Flanders and Wallonia, Right versus Left: is this Real ?

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I was asked to reflect on the questions '*is Flanders right and Wallonia left?*' in the light of the finding of survey research on public opinions, attitudes and values in the past decennia. It is common in Belgian public opinion to state that Flanders is (Centrum) right and Wallonia (Centrum) left when one refers to the political landscapes of this two regions.[1] The strength of the political parties on the left-right dimension is indeed very different in these regions. What do we however mean by right and left? Several dimensions are distinguished in the literature on ideological conservatism (Middendorp, l978): political, cultural, and economical. I will deal with two of these, economical and cultural. *Conservatism* is commonly associated with *right*, and *progressiveness* with *left*. I do not use these 'coloured' words since these express to much an appreciation and are part of debates between social groups in society. Take for example the (extreme) protection of actual welfare state achievements at cost of care for future generations. Is this progressive, or rather an expression of conservatism.

I will made some preliminary remarks before starting. Most of my work is on the methodology of the measurement of trends and changes in public opinion by means of large population datasets. This work was mainly comparative during last decennia. I am however very critical towards published statistics on public opinion issues. I do not consider figures about response distributions of specific opinion questions as 'hard facts' or 'truths' but rather as signs that need interpretation in the context of knowledge about society, insight in the way the results are produced, and measured. Statistical figures cannot be interpreted without knowledge of methodological rules about measurement, sampling, and non-response (that what is not observed). A basic rule in the interpretation of responses to questions is '*do not trust single questions*' but rely on latent variables that are tested in the context of measurement models for multiple indicators.

What do we mean by '*public opinion*'? There are several public opinions that are related. There is the PO of the media which is made by journalists, commentators… These interpret what the public opinion is from their interest, values, and ideology. There is also the PO of the opinion leaders. The discourse of politicians about their interpretation of PO as it appears in voting behaviour and voting intentions is also biased by their interests, norm and values. Finally, we have 'public opinion' as it is measured in opinion polls or in social research (which is absolutely not same). This is PO as aggregation of individual opinions. Needless to say that there are here too many sources of bias. One should take this into account at occasion of the interpretation of this PO. In sum, there is not one

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[1] The situation in Brussels is not so clear. Brussels is not only a region but also a large urban agglomeration which made it on itself different from Flanders and Wallonia, and not so easy to compare with these. I will therefore focus on Flanders and Wallonia, as was asked, and do not consider the region Brussels. An additional reason is that the samples for Brussels are mostly too small for obtaining reliable conclusions. Brussels is included where figures for Belgium as a whole are shown

public opinion but a variety of related public opinions. I will now further focus on the third conception of PO as measured in opinion research.

1. Dimensions of left and right in the ESS and ISPO surveys

I will not start with a theoretical discussion about the dimensions and sub-dimensions of the left-right orientation or ideology but simply present the data that I have and will use to find an answer to questions about the position of the Flemish and Walloons. The sources that I will use are several waves of the Belgian post election surveys of the *Institute of Social and Political Research* (ISPO/PIOP) between 1991 and 2007[2] at occasion of each general elections and data the fourth round of the *European Social Survey* held in 2008.

The sample sizes of the electoral surveys vary between minimum 1750 and maximum 4511 interviewed voters. These are two-step samples selected randomly from the National Register. The data was collected by ISPO (K.U. Leuven) and PIOP (UCL). These datasets contain aspects of political right (ethnocentrism, authoritarianism), or related concepts (national consciousness). There are also some items that measure economic conservatism.

The realised country samples of ESS round 4 are all between 1549 and 2751 in the twelve European random samples I will use in order to place Belgium (and Flanders and Wallonia) in a perspective. Round 4 of ESS contains a large module on the role of the state concerning social equality, and the consequences of social benefits provided by the state (Van Oorschot, 2010). It is easy to identify here left and right attitudes towards welfare state provisions.

I start with the social-economic left-right dimension in next section. Then an aspect of political right is discussed, ethnocentrism, or more specific 'ethnic threat' which contains several stereotypical expressions about immigrants. The evolution of this attitude towards immigrants is studied in Flanders and Wallonia over time (1991-2007). Finally in the final section, the relation between ethic threat, Islamphobia, and (sub)national identity is analysed in the region samples. Focus is on this relation since a remarkable and stable difference in relation is found since 1995. The election survey of 2007 is used here.

2. Left and right attitudes towards welfare state

The following five aspect of welfare state provisions or social benefits are measured in ESS round 4:

(1) An attitude towards the RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT concerning social benefits. This attitude was measured by a set of six questions (10-point scales). A reliable latent variable GOVERN_RESP was measured with these six indicators.

'People have different views on what the responsibilities of governments45 should or should not be. For each of the tasks I read out please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much responsibility you think governments should have. 0 means it should not be governments' responsibility at all and 10 means it should be entirely governments' responsibility'
- '…ensure a job for everyone who wants one?'

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[2] The data of the 2010 Elections are on the issues of interest for this study are not yet analyzed.

- '…ensure adequate health care for the sick?'
- '…ensure a reasonable standard of living4 for the old?'
- '…ensure a reasonable standard of living for the unemployed?'
- '…ensure sufficient child care services for working parents?'
- '…provide paid leave from work for people who temporarily have to care for sick family members?

A composite score on this variable in the range 0 to 10 is computed for respondents. In this measurement, 0 indicates a marked right wing attitude (no government responsibility for social benefits) and 10 expresses a marked left attitudes. Moderate respondents are in the middle of the scale. The direction of the scores is given by the way the statements are worded. In this case they are all expressing in favour of state responsibilities for social benefits, and this is normally considered a left wing stance.

The other dimensions are each measured with a 5-poit response scale ranging from completely disagree (1) to completely disagree agree (5). As one can see, in two of the item sets are worded in the direction of a left viewpoint (with exception of one item in the income equality set, and two sets express ideological right wing ideas.

(2) INCOME EQUALITY (INC_EQUAL):
- *The government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels (+)*
- *Large differences in people's incomes are acceptable to properly reward differences to obey authority (-)**
- *For a society to be fair, differences in people's standard of living should be small (+)*
* This item is reversed in composite scale.

The composite score of this variable also ranges from 0 (right: not in favour of equality policy) to 10 (left: marked attitude in favour of equality policy).

(3) SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF WS SOCIAL BENEFITS (SOC_CONS):
- *Social benefits prevent widespread poverty*
- *Social benefits lead to more equal society*
- *Social benefits make it easier for people to combine work and family*

The composite score of this variable also ranges from 0 (right: not in favour of equality policy) to 10 (left: marked attitude in favour of equality policy).

(4) MORAL CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL BENEFITS (MORAL_CO):
- *Social benefits and services make people lazy*
- *Social benefits and services make people less willing to care for one another*
- *Social benefits and services make people less willing to look after themselves and their family*

The composite score of this variable also ranges from 0 to 10 but for this variable a higher score indicates a more right since it endorses the idea (or conclusion) that there are negative moral consequences related to social benefits.

(5) ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL BENEFITS (ECO_CONS):

- Social benefits place too great a strain on the economy
- Social benefits cost business too much in taxes and charges

The composite score of this variable also ranges from 0 to 10 and a higher score indicates a more right stance since it endorses the idea that negative effects of social benefits for economy.

Mean differences between Flemish and Walloon voters

The differences in mean scores between Flemish and Walloon respondents are show in Table 1. The meaning of a mean score in a sample is a summary of a distribution and can mean several thing depending of the dispersion around the scores around the mean. We present for that reason also the standard deviation that express how weak or strong the scores vary around the mean score.

Table 1. Mean composite scores and standard deviations of five aspects of the social-economic left-right dimension the Flemish and Walloon samples of ESS round 4 (mean scores on 10-point scales).

	Aspect	Flanders		Wallonia		prob
		Mean score	*SD*	Mean score	*SD*	
10 = left	Government responsibility SB*	7.201	*1.149*	7.103	*1.260*	*ns*
	Income equality	5.632	*1.860*	6.014	*1.910*	*< .0001*
	Social consequences of SB	6.680	*1.414*	6.615	*1.654*	*ns*
10 = right	Moral consequences SB	4.931	*2.005*	5.628	*2.136*	*< .0001*
	Economic consequences SB	5.956	*1.977*	5.782	*2.243*	*ns*
Smple sizes (N)		565		1034		

(SB: social benefits)

In order to compensate for the summary information in the means, percentages of the significant differences are also given in the comments to the means that are significant different between Flemish and Walloons. Three of the scales are not significant (*ns*). This means that one can not exclude the hypotheses that the two samples do not differ from each other. We focus on the two significant differences, income equality and moral consequences

The two significant differences in mean score are in the scales in which higher scores indicate are in variables that are measured by indicators worded in a different direction, income equality and moral (negative) consequences. A t-test shows that the Walloon score on *social equality* is significant different from the mean score in Flanders ($t = -3.90$; $p < 0.0001$. Wallonia is indeed, as one could expect, somewhat more left than Flanders on the income equality dimension. About 76% of the Walloons agree that the government should reduce differences in income levels; this is ten percent point lower in Flanders (66%). More Walloons (28%) than Flemish (21%) do not accept that large differences are acceptable to reward talents and efforts. The opinions concerning small differences in standard of living are not so marked.

The second significant difference is in the mean score of the *moral consequences* of social benefits. The Walloons endorse significantly more the idea that social benefits (SB) make people lazy, and less willing to care for each other ($t = -6.32$; $p < .0001$). It is possible that this reflects more a perception of

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others than an attitude. More citizens in the environment take profit from welfare benefits than in Flanders because of higher unemployment and age of population. Much more Walloons (48%) than Flemish (38%) agree with this statement. The largest difference has been fount in the statement that social benefits and services make pople less willing to look after themselves and their family. This is endorsed by the majority of the Walloon respondents (53%) and only by 31% of the Flemish..

Attitudes towards social benefits and income equality in some European context
Let us now consider the attitudes toward government responsibility concerning social benefits, some consequences of social benefits, and income equality in the contexts of European countries. Two different figures are shown depending on the direction of the scale. High scores indicate a left attitude in the first figure.

Figure 1. Mean composite scores on income equality, social consequences of social benefits, and responsibility of the government for social benefits (ESS round 4).
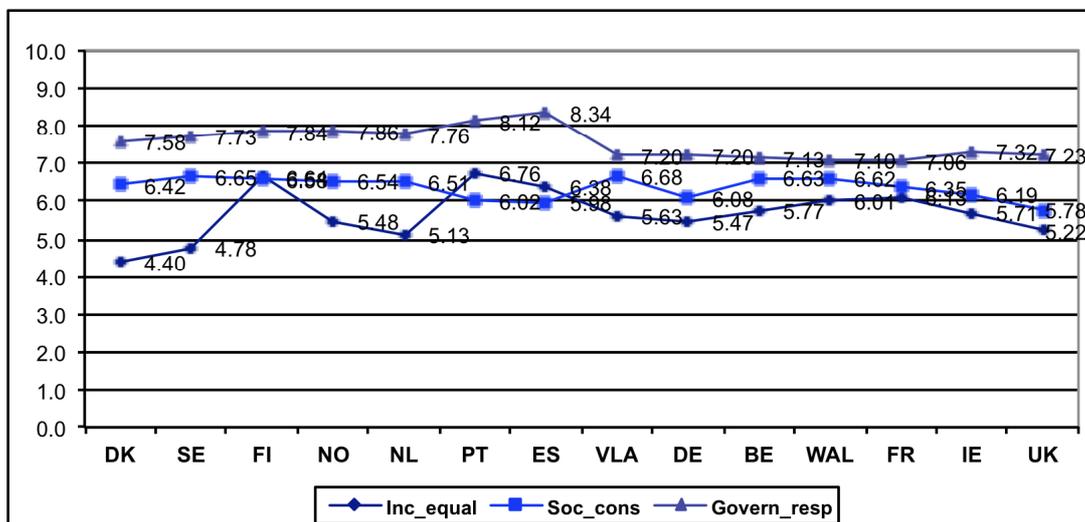

The North European countries score in general higher (more left) on government responsibility and positive social consequences of social benefits. Spain and Portugal show however the highest scores on government responsibility. The idea that social care an social benefits are a responsibility of the government is strongest in these two countries.

Is it surprising the North European countries, except Finland, score lower on the aspect of income equality. Is it because the respondents from these countries have the impression that the social equality is sufficiently realised in their country? Both Flanders and Wallonia score rather low on government responsibility, but have nearly the highest scores on the acceptance of the positive social consequences of social benefits.

Figure 2 shows the two aspects that are scaled in different direction and where high scores indicates ideological right position and low scores a right position. This figure shows clearly that the citizens in the Northern countries are in the average more left than right. The scores on negative economic consequences are in the Nordic countries significantly lower than in all other countries. They do not

so strongly admit that social benefits have negative consequences for the economy neither that there are negative moral consequences and that people become lazy and loss their solidarity. These democracies are more able to avoid the negative consequences of their social policy than the other Western countries. Counties as France, the United Kingdom, and to a lesser extent Ireland belong to the opposite side. Worse economic and moral consequences are in average more observed. Flanders and Wallonia have a more moderate position, but the different between these two regions are not significant. The scores for the two aspects deviate from each other in Flanders, but this is even stronger the case in Spain that is left side like the Nordic concerning the moral aspect but more right concerning the economic consequences.

Figure 2. Mean scores on consequences for economy and moral consequences of social benefits (ESS round 4)
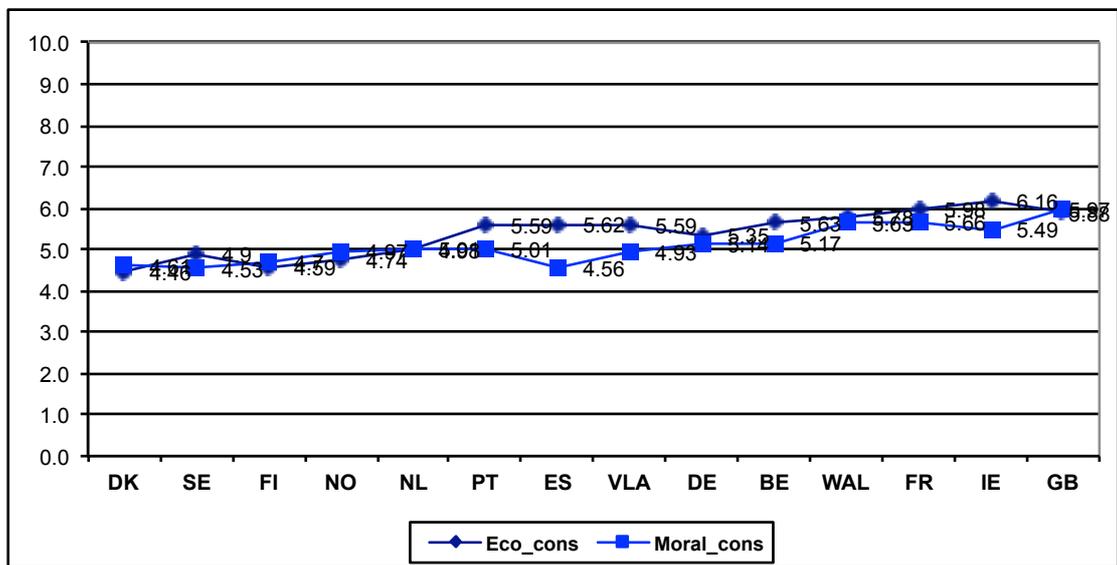
Attitude towards equality and the role of unions in ISPO/PIOP

We will now consider a small set of questions of the Belgian post election survey before concluding this section on economic and social left and right. ISPO 1999 contains a set of questions measuring the attitude towards trade unions, and income reduction with, as far as one can compare, rather stable results over time. The mean composite scores on a 10-point scale are 6.39 in Flanders and 2.60 in Wallonia. This difference is significant (p < .001) and was confirmed by the later findings of ESS round 4 about income differences. The Walloons do stronger support income equality policy and the role of the trade unions as we could expect.

Left and right in the economic dimension

One may conclude that the attitudes in Flanders and Wallonia are all by all not so different on the left-right dimension as one should believe when the strength of the political parties is considered. The differences in political power (measured votes obtained by political parties) is much marked than the differences in opinions about social equality, social benefits provided by the state, and welfare state responsibilities. It seems in other words that all, left and right, recognised the achievements of the

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welfare state system. In that sense are the items used in ESS and also in ISPO rather moderate. Let us now move to the second aspect of the left-right ideology: ethnocentrism.

3. The evolution of ethnic threat in Flanders and Wallonia

Ethnocentrism, or the attitude towards ethnic minorities (in this case 'immigrants') is a dimension of political right. Is there a difference between the Flemish and Walloons, and do we observe a change over time? In order to answer this question, we can rely on the large random samples of the *Belgian Post Election Surveys* between 1991 and 2007. The questionnaires contained in each election survey a set of minimum 9 questions on the perception (or feelings) of economic and cultural threat by immigrants.

Equivalent measurement of ethnic threat
It is important that the meaning of the latent variable 'ethnic threat' has not changed over time and that we can rely on a equivalent measured concept between Flemish and Walloons, and over time. Four observed identical indicators in each of the surveys. This is a reduced measurement of full item set, but we have observed that this small set of four items correlates strongly with the full scales in the two regions. The four strictly comparable items are the following:
    'In general, immigrants cannot be trusted'.
    'Immigrants take advantage of our social security system'.
    'Immigrants are a threat to our culture and customs'.
    'The presence of different cultures enriches our society'.

The response scales vary from disagree (1) to completely agree (5) (last item is reversed in the analysis).

The measurement models for the two regions and five elections, controlled for changes in age and education composition of the samples over time, are tested using *Multi Group Structural Equation Modelling* for ordinal scaled variables (Jöreskog, 1990). Special attention is paid to measurement validity and to equivalent measurement (Cheung & Rensvold, 1999). A complete invariant model was not rejected. This means that one can conclude that the four indicator measure an equivalent latent variable which has the same meaning between regions and over time. It is thus possible to compare the means between the 10 samples (two region samples times five elections).

Findings
The scores on the latent variables are expressed as deviations from a reference sample, this is a score of zero for the Flemish sample in 1991. Higher scores are higher than zero, and lower scores are lower than zero (negative values). In order to have an idea what this means for the composite score of 'ethnic threat' on a ten-point scale (10 = maximum score on feeling threatened by immigrants) immigrants, we give the scores on a 10-point scale for 1999: mean value in Flanders is 5.22, and in Wallonia 5.48. The Walloons score in average significantly lower (p < 0.01) on ethnic threat than the Flemish in 1991 and 2003, but they scored significantly higher in 1995 and 1999 (p < 0.001). There was no difference between in mean score between Flemish and Walloons in 2007. The negative attitude in the Flemish population decreased in the nineties until the 9/11 attack. It starts then to increase and was highest in 2005, but has again decreased afterwards. Notice that we have only observations for years of general elections and no information in between. After an increase in 1995 a permanent trend

down is observed. The mean scores of Flemish and Walloons are equal in 2007. We do not see the very likely effect of 9/11 in Wallonia.

Figure 3. Means of latent variable ethnic threat in Flanders and Wallonia over time (ISPO/PIOP)
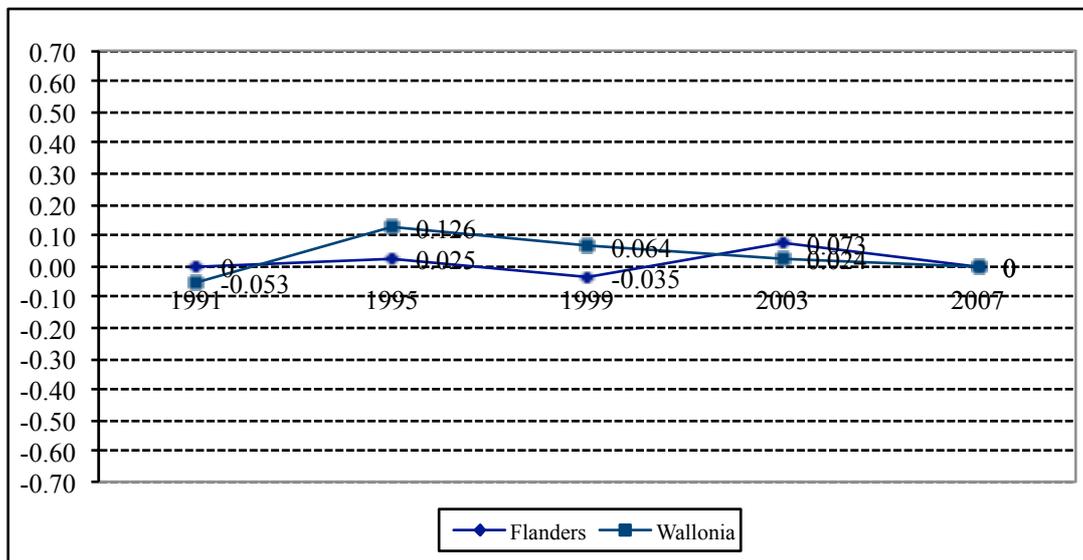
The differences in mean (latent) scores in the measured attitude towards immigrants are all by all not so large as 'public opinion' in the media sometimes suggests. This is what we found in previous research since 1991 (Billiet, 2006; Billiet et al., 2006). Perceptions of cultural threat seemed somewhat more market in Flanders, but perception of economic threat is somewhat higher in Wallonia. This is not strange given the differences in economic situation. Let us take an example of ISPO 2007:

'Immigrants take advantage of our social security system' (2007)
          Flemish sample = 52% agree and Walloon sample = 58% agree
'Immigrants are a threat to our culture and customs'(2007)
          Flemish sample = 42% agree, Walloon sample = 38% agree

The idea in public opinion that the Flemish endorse more negative attitudes towards immigrant or that they are more racist than the Walloons is in other words a strong simplification the real attitudes in these populations.

4. Ethnic threat and (sub)national identity among Flemish and Walloons

Let us now consider the relation between xenophobia and (sub)national identity. The later is a proxy measure for national consciousness which is an aspect of nationalism. Some stress the necessity for an open form of identity that embraces newcomers as long as they participate in society by respecting the law. This refers to a civic concept of the nation (Billiet et al., 2003). Others seem to have a different notion of what it means to adhere to the (sub)national rules of the game. Sharing a (sub)national identity assumes sharing a common history, language and even common descent. These are the elements of the so-called 'primordial autochthony' (Roosens, 1998; Jaspaert, 2009), and refer to an ethnic concept of national identity.

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(Sub)national identities in Belgium

Belgium is a telling example of a state whose citizens are faced with two competing projects of nation-building. The most obvious national identity remains the official Belgian one, but the main sub-national entities, Flanders and Wallonia, have acquired a substantial degree of autonomy during the last decades two and both (in particular Flanders) promote a specific 'national' identity. The Flemish identity appears to be associated with the protection of Flemish cultural heritage. Conversely, the Walloon identity is primarily associated with the social-economic emancipation of the Walloon region, and also with anti-racism and openness towards other cultures (Van Dam, 1996). Historically, Flemish nationalism was rooted in the political 'right'. Between the early 1990s and 2007, election after election an extreme right-wing, xenophobic Flemish national party ('*Vlaams Blok/Belang*') increased its share of votes in the Flemish part of the country. In the context of early industrialisation which was accompanied by large immigration streams from Southern Europe (and even Flanders), regionalism in Wallonia was politically 'left'. The political extreme right in Wallonia adheres to Belgian nationalism.

Given these differences in political and historical context, one might expect that the collective representations of 'what a nation is' to differ according to its referent; Belgium, Wallonia or Flanders. Consequently, one might expect that in Flanders, citizens who intensely identify with Flanders will tend to have a negative attitude towards foreigners, while those who intensely identify with Belgium will tend to be more positive towards newcomers. The relationship between the attitude towards foreigners and the (bipolar) national identity variable is expected to be more diffuse in Wallonia, because the representations of the Belgian and Walloon identities are less distinct. However, assuming that the civic representation of Belgium is somewhat tainted by the ethnic-cultural views of the extreme right, it can be expected that a negative attitude towards foreigners will tend to coincide with an intense Belgian, rather than Walloon, identification (Billiet et al., 2003: 243-244). We will now test the hypothesis with the data from the 2007 post-election survey and find out how stable the previous findings are.

Data and Methods

The sample from the 2007 *Belgian General (post) Election Survey* is a regionally stratified; two-step, random sample of the 18-85 year old population of Belgian citizens (from the National Register), with equal selection probabilities of the secondary sampling units. Samples from the Flemish (N = 1,084) and Walloon regions (N = 717) are used in this study. The response rates were 61% and 65% respectively (Billiet & Swyngedouw, 2009; Baudewyns et al., 2010). Data collection was organised by means of *Computer Assisted Personnel Interviews* (CAPI).

This study focuses on three multiple indicator latent variables: perceived ethnic threat (THREAT), (sub)national identity (NAT_ID) and Islamophobia (ISLAMPH). The first is based on a quasi-balanced set of eight items. Islamophobia is measured by seven items, of which five are negatively worded towards Islam (see Appendix). It was possible to specify a response style factor, a tendency to agree with items (Billiet & McClendon, 2000). Respondents with higher scores on the latent variables feel more threatened by immigrants for cultural and economic reasons (welfare, social security, employment) and feel more negative towards Muslims in Europe.

The measurement of (sub)national identity deserves somewhat more attention. The first identity indicator is a four-point scale measure, based on two-choice questions about the first and second geo-political (subjective) identity: Flemish/Walloon (score 4), Belgium (score 1) and intermediate positions. The second indicator is the so-called '*Moreno question*' about exclusive or dual identity, where low values express exclusive identification with Belgium and high values exclusive identification with Flanders/Wallonia. The next variable (*Decide*) is an eleven-point scale with scores depending on the degree to which the respondent endorses that the federal level (Belgian state) should decide everything (lower scores), or the degree to which the respondent endorses the opposite view; that Flanders/Wallonia should decide (higher scores). The last item (*Split_B*) is a multiple choice question with ordered categories ranging from the statement that the Unitarian Belgian state must be restored (score 1), to splitting up Belgium into two separate states (score 5). The response scales are shown in the appendix.

Findings

The measurement models for the two regions are tested using *Multi Group Structural Equation Modelling* for ordinal scaled variables (Jöreskog, 1990). Special attention is paid to measurement validity and to equivalent measurement (Cheung & Rensvold, 1999). Top-down modelling has been used, starting from a full invariant measurement model over the two groups: invariant slopes (metric equivalence), invariant intercepts (scalar equivalence) in the measurement part, and in the structural part, equality of the variances and co-variances of the latent variables between the two samples.[3] This model is rejected.[4] We then move step by step towards a model that fits well with the data by specifying restrictions. The means and the correlations between the latent variables have the following characteristics in the final model (see the last part of Table 4)[5]:

- the latent mean of NAT_ID is different in the two samples, it is *significantly lower* in Wallonia;
- the latent mean of THREAT is estimated but *not significantly different* in the two samples;
- the latent mean of ISLAMPH is significantly different in the two samples and *slightly higher* in Wallonia;
- the variance of NAT_ID is different between the regions;
- the correlation (or co-variance) between ISLAMPH and NAT_ID is *significantly different* in the two regions;
- the correlation between THREAT and NAT_ID is also significantly different in the two regions; (7) finally.

As in previous research, in all models, the response style (acquiescence) is significant and not differentin the two samples.

The estimated parameters of the final are in Table 2. It is clear that the measurement quality of the measured concepts is very good. There are no cross-loadings, the relationships between the latent variables and appropriate indicators are in general strong, a response style factor is controlled for among all agree-disagree items and the parameters are all invariant, except one.

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[3] The complete test information for all models can be obtained from the authors.
[4] $\chi^2 = 1{,}663.20$; df = 338; RMSEA = 0.075; p[close fit] = 0.00; CFI = 0.859.
[5] The indicator *decide* is more weaker related to NAT_ID in Flanders than in Wallonia and most important. Test of the final model: $\chi^2 = 772.33$; df = 331; RMSEA = 0.044; p[close fit] = 0.995; CFI = 0.954.

The level of threat does not differ between Flanders and Wallonia, but the correlations between THREAT and NAT_ID are reversed (see bottom part of the table) The correlation is positive (+0.26; t = 7.461) in Flanders and negative (-0.24; t = -6.372) in Wallonia, which means that a higher score for ethnic threat is somewhat more likely to correspond to a higher score for Flemish sub-national identity. The opposite is true in the Walloon sample. Walloons are more likely to have lower scores for Walloon identity when they score higher for threat. The relationship is identical in Wallonia for ISLAMPH and NAT_ID (-0.24; t = -6.350). The relationship between ISLAMPH and NAT_ID in Flanders is in the opposite direction, and stronger (+0.32; t = 8.920), than was the case with THREAT. This means that Flemish respondents who score higher for (sub)national identity are more likely to feel threatened by the presence of Muslims.

Table 2: Full equivalent measurement model (scalar and metric invariance) in the Flemish and Walloon samples (Within group completely standardised factor loadings and correlations between latent variables)

Items	Ethnic threat (in both samples)	Islamophobia (in both samples)	(Sub)national identity Flemish Walloon		Response style (in both samples)
Q114_1	0.797				0.112
Q114_2	-0.751				0.112
Q114_3	0.817				0.112
Q114_4	0.873				0.112
Q114_5	-0.781				0.112
Q114_6	0.791				0.112
Q114_7	0.746				0.112
Q114_8	0.829				0.112
D32_1		-0.773			0.112
D32_2		0.627			0.112
D32_3		0.608			0.112
D32_4		0.836			0.112
D32_5		0.813			0.112
D32_6		0.902			0.112
D32_7		-0.705			0.112
First_id			0.793		
Exclus_VW			0.789		
Decide			0.632	0.749	
Split_B			0.750		

Stand. cov. Flanders	Ethnic threat	Islamophobia	(Sub)national identity	Response style
Threat	1.000			
Islamophobia	0.790	1.000		
(Sub)national	**0.259**	**0.319**	1.000	
Resp. style	-	--		1.000

Stand. cov Wallonia	Ethnic threat	Islamophobia	(Sub)national identity	Response style
Threat	1.000			
Islamophobia	0.790	1.000		
(Sub)national	**-0.243**	**-0.240**	1.000	
Resp. style	--	--		1.000

We may conclude that our hypotheses are not rejected. Does this mean that the mediating effect of *civic representation* on the relationship between (sub)national identity and ethnic threat or Islamophobia is confirmed? No, one can only conclude that this relationship is plausible and not rejected so far. There is no direct measurement of civic representation at individual level in the general election surveys, and thus no test for it. A test by survey research or a more qualitative approach is for future research.

To conclude

I have discussed two dimensions of the left-right ideology in Flanders and Wallonia and observed the relations of one of these dimensions with (sub)national consciousness. The relation found in the general election survey of ISPO in 2007 reproduces the relation already observed in previous surveys since 1995. The relation is reversed in the two regions, and it is possible to interpret this when one take historical factors into account. Sub)nationalism in Flanders is predominantly right wing which is not the case in Wallonia. One should also consider the somewhat different meaning of national identity in Flanders and regionalism in Wallonia, both aspect measured by an equivalent set of items. One element of the explanation, differences in the conception of citizenship (instrumental versus ethnic) is plausible but it needs further research.

The differences in mean (latent) scores in the measured attitude towards immigrants are all by all not so large as 'public opinion' in the media sometimes suggests. This is what we found in previous research since 1991 (Billiet, 2006; Billiet et al., 2006). Perceptions of cultural threat seemed somewhat more market in Flanders, but perception of economic threat is somewhat higher in Wallonia.

Concerning the social and economic left-right attitudes, one may conclude that these attitudes in Flanders and Wallonia are all by all not so different on the left-right dimension as one should believe when the strength of the political parties is considered. In the context of the surrounding European context the two Belgian region are relatively close to each other. Only Germany is in between. The differences in political power (measured votes obtained by political parties) is much marked than the differences in opinions about social equality, social benefits provided by the state, and welfare state responsibilities. It seems in other words that all, left and right, recognised the achievements of the welfare state system. In that sense are the items used in ESS and also in ISPO rather moderate measures of the left-right dimension.

Appendix

Observed indicators for perceived ethnic threat, Islamphobia, and (sub)national identity.

Item	Ethnic threat
Q114_1	In general, immigrants are not to be trusted (-)
Q114_2	Immigrants contribute to the country's welfare (+)
Q114_3	Guest workers come here to take advantage of our social security system (-)
Q114_4	Immigrants are a threat to our culture and customs (-)
Q114_5	The presence of different cultures enriches our society (+)
Q114_6	Most immigrants are lazy, who try to avoid hard work (-)
Q114_7	Guest workers are a threat to the employment of Belgians (-)
Q114_8	Immigrants' way of life is irreconcilable with Western Europeans' way of life (-)
Item	**Islamfobia**
D32_1	The Islam can contribute to the European culture (+)
D32_2	Muslim men dominate their wives (-)
D32_3	Muslims do attach great importance to their children's education (-)
D32_4	If it really matters Muslims turn against Europe (-)
D32_5	The Islamic culture and history are more violent than others (-)
D32_6	Islamic values are a threat to the European culture (-)
D32_7	Most Muslims have respect for our culture and our way of living (+)
Item	**(Sub)national identity**
First_id	4-point scale (0 = first identification with Belgium --- 3 = first identification with Flanders/Wallonie)
Exclus_VW	5-point scale (1 = exclusive Belgium --- 5 = exclusive Flemish/Walloon
Decide	11-point scale (0 = Belgium must decide --- 10 = Flanders must decide)
Split_B	5-point scale (1 = Unitarian Belgium state --- 5 = split the state

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