetheless, the figures do point into a certain direction and, particularly, allow us to make mutual comparisons in our search for the causes and backgrounds of peace perceptions, attitudes, and behaviour.

What we particularly retain from the context of this chapter is that there exists still quite a bit of potential for peace engagement. Many people state that they have already become engaged politically in actions for peace, but an even greater number state that they are not engaged yet but are prepared to join. But it is difficult to develop a peaceable society on the grounds of mere professions of intentions; it is very easy, and it does not place any obligation upon a person, to proclaim that you 'would consider' your active engagement in the cause of peace. Nonetheless, it does indeed indicate that a large number of Flemish people are strongly supportive of the idea of peace and of a non-violent society. Especially with respect to petitions, the displaying of posters, and the participation in demonstrations, there appears to still exist a very large potential of support. What the peace movement has to achieve as a prime objective is to convert that potential into active engagement and participation.

To actually bring about the swing from consensus mobilisation (support in principle for a theme or an issue) to action mobilisation (active participation in a peace activity), organisations and organisation membership are essential features. This also becomes evident from the second part of this chapter. Membership in reputed peace organisations exerts a strong influence on one's participation in political actions in support of peace. This then means that people do not want to engage themselves for peace in a vacuum, but rather do so because they were asked, because they were contacted, because there exist organisations that approach them with a 'proposition' for such an engagement. Of course, it is true that there are people who do get involved without prodding or incentives by peace organisations, but, no doubt, membership in an organisation is the best first step to convert potential commitment into a true personal commitment.

*Membership in an organisation is the best first step to convert potential commitment into a true personal commitment.*

Aside from the logical observation that attitudes about peace have an effect on the active involvement in peace activities – it is probable that the causality here lies likewise in a reverse direction – it is clear that active peace engagement is strongly coincidental with a number of general attitudes that, at first glance, do not have a true relation to specific peace attitudes. What throughout the analyses in this chapter may perhaps have proved most striking has been the large impact of the 'social capital' variable. Flemish people with a great deal of social capital – who, in other words, can have recourse to a strong network and informally support the local community via volunteer work and similar activities – are more inclined to back the cause of peace and anti-violence and are, in addition, also more likely to be members of organisations that – at least in the opinion of the respondents themselves – are involved in peace activities. And the same holds true for people that have a rather post-materialistic life vision. For Flemish people that scored high on the scale of adherence to government policy and law abidance, and are thus strongly supportive of government-imposed public order, the opposite is true; these people are notably less inclined to become actively involved in peace movements – although this variable does not influence the membership in organisations that, in the opinion of respondents, are engaged in peace initiatives. In conclusion, there also appears to exist a modest, yet significant, role reserved for following the news and watching television newscasts, and for a knowledge of international politics, in terms of its influence on the degree in which the Flemish people engage themselves actively in support of peace and non-violence. The more one becomes informed, and the higher the (resulting) knowledge, the more one becomes inclined to actively participate in actions for peace and non-violence.

# 5

*Peace as a priority  
in the media and in  
politics*



## 5.1

# Peace as a priority in the media

'Everybody wants peace, but nobody is losing any sleep over it.' This was one of the propositions which we used in an attempt to start a discussion in the four focus groups. In spite of the differences in the nuances amongst the different focus groups and the individual participants, the discussions centred more or less persistently on three aspects. Firstly, to be in favour of peace is not a constant but rather a variable and *'dependent on the political circumstances'* (Rudy Demeyer, Focus Group Civil Society, 25/10/2006). Katrien Hertog, for instance, holds the view that: *'I have the impression that there does not exist any genuine interest in peace in people's daily life that might be taken as a constant. When something happens, there is indeed some display of interest, but can it be called a genuine, lasting interest in peace? Or does it pertain to other issues?'* (Focus Group Peace Movement, 24/10/2006). Jan Rutgeerts formulates it in somewhat stricter terms: *'It pertains mostly to one single issue: it could be missiles, or Iraq, or Afghanistan... but people have no real global encompassing vision about this'* (Focus Group Peace Movement, 24/10/2006). Secondly, politics is not really interested in the peace process: *'No longer are party conferences organised to discuss the problem of peace and security in the world. This is not a topic that is still closely followed anywhere. It is not an issue that comes up during elections'* (Jan Rutgeerts, Focus Group Peace Movement, 24/10/2006). *'This issue will not get a politician more votes'* (Jan Roegiers, Focus Group Politicians, 24/10/2006). Thirdly, media coverage is the key to how persistently the peace issue will maintain a lasting impression on the Flemish population and what its attitude is vis-à-vis the issue. *'If the media decide to ignore an issue, any peace movement may as well throw in the towel. You may work as a dog and the results will simply be negligible'* (Nicole Van Bael, Focus Group Peace Movement, 24/10/2006). *'What it all amounts to is people manipulation by the media, on instructions from the political leaders'* (Roland Van Goethem, Focus Group Politicians, 24/10/2006).

In a sense, this final chapter provides an answer to these three concerns. What is the politicians and the media's interest in peace issues such as international security, arms trade, and similar topics? Is their professed interest determined by the pattern of major events and conflicts or does there, indeed, continue to exist a strongly focussed attention and interest that is relatively constant in its nature? In other words, how high a priority is peace on the political and media agenda? In a first section, we shall examine more closely the interest in peace displayed by the

media. In a second section, we shift our attention to the political agenda. Finally, in a last section, we shall briefly discuss the reciprocal influence of these two agendas.

The principal reason why the media often play a crucial role is the fact that, for many people, the media are, in essence, the most important source of information, *'the window onto the world'*, and as such have a potential influence on determining what issues society considers (politically) important and how they are generally perceived and interpreted. The exchange and the reciprocal influence of public opinion, media, and politics is, however, of a very complex nature and passes beyond the remit of this study. Nonetheless, a few discussions in the focus groups may usefully serve in illustration: *'The British press was very much opposed to Blair and his Iraq policy. In spite of this, the government persisted in its course. In the USA, the media were very supportive of Bush and his policy on Iraq'* (Filip Reyniers, Focus Group Civil Society, 25/10/2006). *'To me, a very telling example is a programme on a Dutch station about Powell that demonstrated how a bit of everything was unearthed in Iraq. The next week, Balkenende states that the Netherlands are in favour of a military intervention. In the programme, individuals such as Blix are given the floor to express their opinions. They claim that Balkenende knew well that all of this was one big deceit. These statements are actually made on national TV but people simply don't react and continue on their accustomed way. What is being said in the media is not enough to undermine the expressed political resolve'* (Rudy Demeyer, Focus Group Civil Society, 25/10/2006).

We shall, therefore, leave aside the question of how strong an impact the media exerts on public opinion and on the political agenda as discussed above. In this part of the study, we examine in the first place *what* was reported in the news: firstly, the written news in the newspapers and, subsequently, the news as reported on TV. Newspapers can count on reaching, as a daily average, some three million readers, and politicians are devoted readers of the reported news. Television, on the other hand, is often considered to be the most influential source of news, and especially the seven-o'clock news always reaches a very large audience. The file about the agenda of topics, which we also used in the earlier political agenda, includes items that were broadcast on the seven-o'clock TV newscasts of both the VRT and VTM stations. In addition, every front page article in *'De Morgen'*, *'De Standaard'*, and *'Het Laatste Nieuws'* was given a certain thematic code.<sup>VI</sup> For the three newspapers combined, we ultimately counted a total of 73.000 items during the period 1991 – 2000. For what concerns the television newscasts, data were missing for the period between 1991 and 1992, and for the period 1993 – 2000 we coded 115.000 items. More recently, within the context of the Electronic News Archive (ENA), every item on the seven-o'clock newscasts by VRT and VTM was coded anew: this accounted for 62.305 items during the period 2003 – 2006. In what follows, we first take a look at the printed press and the television newscasts between 1991 and 2000, a period in between two Gulf Wars, both generating mass protests worldwide. Subsequently, we shall look at the data we find in the ENA from 2003 to 2006, a good two years after the assault on the New York WTC-towers shuffled the deck.

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VI Two major restrictions apply, mainly as a result of practical considerations: only front page items were encoded and the Tuesday and Friday editions were excluded (these proved consistently to deal with less political news). It is quite possible that the latter element ensures that on the non-encoded days there is more room on the media-agenda for foreign and international political news.



### 10 years of international security in newspapers and on television

A brief glance at figure 5.2 teaches us that attention to international security elicits as volatile and changeable an interest as the political agendas, but that both the newspapers and the television agendas do nevertheless systematically pay relatively more attention to this theme. Newspapers and television adhere to practically an identical pattern, except for a few deviations. We can distinguish three major areas of interest: the beginning of the nineties, thus the start of the Second Gulf War; in the mid-nineties, it is especially the genocide in Rwanda that engages the full attention of political editors at newspapers and television stations. Until far into the mid-nineties, international security remains high on the media agenda: highlights are the extended participation in the UN peace operations in the former Yugoslavia, the 'final series' of French nuclear tests in the South Pacific, the Oslo Accords, and the assassination of the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. We record a third high peak when on 23 April 1999 NATO secretary-general Solana orders the start of air raids on Yugoslavia in order to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo. In this instance, media attention deviates notably from the political agenda. There is a bit more attention on the parliamentary agendas, it is true; yet, in comparison to other 'peak moments', this is hardly worth mentioning.

*The general trend manifests rather a decline in interest in international security, with the exception of the peak moments.*

In Table 5.2, we list the 18 principal themes on the seven-o'-clock newscasts on VRT and VTM (accounting for an average of 85% of the transmission time<sup>VII</sup>). We note that the topic of international security pretty well appropriates the lion's share of the attention. Defence and arms export, in contrast, topics that occupy a reasonably high position on the political agenda (and higher still when we 'ascend the ladder' qua political agenda), here appear practically at the very bottom of the list of important issues. As (already) could be deduced from figure 5.2, the general trend manifests rather a decline in interest in international security, with the exception of the peak moments. By 2000, that interest has fallen to barely 4%. The 9/11 assault on the WTC-towers brings about a real upheaval in the trend. We shall discuss this briefly in the following pages.

### International security on the media-agenda in a post-9/11 period

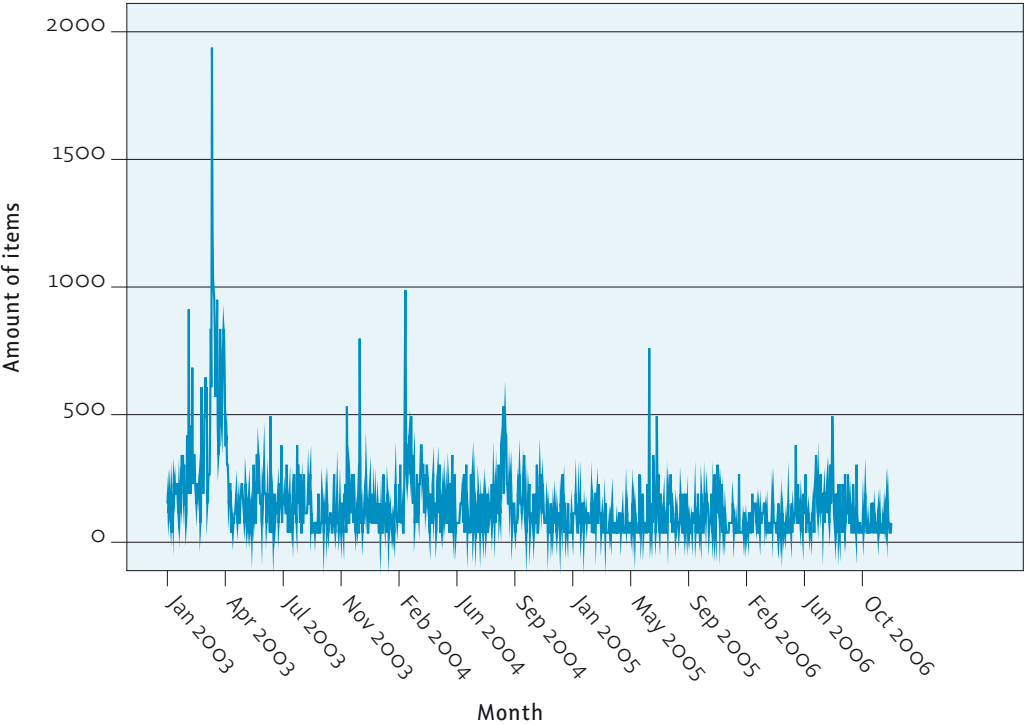
9/11 instantly puts international security at the top of the media agenda. While we lack data for 2001 and 2002, we do nonetheless register in 2003 no less than a 10% attention increase when compared to 2000. Terrorism, the deadly assaults on New York City, but likewise the assaults in Europe (Madrid, London), the war in Afghanistan, and the US pre-emptive strike against Iraq, all turn the subject of international security into the number 1 topic on the seven-o'-clock television newscasts. Since the conflict in Iraq is still continuing with no end in sight, it is all the more remarkable that, in 2005, attention to international security suddenly drops again to occupy barely 5% of the broadcast time.

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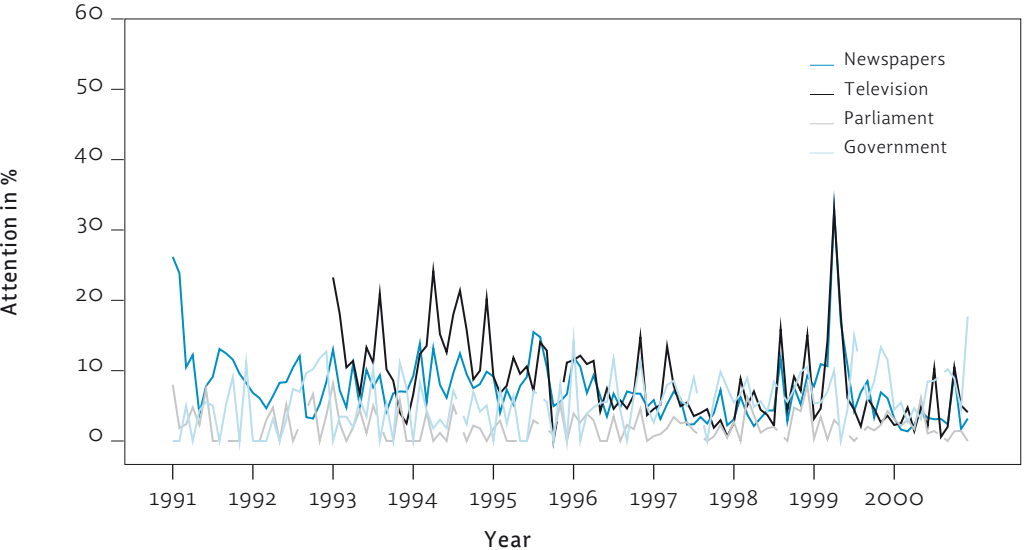
VII That this average for the period 2003 – 2006 lies significantly lower has to do with the absence of reporting of the categories 'celebrity and royalty' and 'cultural policy', categories that during the period 1993 – 2000 figured practically at the very bottom of the media-agenda.

When we more closely scrutinize the waning interest in international security, we observe in Figure 5.1 two clear peak periods: around March 2004 and July 2005. On 11 March 2004, four commuter trains were bombed in Madrid. On 7 and 21 July, London was the target of terrorist attacks on crowded bus routes and subway systems.

**Figure 5.1** Attention to international security on the seven-o'-clock VRT and VTM newscasts (2003 – 2006)



**Figure 5.2** The political priority of 'international security' on two political agendas and two media agendas (monthly figures)



## 5.2

# Peace as a priority in politics

The political decision-making process cannot possibly embrace everybody's opinions equally, for the simple reason that a chronic lack of time and resources force politicians to set priorities. In other words, the political agenda is the outcome of a race of attrition whereby a number of diverse problems, as it were, are tossed into a hopper where the decisions will be made, each always clamouring for as much attention as possible from the decision-makers. Needless to say, there is really not such a thing as the simple political agenda per se. Reality happens to be a lot more complex. Not only is the political agenda itself made up of different and often competitive agendas, but, within society, there exist a host of other agendas that attempt to press their stamp on the political decision-making or exercise an indirect influence on it: by this we mean society itself (public opinion), the civil society, and also the media. Generally, one distinguishes in the political agenda a 'lower' (amongst it the parliamentary processes) and a 'higher' agenda (with the budget at the very top), where the lower agenda can be influenced more rapidly and more readily than the higher (Walgrave, De Winter & Nuytemans 2005).

*The political agenda is the outcome of a race of attrition whereby a number of diverse problems, as it were, are tossed into a hopper where the decisions will be made.*

In order to construe a clear picture of the manner in which agendas evolve, we need data over a long period of time. It is not unthinkable that sporadic or sudden events, such as elections or serious international conflicts, exert a relatively atypical impact on the political agenda. We shall, therefore, use data gathered during the period 1991 to and including 2000. 1991 presents us with an interesting point of departure since it was the year of the mass peace demonstrations with mobilisations against the second Gulf War. With data extending to the year 2000, we cover a period of more than 10 years, which is without question long enough to observe evolutions and changing conditions. In the previous section about the media-agenda, we have also used more recent data after 2000.

For the period 1991 – 2000, we possess data about all government accords, party programmes, interpellations, verbal and written questions submitted, agenda points from ministerial councils, adopted enactments and bills in the House of Representatives, and budget entries in the annual budget. The enormous amount of work that was required to fit every text, every question, and every account into a limited number of codes, has resulted in a substantial agenda database that offers, in a coherent way, an insight into the manner in which the different political agendas mesh with one another and how the political priorities, day-in and day-out, week after week, month after month, and year after year shift their ground. The coding scheme that was used originally contained 97 different codes, which could subsequently be compressed into 39 broader themes. However, since there does not exist a general code for ‘war and peace’ in this database, we used in our analyses the codes that came closest to it, namely ‘international security’<sup>VIII</sup>, on the one hand, and ‘defence and arms policy’<sup>IX</sup> on the other. We shall further restrict ourselves to the (lower) parliamentary agenda (verbal questions and interpellations of the majority and of the opposition parties), the government agenda (the weekly council of ministers), the legislative agenda (adopted laws initiated by parliament or by the government), and, finally, the budget. Table 5.1 shows the results of this coding.

Table 5.1 is so construed as to make it possible to deduce per agenda/per year both the percentage of attention and the ranking vis-à-vis all of the other themes. This ranking theoretically extends from 1 to 39 (that is, the total number of employed codes), but, in practice, it appears that as of rank 15, an average of only 90% of the agenda topics are filled in. In other words, our policy makers consider the remaining 24 themes hardly worth 10% of their attention. A ranking higher than 15 will get you to the bottom on the list of political priorities.

International security can be found on the four political agendas rather at the bottom of the list of priorities. There also appears to be a great difference amongst the various agendas: the ‘higher’ the agenda – thus, the more difficult it becomes to influence it – the lower international security is ranked, in contrast to defence and arms export issues, which rate a lot of attention on the highest agendas. And on the budget agenda, defence has for already ten years even rated amongst the top three concerns. In that respect, the budget agenda is clearly characterised by its rigidity. Also the position of the theme ‘international security’ shows little movement during the whole of the nineties. In contrast, the lower agendas are much more flexible, although the instances where international security clearly makes an appearance in the picture can be explained relatively easily by the major events of that period: in 1991. We refer, of course, to the second Gulf War with, in its aftermath, the crisis swirling around the arms deliveries and the fall of the Martens VIII government. April 1994 is notorious for the start of the Rwanda genocide, at which time also 10 Belgian paratroopers are killed. In 1995, Belgium extends its participation in operations in the former Yugoslavia. And around that time, there is the spread of protests against nuclear testing by France.

VIII In the code list, ‘international security’ is described as: NATO, military sanctions, Partnership for Peace, international dispute, intervention, OSCE, non-proliferation, demilitarised zone, deportees, everything around the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, the Situation in the Congo, mine-sweeping, UN weapons inspections in Iraq, fleeing refugees, national liberation movement with international branching, cease-fire (not their negotiations),...

IX ‘Defence and arms policy’ is described as: arms industry, nuclear weapons, conscription, secret services, Belgian participation in UN peace missions, Belgian participation in military manoeuvres, state security,...

**Table 5.1** The importance of 'international security' and 'defence' on four different political agendas (in % and according to rank #) (1991 – 2000)

	Parliament (N=10.657)				Government (N=6.296)				Legislation (N=1299)				Budget (N=23.410.236 mil.)			
	Internat security		Defence		Internat security		Defence		Internat security		Defence		Internat security		Defence	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
1991	4.4	9	4.2	10	2.2	15	3.9	10	7.0	6	4.7	10	0.4	16	10.6	3
1992	3.4	11	3.0	12	1.0	18	7.3	4	0.0	–	3.5	9	0.4	17	8.9	3
1993	4.0	8	2.5	12	2.6	8	5.1	13	1.0	15	1.0	14	0.4	17	8.8	3
1994	4.8	8	1.5	16	0.8	19	4.2	10	0.0	–	7.4	6	0.4	17	8.4	3
1995	3.7	9	2.1	13	2.2	14	3.7	9	4.8	8	1.9	12	0.6	17	8.4	3
1996	2.2	11	2.2	12	3.5	12	6.0	8	1.9	12	1.9	13	0.7	16	8.8	3
1997	3.3	11	1.9	12	0.4	21	6.7	5	2.1	11	1.4	13	0.5	17	8.3	3
1998	2.9	9	3.2	10	1.5	16	7.3	4	3.2	9	2.3	13	0.5	17	8.8	3
1999	3.9	8	2.2	12	0.9	21	8.3	4	2.8	9	0.8	19	0.3	19	8.0	3
2000	2.7	10	2.1	12	1.2	18	7.8	4	1.9	14	2.6	11	–		–	
Total	3.3	9	2.4	13	1.6	15	6.0	6	2.5	12	2.8	11	0.5	18	8.8	3

Note: in theory, the ranking number runs from 1 to 39, but, in practice, only from 1 to about 25, on the average; 90% of the agenda appears then to be 'filled in'. In 1992 and 1993, there was no legislation that related to the 'International Security' theme. In 2000, no data were available for the budget agenda.

Figure 5.2. clearly shows how attention paid to international security dangles nearly unnoticed at the bottom of the parliamentary and government agendas, only to shoot up sporadically. This political capricious attention is also notable for all sorts of other themes, but it is, however, especially relevant to the international issues that more than any other issues are subject to unexpected events or conflicts. Unemployment, for instance, is given much more constant attention by the political elite and by the media. In the period studied, politicians were therefore not quite awake to the issue of international security. According to some of the politicians in the focus groups we talked to about this, today's attitude is not all that different: '*... what is really important and what means most to the world receives the least attention. Politicians are not about to invest in that sort of thing, because there is not enough time for it and it has no electoral pay-off... The press finds the issue too complex and doesn't take to it, and more and more often, the debate is left to a small circle of diplomats devoid of any democratic platform*' (Roel Deseyn, Focus Group Politicians, 24/10/2006). Figure 5.2. points out the fact that both agendas, the political and the media ones, are more concerned about other priorities.

*This political capricious attention is notable for all sorts of other themes, but it is, however, especially relevant to the international issues that more than any other issues are subject to unexpected events or conflicts.*

**Table 5.2** Attention to the 18 most important themes on the VRT and VTM tele-newscasts (seven-'o-clock news) (in%) (from 1993 to 2000 and from 2003 to 2006)

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2003	2004	2005	2006
Criminality	10.2	13.0	12.8	17.8	22.1	17.8	13.6	13.1	10.5	13.1	12.1	13.9
<b>International security</b>	<b>11.7</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>10.7</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>6.2</b>
Disasters	6.3	6.3	8.4	4.9	6.1	7.4	8.6	9.3	6.1	6.7	9.5	6.6
Justice and criminality policy	4.7	3.5	4.3	8.4	7.2	9.0	5.4	6.7	6.5	9.0	6.7	7.6
Political organisation	6.7	7.9	7.4	5.8	9.3	5.8	7.5	6.3	5.7	5.0	3.1	4.4
Mobility, traffic and transport	4.6	5.9	5.7	6.8	5.9	7.7	5.4	5.2	7.0	7.8	8.2	6.9
Work, policy and conditions	9.7	5.4	6.7	7.1	7.8	5.0	3.9	6.2	3.6	2.9	4.3	3.2
Social affairs, poverty and health	4.5	4.0	5.4	7.4	4.4	4.7	5.9	4.8	6.0	5.6	7.6	6.8
Economy, industry, policy	5.4	4.9	5.0	3.3	4.6	3.4	3.7	4.2	3.4	4.2	3.0	3.4
Diplomatic contacts	7.0	6.6	4.4	3.3	3.4	3.6	5.0	4.9	1.8	1.0	1.3	1.2
Environment and climate	3.7	3.8	5.2	3.2	4.5	3.9	3.7	4.6	3.4	2.2	3.1	3.7
Finances	4.3	2.7	1.7	3.1	1.5	2.0	1.6	2.2	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.3
Elections	0.3	2.0	2.0	0.2	0.4	0.7	1.4	4.4	4.0	4.9	1.3	3.1
Europe, workings and policy	3.2	2.8	1.6	2.1	1.7	1.2	3.0	1.9	1.3	1.5	1.3	0.8
Consumer affairs	1.4	1.2	1.0	1.6	1.7	1.8	2.3	3.6	1.3	1.6	1.7	2.0
Migration, integration, asylum seekers	1.2	0.9	1.2	0.7	0.7	2.5	3.5	3.4	1.3	1.1	0.9	1.6
<b>Defence and arms export</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
Education	1.2	1.6	1.7	2.1	1.4	0.8	1.5	1.2	0.9	1.2	1.0	1.2
Total	89.1	89.2	84.8	87.1	90.2	85.7	86.2	87.2	78.9	80.3	72.1	74.7

## 5.3

# Conclusion

We can conclude with three notable observations. In the first place, the interest in the theme of 'international security' runs relatively parallel on the different political and media agendas, but it does nevertheless receive substantially more attention on the latter. With reference to the theme of 'defence and arms export', this difference proves even more pertinent. Secondly, there appears a systematic decline in the attention devoted to this theme, in general throughout the nineties and, by its extension on the media agenda, also during the period 2003 – 2006. This drop in attention to international security brings us to the third and final observation: we note that interest in international security, in war and peace, is very variable and is given to following a few major conflicts, rather than that there exists a constant base for the other events that are happening at the same time and demand the attention of politicians and of the media.





# 6

*General conclusion:  
the Flemish population  
and ‘peace’*

In the preceding chapters, we extensively discussed the opinions of the Flemish population about peace. The study was based on the results of a detailed survey that encompassed more than 1000 Flemish respondents. Also, the opinions of a number of parties from the civil society, the political landscape, and industry were polled. The amassed data were categorised on the basis of other available empirical material. What then are the most significant observations we can draw? We have identified twelve of them.

- 1 'Peace' means many different and divergent things to the Flemish population. Mostly, when confronted with the word 'peace', the Flemish people spontaneously think of the absence of war, weapons, and violence. But many people also spontaneously assign a broader and more positive meaning to the concept and, when confronted with the word 'peace', think of notions such as friendship, tranquillity, equality, freedom... A fair number of people spontaneously lay the link between the 'International' peace and the 'Inter-personal' peace within their own social environment. When people are asked about peace in a closed question form, then tolerance and discussion and dialogue are the notions that are mostly associated with peace.
- 2 People's opinions about peace are strongly determined by context. People think differently, and, in any event, more deeply about peace at times when international tensions are running high than at other times. Within that context, the opinion of the national government about peace issues proves very important. For what concerns people's opinions about peace, we have demonstrated that public opinion most certainly coincides with the position taken by the national government about a given international conflict. We analysed the example of the war with Iraq in 2003 and noted that in countries where the government voiced its opposition to the war, also public opinion was uniformly opposed to the war. In other countries, where the national government supported the war, and certainly in countries that participated in the war and actually contributed troops, public opinion swung more towards supporting the war. The national political context is thus likewise determinative of public opinion about peace and war.
- 3 When we look at the attention given to peace on the political and media agendas, we note that such attention is very variable and, therefore, depends on the international context of events. In times of war and terrorism, we register a spectacular rise in attention, which, subsequently, drops just as spectacularly. Furthermore, we register, as of the start of the nineties until today, a gradually diminishing attention to peace, both in the political corridors and in the media.
- 4 The Flemish population believes that the competition for natural resources is the most significant cause of war and the use of force. Also frequently named is the rivalry amongst various population groups. When polled about the deeper and underlying causes of war and violence, the Flemish people list both religious causes as well as the absence of equal opportunity and economic inequality. All in all, the Flemish people maintain a generally nuanced picture of war and violence, phenomena that are, according to them, due to a variety of causes, both cultural and economic.

- 5 The Flemish population largely rejects international military intervention, except under very special circumstances. The majority of the Flemish people sanction military intervention only in order to prevent terrorist attacks or very serious violations of human rights, but even then it pertains to a small minority that finds military intervention acceptable. In contrast, a small 50% of the Flemish consider the United Nations to be the only body that can sanction the use of military force against a country. A small 30% or so do not agree with this premise, a position that is further reflected in about the same number of proponents of the concept of the 'pre-emptive strike', an action that is rejected by a large majority of the Flemish people. We find, on the whole, very few differences amongst people that more frequently agree to military intervention than do others. Socio-demographic differences do not enter into play; only a more authoritarian value system leads to a wider acceptance of military intervention. This also applies to people that are less versed in issues of international politics. It is interesting to note that the acceptance of personal force and the acceptance of military force coincide very strongly. The more people are inclined to accept the possible use of personal force in their own environment, the more ready they are to accept military intervention. This is a strong indication that the notions of 'International Peace' and of 'Inter-personal Peace' are highly related.
- 6 While they profess high standards with respect to violence and non-violence, a fairly large number of Flemish see themselves as taking recourse to the use of personal force and violence. Certainly when it comes to situations where one's partner or children are threatened. Only 6% of Flemish would under no circumstances resort to personal force and violence. Younger people, people that believe in a strict upbringing and law abidance, and people who see themselves as belonging to the political 'right', are more inclined to personally resort to force and violence.
- 7 The Flemish hold various opinions for what concerns arms export by Flemish firms. The very large majority is of the opinion that Flemish industry should not export weapons to countries at war, even should employment in Flanders suffer because of that restriction. Industry too has to assume its responsibility for peace. On the other side of the coin, a small minority believes that Flanders ought not to impose stronger measures on arms export than the other European nations, while a very large majority is of the opinion that arms export control ought to be regulated on the European level. In short: the Flemish people shift the burden onto Europe and implicitly plead for a strong European arms export policy. With respect to weapons technology that can be used both for military applications and civil purposes, and particularly the free export of these dual-use products, opinions amongst the Flemish population are very much divided. Many believe it is OK; others disagree. A remarkable a significant number of people have no opinion on the issue.
- 8 The Flemish population considers terrorism in particular an important theme in international politics. That seems to be by far the most pressing international problem, followed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, most of the Flemish believe that the possibility of a terrorist attack in Belgium is small. Thus, the Flemish population considers terrorism an important issue, but they themselves do not overly fear it. This does not, however, prevent

them from the (implicit) fear that terrorism could lead to a third world war. Nearly half of the respondents believe such a global conflict would be a religious strife between Islam and Christianity.

- 9 The Flemish people believe that they personally can contribute to making the world a less violent and more peaceful place. They thus see themselves as being involved in one way or another. To treat other people with respect and raise children in the proper and appropriate manner are the most important contributions that the Flemish see as tasks primarily reserved for them. A large number of Flemish people, although not the majority, also believe it is possible to contribute in a political sense by engaging in ethical consumption or ethical banking. Older people believe people can engage themselves for peace in a variety of ways, and people that consider law and order to be important aspects prove themselves more pessimistic about getting engaged into peace matters. The greater one's trust in people, the more one is inclined towards personal social engagement in general, and the more left-wing one is in the political spectrum, the more one sees opportunities for engaging personally in the cause of peace. Also a post-materialistic value pattern and an accumulation of social capital lead to a more optimistic assessment of one's own capabilities to contribute to the cause of peace.
- 10 All of the findings throughout the report confront us again and again with the great divergences between what people 'think' about peace and what people 'do' in furthering its case. Talking the talk and walking the walk are two different things. By no means do all people that hold definite and professed opinions about peace convert such opinions into active engagement, or even have the intention of turning their opinions into such a personal engagement. The path between 'thinking' and 'doing' is strewn with many practical obstacles. In order to get people to act, a necessary requirement is that they be mobilised, enlisted to the cause. People need to be personally approached, they need to become convinced that their eventual personal actions make sense and might well make a difference. There needs to be an approach made to them, for instance, by an organisation, which will lead them to convert their opinions into an active commitment.
- 11 The Flemish believe that it is the task of government to make the population sensitive to issues about peace and that the future generations must become informed about the horrors of war. They claim that they personally engage themselves effectively for peace, especially by contributing money. However there are still other means of 'engagement' that are frequently employed by many Flemish people, such as, for instance, the signing of petitions or the decision to purchase or not purchase products out of ethical considerations. There is continuous evidence that the potential of such forms of action – that is the potential of people that say they are not doing anything yet but are prepared to become active – is rather high. Organisations involved in issues of peace therefore still have a storehouse of potential active followers to draw on, but the point is to effectively contact such people. Especially for what concerns campaigns against violence in one's own society, the potential is still very large. The significant predictors of active peace engagement prove, indeed, to be the expected characteristics: youths and highly educated people, people with an

accumulation of social capital, post-materialists, and people of a leftwing ideology are more inclined to become actively engaged. Furthermore, it appears that to be active in the cause of peace and non-violence is enhanced by a knowledge about international politics, and by following the news and commentary on television. The more people reject personal violence and become opposed to military interventions, the greater their commitment to the cause of peace. Consequently, the attitudes of the Flemish people strongly coincide with what they are doing for peace. Membership of an organisation is the best guarantee that peace attitudes will become converted into actions for peace.

- 12 Two-thirds of the Flemish population does not belong to any organisation that, according to our respondents, is either distantly or closely related with peace. Only very few Flemish people are members of a 'pure' peace organisation, that is to say, an organisation exclusively involved in peace issues. Engagement in peace organisations with a broader remit is determined by the by now familiar predictors: respect for authority (negative effect) and social capital (positive effect). Organisation membership and active engagement in activities for peace coincide to a very large degree, as we already mentioned. It is via organisations that people are led to active participation, although the causality certainly lies in part in the opposite direction. All of this suggests that the 'pure' peace organisations – if they want to reach a lot of people and convert a lot of people from being willing to a truly active engagement for the cause – would perhaps do best to collaborate with other organisations and strongly involve such organisations in their own activities.



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## *Attachment 1*

### *Focus Groups: The Flemish people and ‘peace’*



## Preliminary memo focus groups

### Preamble

Brief personal introduction by all participants – in what way are the participants engaged in peace matters within their organisation? Researchers lay out the research project and its objectives. The objective of the focus groups is twofold:

- To become acquainted with the personal interpretation of peace of the involved individual
- To propose ideas how peace can be ‘measured’ in the population

Participants are first asked to give their own names but, where possible (and if different) also the nature of their organisation or party. A number of propositions are advanced – these are broad and not nuanced but intended to induce discussion. They do not reflect the opinions of the researchers. Not all of the propositions need to be addressed.

- What is peace or what does peace signify
- Relationship between peace and non-violence
- What do the Flemish people think about peace
- The cause / fertile soil of peace
- Peace and participation (peace movement)
- When is military intervention justified (armed forces)
- Peace and deontology (industry)
- The Flemish politics and their role (politicians)

### Propositions

‘For me, peace is the absence of war’

‘Everybody wants peace, but nobody has sleepless nights about it’

‘Peace is a theme that has only significance for a small privileged segment of our society.

To worry about peace in the world is a luxury theme that only the middle-class can afford’

‘What people think about peace is determined by their leaders’ opinions. The general population follows the elite (leadership)’

‘Peace is a fine idea, but if we in Flanders would be confronted by terrorism, for instance, the Flemish would be far less disposed towards peace’

‘Peace between nations and non-violence in one’s own society are two sides of the same coin’

‘The Flemish population is generally more concerned about peace than the populations in other nations’

‘Economic prosperity is a condition for peace’

‘Force can never impose peace’

‘The United Nations is the only body that can legitimately sanction military intervention and the use of military force against nations’

‘The international community has the right to use force in instances of grave human rights violations in a country’

‘Industry in turn has to assume its share of responsibility for peace. Even when it will eat into their profits, businesses should not be allowed to export arms or arms technology to countries at war or to warring groups’

‘Western nations only get involved in international conflicts when there are prospects of realising profits from it’

‘Protests and demonstrations by peace movements have never served any useful purpose’

‘To be for peace in the world means that we also in our own country must consistently stop/prevent all war efforts of other nations’

‘Flemish politicians can make a contribution to world peace by reaching back to their strong traditions of engaging in negotiations and in the search for compromises’

‘Flemish politicians can make a contribution to world peace by setting an example and voting for strict arms legislation’

‘As a nation that is militarily negligible, it is impossible for Belgium to play a peace role on the international scene. For that reason, Belgium must invest in its military forces’



# *Attachment 2*

## *Technical Report*

### *TNS Dimarso*





# *The opinion of the Flemish population about Peace*

**University of Antwerp – Research Group M2P**

**22/01/2007**

## 1 Introduction

### **Objective**

It was the objective of the study to ‘measure’ the opinion of the average inhabitant of Flanders about peace. In addition, the researchers also wanted to examine what factors exert an influence on the formative elements for this opinion. To discourage socially desirable responses, the subject ‘peace’ was left unmentioned during the contacting phase of the respondents. For that reason, the introductory text in the questionnaire was kept vague: ‘the opinion of Flemish people about all sorts of subjects’. For the same reason, the exclusion question referring to the respondent’s non-participation in a survey about peace during the past 12 months was kept to the very last on the questionnaire.

TNS Dimarso / NID’s task was limited to the methodological finalising of the questionnaire, the conducting of the interviews, and the submission of an SPSS datafile. The analysis and the reporting was carried out by the customer himself.

### **Questionnaire**

The content of the questionnaire was composed by the research group Media, Movements & Politics (M2P) of the University of Antwerp (UA). The final questionnaire, together with the datafile, was submitted to the customer.

## 2 Scope and region of the survey

### **Scope and region of the survey**

The survey’s target group consists of inhabitants of the Flemish Region, 15 years and older and with sufficient mastery of the Dutch language to respond intelligently to the questions.

The observed penetration grade of this target group is 99 % of the total Flemish population aged 15 and older.

### Size of the survey

A net n = 1.000 interviews needed to be conducted. TNS Dimarso conducted 1.041 interviews, of which 1.029 were also submitted (see infra).

### Composition of the survey

The age profile of the net sampling deviates from the population distribution. The below-par representation of the 21 to and including the 34-year old group is a consequence of the sampling method employed. The gross file figures are based on subscribers that have a fixed telephone. Within the mentioned age group, in contrast to the other age groups, between 20% and 30% are accessible only by GSM (Studiedienst van de Vlaamse Regering 2004).

	Obs	%	% Pop
Total	1029	100.0	100.0
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	509	49.5	49.0
Female	520	50.5	51.0
<b>Age</b>			
15-17	66	6.4	4.1
18-20	41	4.0	4.1
21-24	41	4.0	5.9
25-34	120	11.7	15.3
35-44	181	17.6	18.5
45-54	209	20.3	17.0
55-64	184	17.9	13.7
65+	187	18.2	21.5

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Method of data gathering

The interviews were conducted ad hoc via a standardised CATI questionnaire (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing). The interview is **entirely computer-assisted**, which excludes any possible errors by the surveyor (e.g., forgetting or misinterpreting filter questions). TNS further employs a system of **permanent supervision**. Via a closed system of **co-connected listening devices**, the telephone interviews are permanently monitored. The customer likewise used this facility to monitor interviews in his turn.



### 3.2 Survey method

TNS DIMARSO has taken a gross sampling from a population file of fixed telephone numbers. This pertains to a copy of the Belgacom and Telenet datafile that we purchase from Infobel.

An optimal geographic distribution of the respondents was ensured as follows:

- First it was determined how many addresses must be selected within each type of community (gross sampling) ;
- Next, the addresses were categorised within each type of community. This was done on an alphabetical basis, consecutively for communities (name of the community), streets (street names), and, finally, the subscribers (family name).
- From this categorised list, the subscribers from the gross sampling were selected via the procedure with fixed interval and random starting point.

In order to guarantee the quality of the net sampling, drop-outs need to be limited as much as possible. To this end, a number of measures were taken on diverse levels. We list below the most significant intervention points.

#### **Random selection of the subject to be questioned within the contacted family**

In the selection of the subject to be questioned, we employed a random rule. The interlocutor is the 15-year old (or older) family member whose birthday is coming up next. Whenever this person was unable to participate for one reason or another, he or she was not replaced by another family member.

#### **Extra efforts made to attempt to nonetheless reach less accessible groups from the survey target population**

The CATI-system allows us to determine in advance how many contact attempts should be made to again reach a selected telephone number/individual before considering a replacement, and within what time span this ought to be done (to avoid response-bias owing to non-accessibility). In case of contact failure, at least 8 attempts were made per number before replacing it.

A similar arrangement was used whenever the family member to be questioned was absent from the house. In this case, when possible, a time for future contact was fixed. This time was established by the CATI-system (date – hour – name of the subject to be questioned). At the time established for the interview, the number was given to an interviewer who was free at that moment for making the contact.

#### **GSM numbers**

The increase in the number of family members that communicate exclusively via a GSM device (cellular phone), meaning families that no longer have a fixed telephone and can only be contacted via GSM, puts the quality of the traditional telephone survey under pressure. Currently, 18% of the total Belgian population lives in a family without a fixed telephone (for the 25 to 34-year old target group, this is even as high as 29%). To the extent that this population would on crucial survey questions deviate from the population that is, in contrast, accessible via a fixed telephone, this phenomenon can lead to a distortion of the sampling if only fixed telephone numbers were to be contacted.

In order to solve this problem, TNS DIMARSO keeps continually adding via random selections to a databank of exclusive GSM users that are prepared to participate in surveys a few times a year. By carrying out part of the total sampling with these exclusive GSM users, the distortion in the sampling can be limited. The customer did not for this survey wish to employ this possibility.

### **Strict contact procedure**

The contact procedure was as follows:

- First contact: between 5.00 and 9.00 PM on weekdays, or on Saturdays (between 10.00 AM and 6.00 PM)
- Replacement of an address is only possible:
  - In case of refusal
  - In case of an erroneous number
  - If after 8 contact attempts it proves impossible to conduct an interview
- The contacts that follow the initial attempt are made each time at a different time and are spread over a number of days; an occupied number is contacted anew after 20 minutes
- in total, maximum 8 contact attempts are made per respondent
- if the respondent so desires, it is always possible to make an appointment for a later date. In that case, the above rule is no longer valid and the choice is left to the respondent. This applies to respondents who prefer to be contacted at a time that suits them better, as well as to those that are forced by circumstances to interrupt the conversation. These arrangements can also be fixed during the day.

All of these procedures improve the possibility for questioning also respondents that are difficult to reach, which stands the quality of the sampling in good stead.

The CATI-system of TNS Dimarso ensures the 'administration' of these contact procedures and the arrangements, as well as the registration of all of the contacts.

### **Exclusion of certain respondents**

In order to ascertain that the collected data offer a reliable picture of the existing population, respondents with excessive experience in surveys, or who were too closely related to the subject, were excluded from participating. Excluded were:

- persons who in the course of the past 4 months participated in a survey (about any subject whatsoever)
- persons who in the course of the past 12 months participated in a peace survey.

## 4 Fieldwork report

### Data

*The fieldwork for this study was carried out from 4 to 22 December 2006.*

### Contact procedure

In order to realise a net total of  $n=1.029$  interviews, 3.196 telephone numbers were contacted. This led in 32.2% of the cases to a valid interview. Refusals represent with 54.3% the major reason why interviews could not be conducted. The percentage of non-contacts is 13.1%. In comparison to similar surveys, this survey counted a strikingly large number of refusals to be interviewed (10.0%).

We are of the opinion that, in the case of interviews lasting more than 15 minutes, an advance mailing of an introductory letter is necessary to reduce the percentage of refusals.

	N	%
Interview	1.029	32.2
Exclusion	12	0,4
Refusal in interview	319	10,0
Refusal at introduction	1.412	44.2
Refusal because of listening in	2	0.1
Person absent	8	0.3
No response	312	9.8
Answering machine	83	2.6
Busy	14	0.4
Outside target group	5	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Controls

The controls performed are the following:

The supervisors monitored  $n=88$  interviews simultaneously, this in order to check if the interviewers followed the instructions they were given. The following quality criteria had to be respected during the interviews:

- respecting the questionnaire's content: literally reading out the questions and (if applicable) the response categories, and this in a neutral tone of voice (absence of suggestive intonations);
- strict adherence to the instructions for the interviewers (with every question, the instructions for the interviewer are flashed on the screen, for instance: 'read out all response possibilities', 'only 1 response possible', 'do not suggest anything', 'ask more questions',...)
- tempo: the average interview duration for each interviewer is calculated and a comparison amongst the interviewers is drawn up;
- manner of dealing with the respondent (quality of the contact) and the cooperation received.

Seven non-conformities were noted:

- 5 times it was noted that the interviewer failed to follow certain instructions.
- 2 times the interviewer failed to ask sufficient questions.

All monitored interviewers (n=35) received verbal feedback with a discussion of the satisfactory and less satisfactory aspects of the nature of the monitored conversation.

N=12 interviews were declared invalid since the respondent stated that he/she had participated in a peace survey in the course of the preceding 12 months.

Following control, n = 1.029 interviews were retained.

### **Briefing**

*All interviewers that were employed were briefed verbally in advance by the TNS Dimarso project leader, and this during a session lasting 1.5 hours. This was done on 4 December in the presence of the customer.*

### **Time Requirement**

*The average time required to complete the questionnaire is 36 minutes, quite a bit longer than the predicted 25 minutes.*

## **5 File**

The output consisted of an SPSS file with an integrated codebook (.sav-file). Via a conversion table that TNS Dimarso had delivered in advance to the customer, the latter could himself determine the names of the variables, the variable labels, and the response labels.

The responses to the open question and 'other specifiers' were provided in a text-file.

TNS Dimarso did not conduct a re-weighting of the survey.



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