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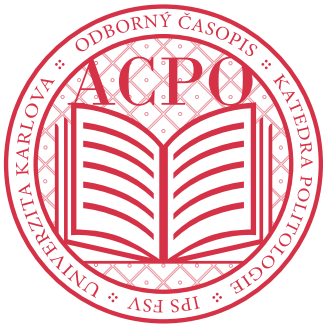

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Legitimacy, Political Disaffection and Discontent with (Democratic) Politics in the Czech Republic

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Abstract:

The goal of this article is to analyse changes in public attitudes towards the political regime, political institutions, political actors and politics in general. For that purpose, four categories of attitudes are differentiated: democratic legitimacy, institutional disaffection, individual disaffection, and political discontent. The study aims at clarifying both this dimensionality of political attitudes and the development of those attitudes in each dimension since the early 1990s. During the time period examined, political discontent underwent considerable growth and the legitimacy of the democratic regime declined. There have been slightly rising levels of institutional disaffection and stable levels of individual disaffection. There is a relatively strong and stable relationship between political discontent and legitimacy at both the aggregate and individual levels. This link suggests that the legitimacy of political regimes in post-communist countries is influenced by their political and economic performance.

Keywords:

legitimacy, disaffection, discontent, trust in political institutions

In recent years, it has been more and more commonplace for Europeans to express critical or negative attitudes towards politics, politicians or the way democracy works in their countries. Experience with various corruption scandals, abuse of public office or politicians' broken promises have provided the public with ample reason for such negative opinions (Hay 2007; Listhaug 1995, 2006; Segatti 2006). Those holding such values and attitudes in contemporary societies have been referred to as critical citizens (Dalton 2004; Klingemann 1999; Norris 1999) or disaffected citizens (Pharr, Putnam 2000). Nevertheless, most current research suggests that negative evaluations of politics, politicians and political institutions do not translate into lower democratic legitimacy or motivate citizens to look for alternatives to democratic regimes (e.g., Dalton 1998, 2004; Klingemann 1999; Norris 1999, 2011).

The Czech Republic belongs to a region in which these changes in political attitudes and evaluations are underway. The goal of this article is to analyse

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changes in mass attitudes towards the political regime, political institutions, political actors and politics in general. For that purpose, I use four categories of attitudes: democratic legitimacy, institutional disaffection, individual disaffection, and political discontent (Linek 2010; Montero, Gunther, Torcal 1997; Torcal, Montero 2006). I'm going to use this dimensionality to show how political attitudes evolved in each dimension since the early 1990s. The categorization of attitudes and their development in time will enable not only a better understanding of the progressive change to those attitudes taking place in the Czech general public but also to compare the dimensionality and dynamics of attitudes in Czech society with other (mostly advanced) democracies. Czech society has been undergoing profound and simultaneous shifts in the evaluations of political actors' performance, on one hand, and of the political regime and political institutions, on the other hand. There is also a link between evaluations of regime legitimacy and of political institutions and their performance. These findings may undermine the consensus known from advanced democracies that there is a difference between evaluations of regime legitimacy and of performance of political institutions (e.g., Dalton 2004; Gunther, Montero 2000; Norris 1999, 2011; for an opposing view, see Weatherford 1987; Fuchs et al. 1995).

1. Dimensionality of attitudes towards political regimes, political institutions and politics

Political attitudes towards the political regime, its institutions and actors are arranged in several clusters and comprise different dimensions. I start with the finding that there are three distinct dimensions of attitudes towards regime, institutions and actors: regime il/legitimacy, political disaffection or alienation, and political discontent (see Gunther, Montero 2006; Montero, Gunther, Torcal 1997). The first dimension refers to evaluations of the current political regime as il/legitimate concerning the basic norms and principles. The second cluster of attitudes comprises political disaffection, i.e. negative or even cynical evaluations of politics and political institutions, feelings of distrust in and helplessness vis-à-vis politics. The last dimension encompasses evaluations of the ways that a political system and its institutions work. Here people consider, above all, their outputs and the ways in which they are being achieved. This category of attitudes includes especially satisfaction with government performance and economic development. Evidence of existence of these dimensions of political attitudes has been presented for Spain, Portugal and other countries of the so-called third wave of democratization (Gunther, Montero 2000, 2006; Montero, Gunther, Torcal 1997; Magalhaes 2005).

Nevertheless, these authors did not build their analyses on the best possible operationalization of several concepts. Also, some of their analyses indicated an ambivalent position of some variables. It seems especially problematic how they applied indicators of satisfaction with the way democracy works (SWD); for example, Gunther and Montero (2006) used that variable to

measure political discontent. A weakness of SWD variable lies in the fact that it covers both people's views on democratic legitimacy and their responses to specific political processes in their countries which are strongly influenced by evaluations of government performance (Anderson et. al. 2005; Anderson, Guillory 1997; Canache, Mondak, Seligson 2001). As a result, it is impossible to determine whether a person is dissatisfied with the way democracy works or prefers replacing the existing regime with a different one, and, therefore, whether regime legitimacy is at stake. At the same time, by definition, satisfaction with democracy in a country cannot be expressed by those respondents who consider democracy an illegitimate regime. The SWD variable measures both diffuse and specific support because it seeks to indicate evaluations of the ways the regime works that go beyond, but are always biased by, evaluations of the performance of individual governments (Linde, Ekman 2003; Canache, Mondak, Seligson 2001). Westle (2007: 115-119) goes even further and argues that this variable measures diffuse-specific support. Therefore, it should not be used for measuring either the dimension of political discontent or that of democratic legitimacy.

Montero, Gunther, and Torcal dealt with another important source of bias in their operationalization of the concepts. The items they used to indicate political disaffection are normally used for measuring perceptions of internal and external political efficacy. However, they never separated those two dimensions, even though Torcal and Montero (2006: 6) suggest that political disaffection has two dimensions that are partially independent. Of course, in this context Gunther and Monthero had to admit that the three items used by them to measure political disaffection were "rather loosely associated with one another" (2006: 53). Moreover, the association between the items of internal and external political efficacy existed for reasons other than measuring the same attitudinal dimension.

The way those items were formulated was one of the main reasons why they were correlated. Gunther and Montero (2006) as well as Montero, Gunther, and Torcal (1997) used the following items: *politicians do not worry much about what people like me think*; *people like me do not have any influence over what the government does*; and *politics seems so complicated that people like me cannot understand what is happening*. All three referred to the "people like me" idea. Westholm and Niemi (1986) demonstrated that perceptions of internal and external political efficacy may comprise the same dimension, but only when the indicators of external political efficacy contain the words "people like me" or conversely when the indicators of internal political efficacy contain words such as "most people" or "others".

Therefore, I find it reasonable to start thinking about the above three dimensions in a somewhat different way, namely with regard to the two-dimensionality of the sense of political efficacy. Many authors (Balch 1974; Converse 1972; Weatherford 1987, 1992; Craig, Niemi, Silver 1990) found a contrast between internal efficacy (a belief in one's ability to understand and participate in politics, and an interest in doing so) and external efficacy (a

belief that politicians and institutions respond to people's demands). For that reason, I find it incorrect to present these two dimensions as one (political disaffection) and propose changes in the ways we conceptualize and measure the dimensionality of attitudes to the political regime and political institutions.

I distinguish four basic dimensions of attitudes towards the political regime, its institutions and actors, which are expressed in negative terms as follows: regime il/legitimacy, institutional disaffection, individual political disaffection, and political discontent. The first dimension refers to evaluations of the political regime as illegitimate or, in the Czech case, disapproval of the view that democracy is the best possible regime. The second cluster of attitudes comprises institutional disaffection, i.e. negative or even cynical evaluations of politics and political institutions, feelings of distrust in and helplessness vis-à-vis politics. Third, individual disaffection with politics includes feelings of distance or alienation from politics, i.e. to what extent one is capable of understanding and participating effectively in politics, but also whether one is interested therein. The last dimension (political discontent) encompasses evaluations of the performance of main political institutions. Here people consider, above all, their outputs and the ways they are being achieved. This category of attitudes includes dissatisfaction with government performance and economic development. At the same time, the attitudinal dimension of political discontent includes distrust in political institutions that form the foundations of the country's party politics: parliament and national government.

This dimensional structure of attitudes describes the situation in the Czech Republic with a relatively high degree of precision. Table 1 presents information about the dimensionality of attitudes towards the political regime, political institutions and actors, and politics generally for the years 2004 and 2014 (see Appendix for the exact wording of items). The values of factor loadings presented indicate four distinct attitudinal dimensions: democratic il/legitimacy, institutional disaffection, individual disaffection, and political discontent.[2] One can reasonably assume that the same structure existed in the 1990s as well. Older publicly available datasets do not contain a sufficient number of indicators to differentiate between all four dimensions; the expected structure is apparent in those datasets which contain indicators of at least two or three dimensions (e.g., Linek 2010: 93-98).[3]

[2] In both years examined, the frequently used SWD variable loaded onto both the dimension of il/legitimacy of democracy and that of political discontent. Another frequently used variable, interest in politics, was strongly associated with items measuring individual disaffection.

[3] This argument is also supported by information not presented in this article that is based on the analyses of the Consolidation of Democracy datasets for 1991 and 1999. The Czech National Election Study 2010 and 2013 datasets lead to identical results.

Table 1 – Four dimensions of attitudes towards political regime, political institutions and politics, 2004 and 2014 (factor analysis)

	2004				2014			
	LEG	**IND-DIS**	**INST-DIS**	**POL-DIS**	**LEG**	**IND-DIS**	**INST-DIS**	**POL-DIS**
LEG1 (democracy best for the country)	**0.86**	0.07	-0.11	0.11	**0.79**	0.04	0.03	0.15
LEG2 (prefer to live in our political system)	**0.76**	-0.04	0.02	0.31	**0.80**	-0.01	-0.01	0.16
IND-DIS1 (good understanding of politics)	0.01	**0.64**	-0.04	0.01	-0.03	**0.64**	-0.05	0.10
IND-DIS2 (others better informed than me)	0.15	**0.48**	0.30	-0.18	0.06	**0.51**	0.15	0.06
IND-DIS3 (personal success in the public office)	-0.02	**0.84**	-0.05	0.01	0.03	**0.82**	0.01	-0.06
IND-DIS4 (consider myself politically qualified)	-0.04	**0.84**	0.07	0.11	0.00	**0.86**	0.00	-0.01
INST-DIS1 (people like me no influence)	0.00	0.12	**0.79**	0.08	0.22	0.19	**0.69**	0.05
INST-DIS2 (politicians care about the votes)	-0.03	-0.01	**0.68**	0.29	-0.17	-0.10	**0.73**	0.23
INST-DIS3 (politicians lose contact)	-0.14	-0.05	**0.73**	0.22	-0.27	-0.11	**0.68**	0.18
INST-DIS4 (government doesn‘t care)	0.05	0.04	**0.77**	0.16	0.20	0.15	**0.72**	0.09
POL-DIS1 (satisfaction with politics)	0.11	0.04	0.10	**0.80**	0.19	0.04	0.17	**0.70**
POL-DIS2 (satisfaction with economic situation)	0.03	0.08	0.15	**0.75**	0.24	0.05	0.34	**0.48**
POL-DIS3 (satisfaction with government)	0.09	0.03	0.11	**0.83**	0.03	0.05	0.04	**0.78**
TRUST-G (trust in government)	0.16	-0.07	0.18	**0.72**	0.04	0.03	0.06	**0.84**
TRUST-P (trust in parliament)	0.18	-0.07	0.27	**0.62**	0.07	0.02	0.16	**0.76**
Correlation of factors	**LEG**	**IND-DIS**	**INST-DIS**	**POL-DIS**	**LEG**	**IND-DIS**	**INST-DIS**	**POL-DIS**
LEG		0.01	-0.01	0.33		0.07	0.03	0.25
IND-DIS			0.12	0.02			0.03	0.06
INST-DIS				0.35				0.32

Source: ISSP 2004, 2014 (Czech data).

Note: The exact wording of the items is presented in the Appendix.
Factor loadings are based on varimax rotation; correlation of factors is based on the summated scales which are created only from the items loading the factors.
LEG refers to illegitimacy, or negative evaluations of democracy; IND-DIS refers to individual disaffection; INST-DIS refers to institutional disaffection; POL-DIS refers to political discontent.

The items load onto the different attitudinal dimensions sufficiently, perhaps with the exception of the EFF_IN2 item (*others are better informed about politics than me*), where the sfactor loadings are quite low but still above the standard threshold value of 0.4. Nevertheless, there are links between the dimensions. Judging from conceptual differences between the dimensions, institutional disaffection can be expected to correlate with political discontent. The highest levels of correlation exist between the dimensions of political discontent, on one hand, and institutional disaffection and il/legitimacy, on the other hand (see lower part of Table 1). The respective correlation coefficients are as high as 0.35 and 0.33 for the year 2004 and 0.32 and 0.25 for 2014. The remaining pairs of dimensions are almost completely independent.

This analysis of relationships between dimensions of political attitudes in Czech society leads to two important findings. First, there is no support for the argument that institutional and individual disaffection are two sub-dimensions of political disaffection/alienation (Torcal, Montero 2006: 6) because both clusters of attitudes are almost entirely independent. In contrast, one might argue that institutional disaffection and political discontent comprise a category of negative evaluations of political institutions and actors. Second, there is a correlation between political discontent, on one hand, and legitimacy and institutional disaffection, on the other hand (but not between legitimacy and institutional disaffection). The significant association between how Czech citizens view the political regime's legitimacy and how satisfied they are with politics suggests that positive evaluations of democracy in their minds are linked to satisfaction with performance of government, representative political institutions, and the economy.

2. Legitimacy of democratic regime

By regime legitimacy I mean the orientation of attitudes towards the political regime, i.e. the belief that existing political institutions are correct and appropriate. In some conceptualizations of legitimacy, this correctness or appropriateness is indicated by the presence/absence of possible alternatives. For example, (Linz 1988: 65) talks about democratic legitimacy as a "*belief that, in spite of shortcomings and failures, the political institutions are better than any others that might be established*". These conceptualizations of legitimacy, nevertheless, are hiding a controversy about its sources. On one hand, it has been argued that regime legitimacy means that people agree with the principles and rules of the political game, or consider them correct. Legitimacy relates to the regime's normative foundations, irrespective of its realities and workings (normative dimension). In a way, this is a de-ontologized concept of legitimacy. On the other hand, regime legitimacy has been conceived as depending on the kind of outcomes it provides, on how it solves the problems people face – see, e.g., Lipset's (1981 [1960]) distinction between government legitimacy and effectiveness).

There is an element of evaluation of regime performance in this second dimension of legitimacy (instrumental dimension).

The relationship between regime legitimacy and support for political institutions and office holders can be viewed as one between two independent attitudes or one between mutually dependent or at least correlated attitudes. On one hand, experience of actual democratic regimes with which citizens were dissatisfied for a long time (such as Italy) shows us that democratic legitimacy and political discontent are relatively autonomous concepts (see Morlino, Tarchi 1996; Segatti 2006; see also Miller 1974a, b; Citrin 1974; Dalton 1998, 2004; Gunther, Montero 2000, 2006; Listhaug 1995). On the other hand, studies of many authors indicate mutual dependence of both concepts – not only Easton (1965) but also early Lipset (1981 [1960]) and others. Weatherford (1987: 13) even argues that legitimacy is "wholly determined by policy performance" in the long term. Analyses of the Czech case in the previous section suggest some association between both attitudes, namely a moderately strong relationship between political discontent and rejection of democracy (correlations between dimensions at levels around 0.3 or higher).

Only one question measuring democratic legitimacy was applied systematically in the Czech Republic in the past, allowing us to chart a trend in democratic support.[4] This method of measuring democratic legitimacy presents respondents with a choice between the following statements: (1) *Democracy is preferable to any other form of government*; (2) *Under some circumstances, an authoritarian regime or a dictatorship is better than democracy*; (3) *For people like me, one regime is the same as another*.[5] This question contrasts two types of government regimes (democracy and dictatorship) and offers a way out for resigned citizens. Those who agree with the idea of democracy and demand a democratic system of government should pick the first statement. This classic measure of democratic legitimacy has become the international norm (Morlino, Montero 1995; Montero, Gunther, Torcal 1997; Gunther, Montero 2006; Linz, Stepan 1996: 160-161; Lagos 2003; Bratton, Mattes 2001). In post-communist countries, it was used systematically by Ulram and Plasser (2003).

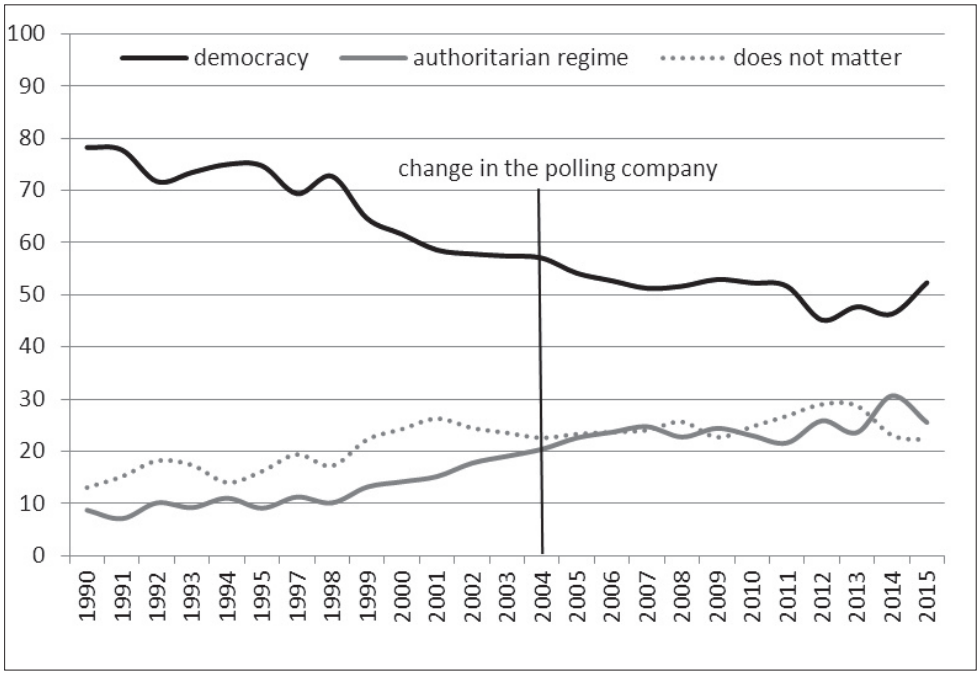
Figure 1 shows the development of democratic support in Czech society from the early 1990s to present. Whereas at least 70% of the public considered democracy as the best system of government in the first half of the 1990s, a decline of democratic support started in 1998, and the current

[4] This indicator was used in comparative surveys in post-communist countries in the 1990s for which primary data remained undisclosed. Therefore, the trend had to be reconstructed from tables published in different studies. For the past decade, primary data are available.

[5] This item was not used in the factor analyses presented in Table 1 because it was not administered in the 2004 survey. If included – as a dichotomous variable – in the 2014 model, the item clearly belongs to the dimension of regime legitimacy (identical results were found also in 2006; see Linek 2010: 58).

levels are at around 50%. At present, around 20% of Czech society is willing to tolerate dictatorship or an authoritarian regime under certain circumstances, and another 20% do not care about the political regime in place. Using an equally worded item, much lower values of democratic legitimacy are observed in the Czech Republic than in Western Europe – compare 93% in Denmark, 88% in Norway or 84% in West Germany (Gunther, Montero 2006: 51). In contrast, the level of democratic support is comparable to other post-communist countries (Ulram, Plasser 2003); other studies using different indicators reached similar conclusions about democratic support in the Czech Republic in the European context (e.g., Klingemann et al. 2006).

Figure 1 – Democratic legitimacy in the Czech Republic, 1990–2015



Source: Ulram, Plasser (2003: 42-43) for the years 1990–1999 and 2001; CVVM for 2004–2015; 2000, 2002–2003 and 2005–2006 extrapolated from surrounding values.

The decline of democratic support is obvious. A part of it can, nevertheless, be ascribed to house-effects and question order-effects. There was a change in the polling company in 2004. At the same time, the order of questions was changed: since 2004 the democratic legitimacy item was preceded by one on satisfaction with the way democracy works in the country. ISSP 2006 (Role of Government), ISSP 2004 (Citizenship) and the Czech National Election Studies 2010 and 2013 did not ask the item on democratic legitimacy after priming on the satisfaction with democracy, and the level of democratic legitimacy for those years is about 7–10 percentage points higher. On the other hand, neither can that change explain the gradual decline of democratic legitimacy during the 1990s or after 2004.

The decline of democratic legitimacy is suggested by European Value Study data as well. People were asked if democracy is better than any other form of government even if it has its problems. Whereas 93% more-or-less agreed with that statement in 1999 (Vlachová 2001: 30), only 84% agreed in 2008. This indicator not only confirms the above-mentioned decline of democratic legitimacy in the Czech Republic but also draws attention to the fact that different wording of questions may result in different levels of democratic support.[6] There should be, however, no doubt about declining and lower levels of democratic legitimacy in the Czech Republic. Indeed, it is a long-term reality that one-fifth of citizens express positive attitudes towards the former communist regime, and one-third agree with dissolving the parliament and political parties (Kunštát et al. 2014).

3. Institutional and individual disaffection

Political disaffection is typically defined as a set of attitudes that includes a negative evaluations of politics, a certain detachment from political institutions and politics in general, or even feelings of estrangement with regard to politics (Torcal, Montero 2006: 5). This set of attitudes brings together "*the subjective feelings of powerlessness, cynicism and lack of confidence in the political process, politicians, and democratic institutions, but with no questioning of the political regime*" (di Palma 1970: 30). Torcal and Montero (2006: 6-7) even mentioned two sub-dimensions of this set of attitudes, namely institutional disaffection and political disengagement.

I refer to the former type of attitudes as institutional disaffection. It represents a belief that one cannot influence the political process because political institutions do not respond to people's demands, i.e. a negative evaluation of the political system. It occurs, above all, when the political system fails to represent citizens' interests and preferences because their demands are not heard out by politicians and political institutions. This type of attitude is associated with distrust or even suspicion towards politicians, political parties and the public sphere in general; at the same time, individuals feel helpless vis-à-vis politics, unable to influence political institutions and actors.

In contrast, I call the other types of attitudes individual disaffection and use it to refer to negative perceptions of one's efficacy – capability of and interest in influencing political institutions and processes. It includes a belief that politics is irrelevant, unimportant, distant from one's life, difficult to understand and inaccessible for participation. This set of attitudes represents a kind of indifference towards politics, and thus also the absence of interest in politics (cf. Magalhaes 2005). On the one hand, institutional

[6] In the years 2004, 2006 and 2014, Czech ISSP respondents were asked, for example, to what extent they agreed with the statement, "*Democracy is the best way of ruling a country like ours*". 57% agreed in 2004, 62% in 2006 and as many as 66% in 2014. The levels of democratic support are similar as in Figure 1 but follow the opposite trend.

disaffection arises from how responsive the political system appears, and as such is primarily associated with political institutions. On the other hand, individual disaffection is primarily concerned with the role which one feels able and willing to play in politics.

The different definitions and conceptualizations of both these attitudes are reflected in their operationalization. Most indicators consist of items measuring the sense of political (in)efficacy (see Gunther, Montero 2006; Montero, Gunther, Torcal 1997). And as political efficacy has been considered two-dimensional, at least since the 1970s, the same should be respected by the operationalization of political disaffection. Balch (1974) provided an empirical proof of the two-dimensionality of political efficacy (cf. Converse 1972; Lane 1959), differentiating between internal and external efficacy. The former refers to the belief that one has the means to influence government, and the latter to the belief that government responds to such attempts (1974: 24); in similar vein, Craig (1979) discussed the dimensions of input and output. Hayes and Bean (1993) proved the existence of both dimensions in some European countries.[7]

Both dimensions may or may not be correlated. An individual who feels capable of understanding and participating in politics may simultaneously be highly critical of the ways the political sphere responds to people's demands. In turn, someone who does not understand and is not interested in politics may believe that political institutions respond to such demands sufficiently. Based on the analysis of dimensionality of these attitudes, I suggest that there are two autonomous types of attitudes; each type is independent from the other, has a different object of evaluation, and is conceptualized differently. For that reason, I find it impossible to mix questions from different dimensions of disaffection and expect them to be strongly correlated and arise out of the same sources.

In order to explore the level and stability of political disaffection in time, I am going to use four items on institutional disaffection and four other items on individual disaffection. These items were selected not only because they were used in the previous section to analyse the dimensionality of political attitudes, but also because they allow us to analyse the longest time series on disaffection in the Czech context. The questions were administered using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree and including a neutral option in the centre). In order to indicate the level of disaffection, I am going to merge the categories of strongly and rather (dis/agree) into one. Table 2 presents the percentages of answers to

[7] Individual disaffection can also be operationalized through questions about interest in politics (Magalhaes 2005) or relevance of politics to one's life (see Gunther, Montero 2006). Some authors have used trust in political institutions to operationalize political (institutional) disaffection (Gunther, Montero 2006; Craig, Niemi, Silver 1990). I do not agree with that approach and instead consider trust in political institutions as a measure of political discontent (see Table 1).

questions about political disaffection that have been transformed to express the proportion of disaffected respondents.

The indicators of institutional disaffection are stable across time. The largest difference between the years 1996 (or 2004) and 2014, namely 10 percentage points, is indicated for the INST-DIS1 item. For most items, the differences are below 5 percentage points, which could be the result of sampling error if both samples were collected at the same point in time. Approximately 70% of the public do not believe that people have any say about what the government does or that the government cares much what people think. Moreover, about three-fourths of the public believe that politicians are only interested in getting people's votes, not their opinions, and that elected politicians quickly lose touch with citizens.

Table 2 – Political disaffection in the Czech Republic, 1996–2014 (per cent)

		1996	2000	2004	2006	2014
INST-DIS1	People like me have no say about what the government does.	76	75	70	69	66
INST-DIS2	Politicians are only interested in people's votes, not their opinions.	-	-	73	75	78
INST-DIS3	Generally speaking, those we elect to public offices lose touch with people pretty quickly.	-	-	72	72	80
INST-DIS4	I don't think the government cares much about what people like me think.	-	-	67	67	69
IND-DIS1	I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.	41	51	37	40	35
IND-DIS2	Most people are better informed about politics and government than I am.	33	36	31	29	30
IND-DIS3	I think I could do as good a job in public office as other people.	-	-	48	43	50
IND-DIS4	I consider myself to be well qualified to participate in politics.	-	-	62	58	61

Source: ISSP 1996, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2014 (Czech data); weighted.

Note: All items used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The direction of the item in terms of political disaffection is shown in the second column. Percentages of respondents who strongly or somewhat dis/agree are presented.
IND-DIS refers to individual disaffection; INST-DIS refers to institutional disaffection.

As far as individual disaffection is concerned, higher variability has been observed for the IND-DIS1 item (with a difference of 14 percentage points between 2000 and 2004). In contrast, the other items are highly stable. One-third of the public believe that most people are better informed about politics and government than they are. Almost one-half do not think that they would be successful in politics or that they have a good understanding of political issues. Moreover, three-fifths of citizens do not feel sufficiently qualified to participate in politics.

Average values of disaffection for individual years can be calculated from this data. Based on all four items, the values of institutional disaffection are 71 (2004), 71 (2006) and 73 (2014) and the values of individual disaffection are 45 (2004), 43 (2006) and 44 (2014). Overall, the level of institutional disaffection is relatively high and stable in time. Individual disaffection is similarly stable but affects less than one-half of the society. These findings are paralleled by US evidence on stability of political efficacy in time (e.g., Abramson 1983). Like in the United States, the stability of individual disaffection in time is somewhat higher than that of institutional disaffection. The decline of institutional disaffection as measured by the INST-DIS1 item is somewhat surprising, while the other items of institutional disaffection suggest stability or even slight growth of disaffection. There are no such contradictory changes in the items measuring individual disaffection.

4. Political discontent

Political discontent is the last dimension of attitudes to political institutions and actors. It consists of evaluations of government outputs and the ways they are being achieved, i.e. how the political regime and its institutions work. The concept of political discontent refers to Easton's distinction between evaluations of political regime and office holders, i.e. those who occupy a state's political institutions. His theory assumed a hierarchy of levels of political support and, as a result, distinguished between diffuse and specific support. According to Easton, a political regime may not be threatened by negative views of the performance of political institutions and those who run them; diffuse support for the regime may not be jeopardized by lack of specific support. However, in the long term, Easton (1965: 215) required that for a political system to work well, citizens should support not only their community and principles (diffuse support) but also their office holders (specific support).

Since the 1970s, scholarly literature no longer strictly required support for political regime to be accompanied by satisfaction with the working of its institutions (Miller 1974a, b; Citrin 1974). This disconnect resulted in neologisms such as critical citizens (Norris 1999) or dissatisfied democrats (Hofferbert, Klingeman 2001). Terms like these suggest that one can be discontent and critical to political elites while holding and accepting democratic values. Dalton (2008) even talked about new norms of

citizenship emerging in the young generation. Young people are strong supporters of democracy but equally vigorous critics of the way it works and of the job done by traditional political institutions (political parties, government) and actors (politicians). The concept of political discontent helps us understand why it is possible to distrust or be dissatisfied with government while respecting and obeying it at the same time.

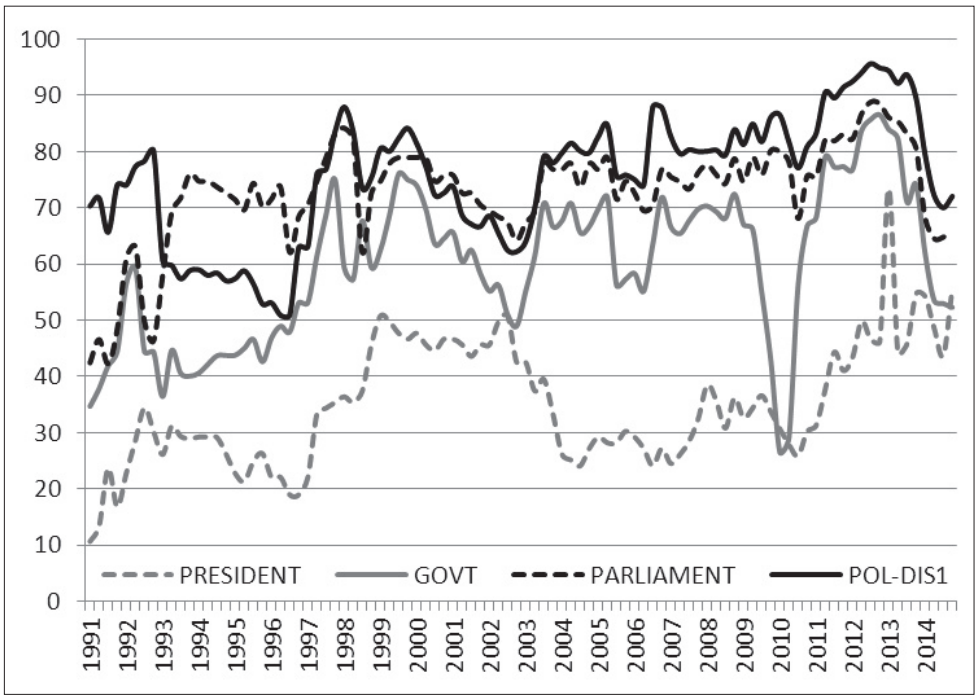
Indeed, political discontent consists of a belief that the state or government are not effectively solving the problems that people find relevant. Such attitudes are a result of comparing what one is getting with what one hopes for or expects to get (Montero, Gunther, Torcal 1997: 130; Torcal, Montero 2006: 19); they effectively depend both on how a government is working and how it might be working. Political discontent relates to evaluations of how a country's democracy, government or economy are working (with an important role played by people's belief in government's responsibility for economic development). This evaluation is performed on a continuum (defined, for example, in terms of trust, satisfaction, support for or rating of actors, institutions or the system's functioning), which can be reduced to the most basic level of political dis/satisfaction. Studies of political discontent have applied different indicators based on questionnaire surveys in which people evaluate politics. An analysis of the dimensionality of political attitudes has demonstrated that this attitudinal dimension includes evaluations of government performance, economic performance and political situation as well as trust in political institutions that form the foundations of a country's party system: parliament and central government.

This cluster of attitudes is importantly characterized by a reference to those actors who hold government offices. Those tend to be evaluated even in response to questions that do not mention them explicitly (for instance, trust in parliament is affected by evaluation of government even if they are two different institutions); survey respondents tend to understand and interpret performance of these institutions in terms of appraisal of the performance and functioning of government. Thus, political partisanship (or support for government/opposition parties) influences the political discontent indirectly, through evaluation of government. Citizens who support opposition parties express more discontent than those who stand by government parties. There are basically two possible reasons for this relationship: (1) dis/satisfaction leads to a change in electoral preferences; (2) party preference provides an interpretive framework for evaluating office holders. Since dissatisfaction is based on evaluation of institutions, politicians, and their actions, it may undergo rapid changes in time, depending on government performance, economic performance, etc.

Figure 2 presents the evolution of political discontent and distrust in national government, parliament and the president (presidential office) in the 1991–2014 period. It shows quarterly means, which mostly aggregate results from three monthly surveys. The levels of political discontent and

distrust in individual political institutions varied in time, supporting the argument that these attitudes are short-term in nature. The average level of political discontent over the time period studied was 76%. The lowest levels were reached in the first half of 1996, when Prime Minister Václav Klaus was finishing his first term in office. In contrast, the highest levels were reached as soon as at the turn of 1997/1998 (88%), at the end of 2006 (88%) and then in the 2011–2013 period (more than 90%).

Figure 2 – Political discontent: Distrust in political institutions and political dissatisfaction in the Czech Republic, 1991–2014



Source: CVVM (monthly surveys).

Note: Quarterly means are presented. For 1994, the data archive contains only one survey. In several months, the trust questions were not asked (parliament was dissolved, president not elected, or government not formed).
PRESIDENT means distrust in the President; GOVT means distrust in the national government; PARLIAMENT means distrust in the national parliament (Czech National Council in 1991–1992 and the Chamber of Deputies (lower house of Parliament) since 1993); POL-DIS1 means dissatisfaction with politics.
Distrust in the different political institutions underwent similar fluctuations. The presidential office received the lowest levels of distrust, with a mean value of 35 percent over the period analysed. Distrust in the President of the Czech Republic peaked in the beginning of 2013 (73%) when President Klaus' pardon was received critically. The level of distrust reached its all-time low in

the early 1990s, under President Václav Havel (11% in the first quarter of 1991).

The average level of distrust in government was at 60% during the time period of interest. The lowest levels were observed in the first half of the 1990s (as little as 35% in the first quarter of 1991) and again in early 2010 (below 30%). The latter was a result of positive evaluations of Jan Fischer's caretaker government in 2010.[8]

The levels of distrust in parliament were much higher, with a mean of 73% for the time period studied. The lowest levels were measured in the early 1990s, and when the indicator first exceeded 60% in 1993, it never again dropped below that level. Distrust in parliament peaked at the turn of 1997 and 1998 (with almost 85%) and in the second half of 2012 (almost 90%).

The above description and the figure itself substantiate two conclusions: political discontent and distrust in political institutions evolved in similar cycles, with the lowest levels typically measured in the first half of the 1990s and the highest levels between 2011 and 2013. A correlation analysis of a series of quarterly indicators of political discontent suggests that political and economic processes affect both political satisfaction and political trust simultaneously. Pearson's correlation coefficients were 0.69 for the variables of discontent with political situation and distrust in government; 0.51 for discontent with political situation and distrust in parliament; and 0.65 for distrust in government and in parliament. The association between distrust in the presidential office and the former three indicators was somewhat weaker, with correlation coefficients in the range of 0.37–0.52.

Not only did these indicators evolve in the same direction, but as apparent from the figure, all four gradually rose in time. This was confirmed by a regression analysis in which time was the only linear explanatory factor for the levels of political discontent and distrust in political institutions. The levels of political discontent and distrust in government grew by approximately 1 percentage point a year. Distrust in president and parliament grew at a slower pace of by approximately 0.75 percentage points a year.

5. Concurrent development in different dimensions and socio-demographic correlates of attitudes

The four dimensions of attitudes to political regime and political institutions analysed evolved divergently in time, despite apparent links between some of them. On one hand, individual disaffection did not change over time at all,

[8] At the end of 2009, CVVM surveyed trust in government in two different ways. The regular question about trust in government was complemented by a version mentioning the name of the nonpartisan Prime Minister, Jan Fischer. The latter version resulted in 20 percentage points higher levels of trust in government than the version without an explicit mention of the premier's name.

with slightly less than half of society feeling disaffected since the mid-1990s. On the other hand, political discontent varied strongly, with a gradual growth in time. Negative evaluations of regime legitimacy grew as well, and at a somewhat faster pace than political discontent. Legitimacy and political discontent exhibited highly similar trends, with positive evaluations slowly decreasing. Finally, for the dimension of institutional disaffection, negative evaluations exhibited a slow growth as well.

As for attitudes towards representative political institutions (parliament, government), negative evaluations grew and, highly likely, translated into negative evaluations of the political regime as such. Both waves of considerable growth of political discontent (in the years 1997–1999 and 2001–2013) were accompanied by deteriorating support of the democratic regime as legitimate. When the monthly/quarterly data on political discontent are aggregated into annual means, the correlation between political discontent and illegitimacy reaches as high as 0.67. The links between both attitudes are apparent not only at the aggregate level but also at the individual level. An analysis of dimensionality reveals a moderately strong correlation between political discontent and negative evaluations of democratic legitimacy (with a Pearson's r of approximately 0.3). Individuals who are dissatisfied with politics are much more likely to reject democracy than those who are satisfied.

It is very likely that the divergent dynamics of the different attitudinal dimensions are associated with the sources of those attitudes. Evaluations of legitimacy and individual disaffection are strongly determined by individuals' structural characteristics such as age, education, and social status. Moreover, both attitudes are associated with socialization experience, which is the strongest determinant of evaluations of regime legitimacy; but there are signs of generational effects on individual disaffection, too. On the other hand, political discontent and, to some extent, institutional disaffection, are weakly associated with social status or age, but in contrast, an important role is played by (partisan) evaluations of political system performance, and especially of the level of corruption or economic performance (analyses not presented here; see Linek 2010).

6. Conclusion

In this study I focused on identifying the different dimensions of attitudes to a political regime, its institutions and actors, and on describing the development of attitudes within those dimensions in the Czech Republic from 1990 to the present. I have drawn a rather disappointing picture of the values and attitudes of the Czech general public: an omnipresent political discontent and distrust in political institutions, a critical appraisal of political institutions' responsiveness, relatively high levels of psychological disaffection or alienation from politics, low willingness to participate in politics, and a long-term decline of the legitimacy of the democratic regime. Generally speaking, Czech citizens follow politics and are willing to engage in

it almost as strongly as in the 1990s, but they have exhibited a dramatic growth of political dissatisfaction, distrust, and cynicism with regard to political institutions. This shift has been accompanied by increasingly critical attitudes towards the democratic regime.

The decline of positive evaluations of the democratic regime by 25–30 percentage points from the early 1990s to present is dramatic as well as somewhat surprising. Attitudes to the democratic regime and, more generally, evaluations of political regimes are typically stable in time. They are thought to be determined by primary socialization and to express agreement with the fundamental values and principles embodied by the regime in place (Weil 1987). On the other hand, it would be naïve to expect stable levels of democratic support since the early 1990s. Mishler and Rose (2007) presented evidence for post-communist societies that regime support is determined not only by primary socialization but also by an iterative process of life-long learning. Change of values in the course of one's life is primarily determined by evaluations of economic and political development. One might hypothesize that it was the growing political discontent that pulled down the levels of democratic legitimacy in the Czech Republic.

This decline of democratic support was highly likely associated with a variety of reasons behind people's positive evaluations of democracy. Inglehart and Welzel (2005: 268-270) distinguish between support for democracy based on values as such (as the appropriate and best possible regime) or instrumental conceptions of democracy as an effective regime (because there is nothing better and the regime guarantees certain outcomes). Using that distinction, they demonstrate that democratic legitimacy relies mostly on instrumentality in post-communist countries and on values in western Europe. The decline of democratic legitimacy in the Czech Republic can be best understood in the context of its citizens' instrumental conceptions. Therefore, in the Czech case, there seems to be a relationship between evaluations of regime legitimacy and political discontent.

Some authors view the considerable growth of political discontent as a positive sign. Klingemann even argues that "the future of democratic governance may lie precisely in the rise of 'democratic dissatisfaction'" (Klingemann 1998: 56). Norris, too, has a positive view on "the growth in the number of 'critical citizens' who want to improve and reform the existing mechanisms of representative democracy" (Norris 1998: 21). However, in the Czech context, the growth of dissatisfaction seems to lead to a decline in democratic legitimacy because both attitudes are mutually dependent and democratic legitimacy is evaluated in instrumental terms.

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Appendix. Information on datasets and wording of questions used

Datasets from two sources were used in the analyses. First, ISSP modules on Role of Government, Citizenship and Environment included a number of indicators of regime legitimacy, political disaffection and political discontent. The original Czech data were used, as they included variables which are not present in internationally distributed ISSP data. The data are available in the Czech data archive (www.archiv.soc.cas.cz). The data were not weighed unless otherwise stated.

Second, monthly surveys by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CVVM), Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Sciences, provided indicators of political discontent (trust in political institutions such as the country's president, government and parliament; satisfaction with political situation) and an indicator of democratic legitimacy asked only once a year. The data are also available in the Czech data archive (www.archiv.soc.cas.cz). The data were not weighted.

Almost all items use a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" (or fro–m "strongly satisfied" to "strongly dissatisfied" or from "strongly distrust" to "strongly trust"). In 2004, the TRUST-G and TRUST-P questions used a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly distrust" to "strongly trust". The answer options for LEG3 are shown below.

Legitimacy of democracy

LEG1 Democracy is the best way of governing a country like ours.
LEG2 I would rather live in our current system of government than in any other one.
LEG3 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? 1. Democracy is preferable to any other form of government; 2. Under some circumstances, an authoritarian regime or a dictatorship is better than democracy; 3. For people like me, one regime is the same as another.

Political disaffection

INST-DIS1 People like me don't have any say about what the government does.
INST-DIS2 Politicians are only interested in getting people's votes, not their opinions.
INST-DIS3 Generally speaking, those we elect to public offices quickly lose touch with citizens.
INST-DIS4 I don't think the government cares much what people like me think.
IND-DIS1 I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.
IND-DIS2 I think most people are better informed about politics and government than I am.

IND-DIS3 I think I would be as successful in a public office as other people.
IND-DIS4 I feel sufficiently qualified to participate in politics.

Political discontent

POL-DIS1 To what extent are you satisfied with the political situation in the country?
POL-DIS2 To what extent are you satisfied with the economic situation in the country?
POL-DIS3 To what extent are you satisfied with the Government's performance thus far?
TRUST-G Do you trust the Government?
TRUST-P Do you trust the Chamber of Deputies?
TRUST-PRES Do you trust the President?