WHO IS A "LEFTIST" AND WHO IS A "RIGHTIST"?
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Left and right – two notions used very frequently by politicians, journalists, and common people. Notions the content of which everybody intuitively knows clearly but which only a few are able to explain without ambiguities. Historians would definitely point out historical connections related to the origin of the notions in the times of the French Revolution and their development in the context of the development of modern societies; political scientist would probably contribute with the aspect of power distribution in fight for power and its development; a politician might manage with simple comparisons of the *We* and *They* type; and in daily speech, we would probably most often meet with popular names of political parties and expressions such as social security, etc.

Although the typical perception of political space as a scale leading from the left to the right is common and widespread, it is not the only pattern of ordering political entities or opinions. Also, as certain authors think, it is an outdated notion that does not offer a precise view of the real distribution of power and opinion environment in politics.[1] In its times, it functioned as a relatively reliable model of political reality. However, the era of its fame has already passed away. It is therefore even more surprising with what inertia both notions remain within the repertoire of common language. The leftist is therefore still an expression describing a person promoting – among other things – the widest possible social securities that the state should provide, while a rightist most frequently describes a person who would restrict state paternalism to the maximum degree and who would leave the care for his/her fate to individuals as much as possible. Usually, the assumption is that both ideal types are opposites positioned at the opposite margins of an imaginary scale. Each of us is then left-oriented or right-oriented according to such model.

METHODS OF INVESTIGATING LEFT-RIGHT ORIENTATION

Two types of enquires belong to the traditional measuring instruments used to classify a person on the left-right spectrum.

The first alternative, to be used when wishing to make any deeper conclusions and provided we are interested in identification rather than merit characteristics, is a simple left-right scale of political orientation, onto which the respondents place themselves. There are several formal and graphical layouts of the scale and the sense and experience of the researcher is the main factor in selecting the one or the other. The scales with alternatives described in the following manner belong to the classical formats:

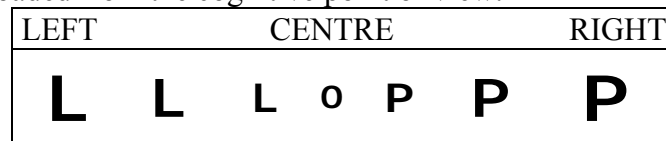| RADICAL LEFT	LEFT	LEFT CENTRE	CENTRE	RIGHT CENTRE	RIGHT	RADICAL RIGHT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Or common numbered scales with marginal points marked such as, e.g.:

LEFT						RIGHT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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[1] Heywood, A. 1994. *Politické ideologie (Political Ideologies)*. Praha: Victoria publishing, pp. 16-18.

Another possibility is an alternative presentation, not using numbered illustration, which is possibly a little bit loaded from the cognitive point of view:

LEFT	CENTRE	RIGHT
L L L o P **P** **P**		

Whatever mentioned alternative of the simple scale we use, we regard the commonly construed validity of such investigation as sufficient. In other words, we assume that the perception of left and right orientation in the minds of the people indeed exists and that vast majority of them, if not all of them, are able to describe themselves as left-wingers or right-wingers. To make the picture complete, let us add now, that the results obtained by the research are different to a larger or smaller degree depending on which of the three above-mentioned examples is used. They will also differ if we select a 5- or 11-point scale instead of a seven-point one, for example.

If we strive to have a more precise, deeper, and a more exploitable view of the issue under review, we should use the second alternative, consisting in a battery of statements. These are a number of formulations that, in certain manner, express standpoints attributable to right-wingers or left-wingers. The respondents are to agree or disagree with the mentioned statements. They may be, for example, as follows:

• The State should provide the people only with a necessary living minimum, otherwise everybody has to take care of him/herself;
• The State should control the direction of the development of economy;
• The State should not limit the individuals; it should only create conditions for them, complying with their rights and freedoms;
• The State should stipulate clear rules for the development of economy and should control their enforcement;
• The State should guarantee that everybody wishing to work gets a job;
• The size of private ownership must not be restricted in any manner;
• Majority of state-owned properties should be transferred into private hands;
• The production of the society must be distributed so that there are not too large differences between the rich and the poor;
• The State should allow the enterprises maximum possible independence;
• The main task of the government is to resolve the issues of unemployment and social securities of citizens.

An infinite number of such statement batteries may be created. It is only up to the imagination and experience of the researcher, how many and what statements he/she is able to make up and use. The classification into the left-right continuum is then implemented especially using various types of construed indices, when individuals are given points for their answers based on the selected key and the sum of the points then unambiguously positions the individual on the scale, spanning between minimum and maximum possible sum of points for all statements – i.e. between right-wing and left-wing. We may then clearly say whether the individual is closer, based on agreement and disagreement with the statement battery, to the right-wing attitude, the left-wing position, or whether he/she is in neutral zone. Two individuals as well as complete groups (for example, men, and women) may be compared very easily based on their average results.

The advantage in using this alternative is apparent: we do not force the respondents to imagine an imaginary scale of left-right and to position themselves on that scale. But we present them with factual and specific statements of the mentioned type with which they either agree or disagree. The respondents are able to imagine the relatively specific reality,

such as provision of jobs by the State, better than an imaginary left-right scale of political spectrum. When discovering the answers, we do not require the people to perform too big degree of abstraction and we approach the matter rather through their specific life attitudes and opinions.

It would seem that, using this method we even avoid the disputable (although only seldom articulated) issue of the validity of the left-right scale construct.[2] And indeed, if we analyse the individual statements, we are not preoccupied with the validity of the construct and it is not substantial for us. But the relevance of the validity of the construct emerges very soon, at the moment of construing the index based on responses for all statements. By creating such an index, we again silently set the assumption that something like left-right scale really exists in the minds of the respondents. We did not force this onto them immediately by a question in the questionnaire but, using subsequent simplification, we achieve the same. By a detour, we come to the same intersection. In order for us to be able to continue, we need to answer a significant question: is positioning a person on a simple left-right scale justified?

VALIDITY OF LEFT-RIGHT SCALE

Tradition and historical interpretation, along with common expressions of experts, politicians, journalists, and commonplace people, give us a seeming justification for the model used. As described above, the left-right perception of the political spectrum is justifiable from historical point of view and we cannot be surprised that this interpretation has survived until now. If political entities and actions are perceived at the left-right scale, we are definitely not far from positioning persons agreeing or disagreeing with the subject entities and actions on the same scale.

As it is possible to challenge the adequacy of the left-right model in the area of political actions, it is possible to challenge it (although this will definitely be based on other resources) in the area of the opinions of people. People do not perceive right-wing opinions as direct opposites of left-wing opinions. Also, left-wing attitudes are not incompatible with right-wing opinions. Therefore, people frequently do not have any major problems in appearing as "leftists" in certain issues and "rightists" in others.

We cannot make this finding by analysing the simple left-right scale and we will not achieve it by all types of statement batteries. The set of statements mentioned above may, however, lead us to such understanding. Reading the individual statements, we discover that some of them express left-wing attitudes, while others right-wing opinions.

Left-oriented statements:
• The State should control the direction of the development of economy;
• The State should guarantee that everybody wishing to work gets a job;
• The production of the society must be distributed so that there are not too large differences between the rich and the poor;
• The main task of the government is to resolve the issues of unemployment and social securities of the citizens.

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[2] Recently, Martin Kreidl and Jindřich Krejčí articulated the issue of validity of the left-right model construct within their methodology experiment. Kreidl, M.: *Použití MIMIC modelu na standardizovaných škálách ke zhodnocení kvality práce výzkumných agentur (Using the MIMIC Model at Standardised Scales to Evaluate Quality of Work of Research Agencies).* The text is currently under review to be included in the Czech Sociological Review /Sociologický časopis/.

Right-oriented statements:
• The State should provide the people only with a necessary living minimum, otherwise everybody has to take care of him/herself;
• The State should not limit the individuals; it should only create conditions, while complying with their rights and freedoms;
• The size of private ownership must not be restricted in any manner;
• Majority of state-owned properties should be transferred into private hands;
• The State should allow the enterprises the maximum possible independence;

      The fact that the set of statements may be divided intuitively naturally does not still justify us to make the conclusion that the left-right continuum is not single and compact! Such conclusion may be made only from results of an analysis based on proposed hypothesis.

      Some statistical methods provide us with useful instruments for its verification. They include especially the factor analysis, aimed at disclosing how many and what hidden attitudes influence the responses to several different questions. For our purposes, we have used data aggregated from three recent surveys conducted by Public Opinion Research Centre (CVVM), i.e. a total of 2,154 cases.[3] The directions of response scales were reversed for left-wing items so that all statements follow the same logic: the more points, the more right-wing attitude.

      Results achieved demonstrate that it is indeed not legitimate to limit the latent influence behind responses in the analysed battery to a single left-right orientation continuum. Based on the results, it would be far more suitable to consider two factors influencing the responses.

Table of factor load[4])

Factor:	Right	Left
The State should not limit the individuals; it should only create conditions for them, complying with their rights and freedoms;	0.914	-0.428
The State should allow the enterprises maximum possible independence;	0.887	-0.290
The size of private ownership must not be restricted in any manner;	0.814	-0.078
Market economy is the route to higher living standard;	0.800	-0.103
As many as possible state-owned properties should be transferred into private hands;	0.648	0.149
The main task of the government is to resolve the issues of unemployment and social securities of citizens.	-0.374	0.939
The State should guarantee that everybody wishing to work gets a job;	-0.205	0.919
The production of the society must be distributed so that there are not too large differences between the rich and the poor;	-0.056	0.801
The State should control the direction of the development of economy;	-0.169	0.715

      Enquiring about the essence of both factors, we need to discover what attitudes are actually involved. Then, we can easily see that each of them goes in its own direction and that it influences two groups of issues quite differently: the group of left-wing statements is positively influenced by one and negatively by the other factor, for the group of right-wing statements, this is entirely the opposite. The factor loads clearly copy the previous hypothetic division of items to left-oriented and right-oriented. Therefore, we may identify these

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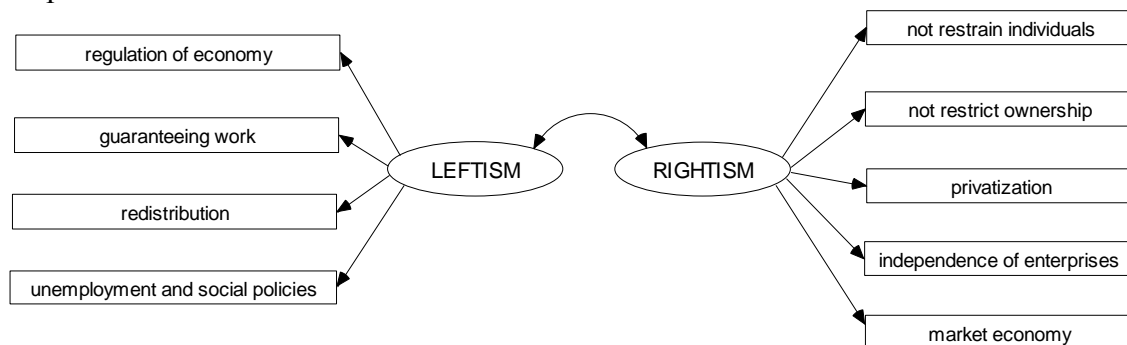[3] Identical statement batteries used in January 2003, January 2002, and November 2000.
[4] The factor analysis was performed in the SPSS programme. Factors explaining the total of 51.5% of the variation are automatically extracted by principal component method, with *eigenvalues* set to 1.
The neortogonal Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization, Delta = 0.7 method was selected as the rotation method, designed to simplify the interpretation of the acquired factors, because of the anticipated high correlativeness of the left-wing opinions and right-wing attitudes.

summary attitudes as the factor of the degree of left-wing orientation and right-wing orientation.

This leaves us no longer with only a single left – right continuum, at which it would be necessary to position each person clearly, but two continuums: left and (!) right. Any individual may now be included in both of them, independently. This may, in consequence, theoretically mean that the same person will be described within one scale as right-oriented and within the second scale, as a person with left-wing ideas. However, such excesses are likely to happen only rarely, because both factors naturally correlate with one another to a relatively high degree.[5] To have an illustrative image, it is more important to see an opposite situation: although a certain person appears to be strongly right-wing oriented based on his/her answers to right-wing questions, this still does not mean that the person will principally disagree with left-wing opinions. And, to the contrary and in other words: not even a radical leftist need necessarily disagree at the same time with moderate right-wing opinions.

The hypothesis on the existence of two continuums behind the responses to the statement battery may be verified by other methods as well. For example, the Guttman's scale – scalegram may be created or statistical acceptability of models with one and two latent variables using a programme for structural modelling may be evaluated.

We have used the AMOS programme for this purpose, performing analysis after obtaining the previous results. In essence, it is the continuation of factor analysis by confirmation, in the course of which two factor models are compared. One of them assumes that the responses to items in the battery are influenced by one latent variable: left/right. The other model assumes the influence of two correlated factors: degree of leftism and rightism. The simplified format of the model with two latent variables looks as follows:

Even here, the results have supported the hypothesis that it is more feasible to assume two latent attitude scales than a single continuum. The model using two latent variables, even if relatively strongly correlated, has proven as a more acceptable solution.[6]

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[5] Pearson's correlation coefficient: 0.72 at the level of significance: 0.01. Such correlation may be described as "considerable" in the context in which it occurred. In the context of evaluating adequacy of a model with one latent variable and model with two latent variables, this is a low correlation, suggesting larger acceptance of the model with two latent variables (see further).

   The value of correlation coefficient for factor scores is obviously also significantly influenced by the rotation method of factors. If another Delta were selected, the coefficient would be different. For example, correlation of gross summary scores of the degree of leftism and rightism, calculated separately for each factor from the relevant items, is 0.36 or –0.36. (The positive value of correlation coefficient here does not signal direct proportion, but is the consequence of the previous reversal of the metrics for left-oriented statements. It is apparent that in reality, the dependence between the degree of leftism and rightism has indirect proportion and the coefficient would therefore be negative.)

[6] Chi-square of the model with one latent variable achieves the value of 1,317.4 with 27 degrees of freedom (RMSEA = 0.149); for the model with two latent variables, the Chi-square is 364.3 and 26 degrees of freedom (RMSEA = 0.078). The correlation: 0.5.

CONCLUSION

It seems that to speak about leftism and rightism in political orientation of individuals and understand these notions as mutual opposites is not entirely adequate to the real situation. As our analysis has demonstrated, each person has certain attitudes to left-wing issues and certain attitudes to right-wing issues and these two need not mutually exclude each other at all. Naturally, it is possible to say about someone that he/she is a leftist. However, it is necessary to add in this context what rightist thinking such person has. Theoretically, it is possible that such person would express its right-wing feelings with a similarly strong conviction with which it expresses its left-wing feelings.

The reason behind the seeming inconsistency of opinions may be, for example, the fact that the factors of leftism and rightism are not the only latent variables determining the responses to the subject questions. Most likely, they are the strongest factors, and, therefore, the most important factors, but (let us recall that they explain only slightly more than half of the variance) there are also other influences and variables not measured directly (such as, for example, individualism, feeling of solidarity, desire for freedom, egalitarianism, etc.), that also enter into the game to a certain degree. Cleared of these influences, it is possible that the factors of leftism and rightism would indeed prove opposites, making them, therefore, two edges of a single continuum. Nevertheless, empirical verification of such hypothesis is already beyond the possibilities of public opinion research. In our present situation, the following results related to the current formats of investigating the left-right orientation of the population, are significant:

The theoretical concept of the left-right spectrum is not the most suitable model to investigate political thinking of the population. It should be replaced by another model, corresponding better to the real situation. If possible, we should therefore avoid the simplified scale of left-right political orientation when conducting research and we should rather make use of the possibilities offered by statement batteries with proven indicators in both directions and with a balanced ratio. Separate investigation of indices of leftism and rightism, preceding their overall interpretation, should solve the complications related to the validity of the concept.

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