Dimensions of antipartyism in the Czech population[1]

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Czech political parties have existed for more than one decade. Their position in the political system seems to be stable and is seldom put to doubt. When this occurs after all, a solution only seemingly dissimilar to political parties is offered. This was the case, for example, with the "Thank You, Leave" (*Děkujeme, odejděte)* civil initiative. Its representatives were thinking of transforming it into a political party after the initiative succeeded with the public. A similar solution is being gradually applied to the Association of Independent Candidates (*Sdružení nezávislých kandidátů*). Although it puts up a non-party face and may be an alternative for citizens dissatisfied with political parties, it is a registered political party.

The role of political parties seems to be unquestioned in Czech society. However, parties as such as well as individual parties face permanent criticism. Both the low willingness to participate in party activities, and the level of membership in the parties (approximately every fiftieth citizen is a member of a political party) imply certain distance of the public from parties. In my text, I will therefore attempt to present some answers to the issues of current level of critical attitudes towards political parties in Czech society. Further, I will explain the content of such attitudes.

Definition of Antipartyism

At the most general level, antipartyism may be defined as an attitude critical to political parties and rejecting their role in the political system. The nature of antipartyism as an attitude makes variability of its contents and dependence on specific context apparent. Rejecting the role of political parties may, therefore, vary. Also, issues arise as to what still is and what no longer is antipartyism and also what dimensions may antipartyism acquire. Thomas Poguntke and Susan Scarrow have defined antipartyism as "disaffection from parties or even their rejection" [1996: 257]. In their opinion, the following forms are antipartyistic:

- **Rejection of political parties as such** – such rejection attacks the principle of necessity of political parties for the democratic system;
- **Criticism of existing political parties** – this form of criticism acknowledges the need for political parties in democracy but focuses on their behaviour.

Mariano Torcal, Richard Gunther, and José Ramón Montero introduced a typology of antiparty attitudes similar to that of Poguntke and Scarrow. They focused their attention to analysis of antiparty attitudes in the general public in four South-European countries – Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece.[3] In their text, they used data from a public opinion research performed in the 1980s and 1990s and demonstrated that the public of these countries expresses two different dimensions of antipartyism [Torcal, Gunther, Montero 2002: 260–262]:

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[3] Owen and Dennis [1996], Gidengil, Blais, Nevitte, and Nadeau [2001], and Poguntke [1996] have made similar, yet not so convincing, attempt to show antiparty sentiments of the population. The text of Gidengil, Blais, Nevitte, and Nadeau contains a secondary analysis of data with a minimum possibility to influence the operationalisation of antipartyism. The text of Owen and Dennis deals with the USA and its specific party system. Moreover, it is also based on secondary data analysis for the most part. Poguntke investigates antipartyism using two attitudinal and three behaviouristic indicators, of which four are commonly considered as indicators of the "decline of importance of political parties" [see Reiter 1989]. Among the indicators of antipartyism, he includes attitudes of the public towards political parties, the number of undecided voters, election turnout, voting for antiparty parties, membership in parties.

- **Cultural antipartyism** – attitude reflecting scepticism concerning usefulness of political parties and politicians in democratic systems;
- **Reactive antipartyism** – critical attitude adopted by citizens in response to their dissatisfaction with the acting of the political elite and institutions.

This brief overview of approaches to investigating antipartyism makes it clear that these authors understand critical attitudes towards or rejection of political parties in general and not only of certain party or parties under the notion of antipartyism. The mentioned authors also tried to differentiate among types of antipartyism depending on the level of criticism or rejection of parties. Similar types of antipartyism were defined: (1) rejection of political parties as such; and (2) criticism of current behaviour of parties.[4]

Since I set the aim of the text as investigating antipartyism in Czech population at the beginning of the text, the approach of Torcal, Gunther, and Montero, seems as the most feasible because they observe the antiparty sentiments of the public. Therefore, their typology is based on empirical data, and is also theoretically justified. However, my attitude to their typology of antipartyism is ambivalent because I have doubts concerning the justification of their interpretation of the contents of the antipartyism notion. In my opinion, the authors define the contents of the individual types of antipartyism rather on the basis of association analysis with other variables, especially indicators measuring political dissatisfaction, political disaffection or legitimacy of the system[5] than on the basis of the content of the items helping them to measure the attitudes. To obtain more valid findings, it is necessary to combine both mentioned methods in my opinion. And I try to do that at the end of the text.

Antipartyism in the Czech Republic
I have adhered to the notions of cultural and reactive antipartyism in order to operationalise antipartyism. The authors operationalised the dimensions of antipartyism using six items in a questionnaire investigation and enquired the respondents about the degree of dis/agreement with the content of the individual items [Torcal, Gunther, Montero 2002: 263].

They defined cultural antipartyism as agreement with the following items:
- Political parties only divide the general public.
- Political parties criticise each other, but in reality they are all the same.
- Political parties are not useful.

They defined reactive antipartyism as disagreement with the following items:
- Without political parties, there could not be democracy.
- Political parties are necessary to defend interests of various groups and social classes.
- Political parties provide people with the possibility to participate in political activity.

I have added another seven items to the six items used in the South-European countries (for their complete wording, see Table 1). These items are based on analysis of opinions, attitudes, and thoughts presented in semi-standardised interviews with citizens and in common public discourse. Items containing criticism of political parties due to their self-centeredness and

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[4] For example, Mudde differentiated antipartyism [1996].

[5] Torcal, Gunther, and Montero in another text demonstrated differences in the notions of political legitimacy, political dissatisfaction, and political disaffection on data from questionnaire investigation [Montero, Gunther, Torcal 1997]. In brief, political legitimacy means conviction that current political institutions are, despite certain shortcomings, the best possible solution or that they are the least bad solution. The notion of political dissatisfaction refers to evaluation of functioning and behaviour of the political system, its institutions, and elites. Therefore, the values of the indicators of political dissatisfaction may vary in time, while indicators of political legitimacy tend to be stable. Political disaffection is the third notion. It involves lack of interest, distrust, distance, frustration, or cynicism, in relation to the current political system and its institutions. These are long-term values independent of the current satisfaction with politics and are not related to the legitimacy of the regime. Connection of the notion of political disaffection with cultural antipartyism and the notion of political dissatisfaction with reactive antipartyism is not random at all.

focus on advantages for their members to the detriment of interest in ordinary citizens were added (for example, Items 1, 2, 4, and 5 in Table 1).

Analysis of the individual frequencies implies large dissatisfaction with the representative role of political parties. Almost 80% of the population are convinced that political parties are interested in the voters only at the time of the election and only because of their votes, not because of their opinions. Moreover, more than 50% of inhabitants think that political parties create barrier between the politicians and the society and that no current political party represents their interests and opinions. On the other hand, citizens are aware to a greater degree what functions and roles the political parties play in democracy (items 11 to 13 in Table 1).[6]

Table 1 - Antipartyism in Czech population (level of agreement with items measuring antipartyism; N = 1,062)

Item	Agrees	Disagrees	DK	Total
1. Political parties are interested in voters only once every four years and for the rest of the election term, they ignore them.	**79 %**	17 %	4 %	100 %
2. Political parties are interested in the votes of people in election, not in their opinions.	**77 %**	19 %	4 %	100 %
3. Political parties criticise each other, in reality they are all the same.	**66 %**	29 %	5 %	100 %
4. Political parties are interested only in advantages for and interests of their members.	**64 %**	31 %	5 %	100 %
5. Political parties are corrupt.	**58 %**	27 %	15 %	100 %
6. Political parties only divide the general public.	**55 %**	37 %	8 %	100 %
7. Political parties create barrier between politicians and society.	**54 %**	37 %	9 %	100 %
8. None of the existing political parties represents the interests and opinions of citizens like me.	**53 %**	41 %	6 %	100 %
9. Political parties are not useful.	**36 %**	51 %	13 %	100 %
10. Political parties are non-democratic.	**32 %**	53 %	15 %	100 %
11. Without political parties, there could not be democracy.	50 %	**31 %**	19 %	100 %
12. Political parties are necessary because they make it possible to defend the interests of various groups and social classes.	62 %	**28 %**	10 %	100 %
13. Political parties provide people with the possibility to participate in political activity.	76 %	**17 %**	7 %	100 %

Source: CVVM, Our Society 2003 (Naše společnost 2003) survey, investigation 03-06.
Note: Attitudes that may be defined as antiparty are in bold.

To understand the relationships between the individual items in the battery and to reveal the latent variables they have in common (dimensions of antipartyism), I have used the exploration factor analysis. When a factor analysis was used for all 13 items, only two factors, containing the same items, therefore identical with the two dimensions of antipartyism demonstrated by Torcal, Gunther a Montero [2002][7] on the instance of South-European

countries, proved as significant (they explained 61% of the variance – see Table 2). It was possible to extract the third factor at a relatively low value of absolute share in factor dispersion (eigenvalue set at 0.75) and this factor explained data variance of another 6%; statistical significance of the model did not improve with the extraction of the third factor.

I have tried to improve the model by gradually removing items measuring more factors or those with low communalities (items 8, 10, 9, 13 in Table 2). This allowed gradual improvement to be achieved.[8] The third factor (consisting of items 6 and 7 in Table 2) remained weak all the time. To summarise the presentation of conclusions from the exploration factor analysis, we could state that antipartyism in the Czech population has only two basic dimensions. I would term the first as **rejecting the representative role that the political parties play in political system according to the ideology of representative democracy** (items 11 to 13 in Table 2). The second dimension could be described as **criticism of the current functioning of political parties** (other items). This involves both the criticism of self-centeredness or opportunism of the parties (items 1, 2, 4, and 5 in Table 2) and the criticism of parties due to their poor functioning (items 6 and 7 in Table 2) – for precise definition of dimensions and its justification, see further text.

Table 2 – Antipartyism in Czech population (factor load values)

Item	Rejection of the representative role of parties	Criticism of current behaviour of parties
1. Political parties are interested in voters only once every four years and for the rest of the election term, they ignore them.	0.14	**0.80**
2. Political parties are interested in votes of people in election, not in their opinions.	0.15	**0.78**
3. Political parties criticise each other, in reality they are all the same.	0.18	**0.80**
4. Political parties are interested only in advantages for and interests of their members.	0.19	**0.79**
5. Political parties are corrupt.	0.20	**0.78**
6. Political parties only divide the general public.	0.22	**0.71**
7. Political parties create barrier between politicians and society.	0.24	**0.74**
8. None of the existing political parties represents interests and opinions of citizens like me.	0.28	**0.68**
9. Political parties are not useful.	**0.48**	**0.59**
10. Political parties are non-democratic.	0.33	**0.66**
11. Without political parties, there could not be democracy.	**0.73**	0.22
12. Political parties are necessary because they make it possible to defend the interests of various groups and social classes.	**0.79**	0.24
13. Political parties provide people with the possibility to participate in political activity.	**0.73**	0.12
	N = 643	60.60 %

Source: CVVM, Our Society 2003 survey, investigation 03-06.
Note: Factor loads of the first and second factor after varimax rotation, extracted using the principal components method, listwise. Statistically significant values of factor loads are in bold. I have used the LISREL programme to test statistical significance of factor loads for items used in the model. The programme makes it

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PAIRWISE method (in individual instances, it selects data that is available for at least two items); (2) re-coding of the DK answers to median value of the newly created five-point scale; (3) various methods of extracting factors (principal components, maximum credibility or minimum residues in the LISREL programme). The results did not vary significantly.

[8] Values of factor loads presented in Table 2 are for 13 items. But values of factor loads for models with 12, 11, 10, and 9 items differed in a maximum of several hundredths.

Results of the factor analysis for 13 items have shown the reduction of the variables to two basic factors. Due to low significance of the third factor, I will limit the analysis to these two factors in further text. I identify the contents of these two factors with cultural and reactive antipartyism identified in the South-European countries by Torcal, Gunther, and Montero [2002]. Therefore, I have observed the interaction of the six items used by these authors on data from the Czech Republic.[9] The results of the factor analysis confirmed that in the Czech society as well, the relationship of these indicators is similar to the countries in Southern Europe – the items have fallen into two identical groups of which each measures a different dimension of antipartyism. The model with these six items and two factors does not prove as sufficiently good from the point of statistical criteria[10]. But it has a relatively high, explained variance at the level of 65%, and it is possible to interpret it meaningfully.

Table 3 – Antipartyism in the Czech Republic and Southern Europe

Country	Year	Parties are not useful	Parties criticise each other, in reality, they are the same	Parties divide the public	Parties defend interests of social groups	Parties allow participation	Without parties, there would not be democracy
Czech Republic	2003	**-0.43**	-0.15	-0.14	**0.80**	**0.77**	**0.71**
		0.68	**0.82**	**0.82**	-0.24	-0.09	-0.26
Spain	1985	**-0.41**	-0.19	-0.20	**0.58**	**0.68**	**0.66**
		0.53	**0.60**	**0.78**	-0.30	-0.21	-0.17
	1997	**-0.34**	-0.17	0.00	**0.74**	**0.48**	**0.59**
		0.52	**0.62**	**0.62**	-0.18	-0.15	-0.01
Portugal	1985	-0.12	0.11	0.00	**0.74**	**0.48**	**0.59**
		0.54	**0.70**	**0.70**	-0.14	0.00	-0.22
	1993	**-0.44**	-0.18	-0.28	0.06	**0.72**	**0.75**
		0.34	**0.57**	**0.73**	0.47	-0.07	-0.05
Italy	1985	**-0.44**	-0.01	-0.16	**0.45**	**0.63**	**0.64**
		0.49	**0.66**	**0.56**	-0.10	-0.13	-0.13
Greece	1985	**-0.45**	0.00	-0.01	**0.38**	**0.59**	**0.38**
		0.31	**0.73**	**0.61**	0.00	0.00	0.00
	1998	-0.11	0.06	-0.02	**0.57**	**0.62**	**0.56**
		0.58	**0.80**	**0.69**	0.08	-0.05	-0.11

Source: Torcal, Gunther, Montero [2002: 264] for Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece; CVVM, Our Society 2003 survey, investigation 03-06 for the Czech Republic.

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[9] There was a possibility to use other items than those used by Torcal, Gunther, and Montero to measure the "cultural antipartyism" and forming this factor. I have tried it and in subsequent analyses of relationships in the modified versions of "cultural antipartyism" with indicators of political legitimacy, political dissatisfaction, and political disaffection, no significant differences appeared (correlation coefficients varied by maximum of hundredths).

[10] It is possible to monitor the quality of the model, or its statistic significance, in the instance of using the method of maximum similarity or the smallest squares for factor extraction. The factor analysis using the method of maximum similarity revealed that the model with two factors is unsatisfactory statistically.

Note: Factor loads of the first and second factor after varimax rotation are listed. For the Czech Republic, the extraction using the principal component method, selecting the instances using the listwise method, N = 746, and explained variance of 65.1%; for other countries, this data is not available.

Having identified the items creating the individual types of antipartyism, I can now move to construing new variables using additive scale, that will represent antipartyism and using which the level of antipartyism in the general public may be estimated. I have created two different antipartyism scales (for values, see Table 4):

(1) Reduction before addition – merging the values of *definitely and tend to dis/agree* into a single category with an opposite sign and its subsequent addition. The resulting values acquire values of –3, –1, 1, and 3 and the limit values were considered as antipartyism and partyism and the median values as neutral attitude (I have used this scale in further analysis).

(2) Reduction after addition – sum of values on the attitude scale from 1 to 4 (*definitely, tend to, (dis/agree)*). The resulting sums acquired values from 3 to 12 and I have considered values 3 to 6 to be antipartyism, 7 to 8 to be neutral attitude, and values 9 to 12 to be partyism.

Table 4 – Antipartyism in Czech population

	Type of antipartyism	Antiparty attitudes	Neutral attitudes	Party attitudes	Total
Reduction before addition	Rejecting the representative role of parties	9 %	42 %	49 %	100 %
		74	339	394	807
	Criticism of behaviour of political parties	31 %	48 %	21 %	100 %
		272	423	179	874
Reduction after addition	Rejecting the representative role of parties	14 %	31 %	55 %	100 %
		114	250	443	807
	Criticism of behaviour of political parties	40 %	34 %	26 %	100 %
		355	295	224	874

Source: CVVM, Our Society 2003 survey, investigation 03-06.

Redefining the two dimensions of antipartyism

When introducing the notions of cultural and reactive antipartyism, I have suggested that the interpretation of these dimensions of antipartyism should not follow just the results of the association analysis with other variables, especially the indicators of political legitimacy and political disaffection, but also separate contents of the items. Therefore, I will now try to reinterpret the two mentioned dimensions of antipartyism using data from a survey of the Czech population.

I will designate the dimension of antipartyism, described by Torcal, Gunther, and Montero as reactive antipartyism (items 11 to 13 in Table 1), as **rejection of the representative role that political parties should play in the political system according to the ideology of representative democracy (the "de-legitimising antipartyism")**. This is an attitude rejecting political parties as a legitimate instrument for representation (as an instrument with assistance of which interests should be joined and articulated). The reason for such interpretation is not only the contents of items forming this dimension of antipartyism. This dimension of antipartyism is also conditioned by a significant correlation with the indicator of political legitimacy (Kendall's Tau-b –0.17). This is contrary to the second dimension of antipartyism, related to dissatisfaction with and distance from parties, where the value of Tau-b reaches only -0.07 and is not statistically relevant. This clearly demonstrates the relationship

between those who do not consider democracy to be the best political regime and those who do not agree with the normative notion of the representative role of political parties in democracy (values of correlation coefficients are shown in Table 5).

I newly term the second dimension of antipartyism, described by Torcal, Gunther, and Montero as cultural antipartyism, as **criticism of the current functioning of political parties (the "criticising antipartyism")** (items 3, 6, 9 in Table 1). I have two supporting reasons for such interpretation. Firstly, it is the contents of all 10 items involved in this dimension of antipartyism during factor analysis of all 13 items in the battery (and, finally, also the 3 items in the final model). The second reason involves the values of correlation coefficients with indicators of political legitimacy, dissatisfaction, and disaffection (see Tables 5 and 6). This dimension of antipartyism is an attitude that considers the existence of political parties in the political system as necessary, but it does not perceive their current behaviour and functioning as optimal. Various corruption scandals, existence of privileges for politicians, failure to meet the election promises, inability to agree, for example, on the election of the President, interest in issues that are not relevant for voters (e.g. the reform of the election system and the powers of the President), the phenomenon of the "opposition agreement", or the behaviour of established political parties towards other smaller parties may nourish this attitude. Additionally, such standpoint also involves mistrust in political parties and organising in general.

Table 5 – Antipartyism and indicators of political disaffection, political dissatisfaction and political legitimacy (Kendall's Tau-b)

	Rejection of representative role of parties	Criticism of behaviour of political parties
1. Politicians take care only of their own personal interests.	-0.222*	-0.473*
2. Politicians do not take care of what people like me think.	-0.183*	-0.401*
3. Trust in political parties.	0.172*	0.313*
4. Nowadays, politics is so complicated that people like me do not understand what is happening.	-0.164*	-0.323*
5. Interest in political situation.	0.162*	0.251*
6. Family discussions about politics.	0.096*	0.166*
7. Discussions about politics with strangers.	0.058	0.127*
8. Evaluation of the activities of the Government.	0.112*	0.138*
9. Satisfaction with political situation.	0.113*	0.205*
10. Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in the Czech Republic.	0.208*	0.274*
11. Democracy may have its problems but it is better than any other form of government	0.165*	0.067

Source: CVVM, Our Society 2003 survey, investigation 03-06.
*Note: * Statistically relevant at the level of 0.01. Items 1 to 7 are indicators of political disaffection, items 8 to 10 are indicators of political dissatisfaction and item 11 is an indicator of political legitimacy.*

Table 6 – Antipartyism and selected indicators of political disaffection, political dissatisfaction and political legitimacy (relative column frequencies and Kendall's Tau-b of selected indicators)

	Rejection of representative role of parties			Criticism of behaviour of political parties		
	Party attitude	Neutral attitude	Antiparty attitude	Party attitude	Neutral attitude	Antiparty attitude
Politicians take care only of their own interest						
Agrees	61	77	93	32	73	97
Disagrees	39	23	7	68	27	3
N	(376)	(333)	(73)	(173)	(407)	(268)
Tau-b		0.22*			0.47*	
Satisfaction with functioning of democracy						
Yes	52	35	20	57	48	19
No	48	65	80	43	52	81
N	(377)	(326)	(70)	(176)	(401)	(250)
Tau-b		–0.21*			–0.27*	
Democracy has its problems but it is better than anything else						
Agrees	95	89	75	92	91	87
Disagrees	5	11	25	8	9	13
N	(373)	(297)	(65)	(169)	(385)	(216)
Tau-b		–0.17*			–0.07	

Source: CVVM, Our Society 2003 survey, investigation 03-06.
*Note: *Statistically relevant at the level of 0.01.*

Conclusion

The results of the analysis of antipartyism in Czech population have demonstrated the existence of two different dimensions of antiparty attitudes. These dimensions correlate in their essence with those defined by Poguntke a Scarrow [1996] or Torcal, Gunther, and Montero [2002]. Their existence reflects the discrepancy between the legitimacy of political parties and their criticism or mistrust in them. The first, less common antipartyism (around 10% of population), may be described as rejection of the representative role of political parties and may be characterised as an attitude considering political parties as illegitimate. The second dimension of antipartyism could be defined as criticism of the current behaviour of political parties (approximately 30 to 40% of the population).[11] Further analyses demonstrated significant impact of antipartyism on the election turnout and on the power of party identification. Antipartyliners do not attend elections and do not identify themselves with parties; the relationship is much stronger for those who criticise the behaviour of political parties. Antipartyism has significant impact on the membership in political parties, both the potential of membership (understood as "considering joining a party") and party membership itself.

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[11] Just for illustration, approximately 35% of the population are in favour of cultural antipartyism in Spanish population, while only 5% stand up for reactive antipartyism [Torcal, Gunther, Montero 2002: Tables 4 and 5].

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