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# **Psychology of Political and Economic Self-Constitution**

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project, where subjectivity is viewed as an integral characteristic of an individual.

The main tracks of such activities are considered to be: facilitation of reflection about individual political interaction and political self-identification; articulation of mechanisms of achieving success; themes of personal responsibility for the choice of communicative practices and for the translation of this or that discourse; prevention of frustration discourse development, distrust and alienation; construction of possible models of these or those interpretations of values, and prognosis of the consequences of their realization

## **Public opinion on political issues**

### **The meaning of ideological self-description in Serbia**

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**Introduction.** Ideological orientations are typically measured in two manners: through specific statement-type items or through respondent's self-identification with ideological labels (e.g., 'conservative'). Attitudinal structure obtained through factor analysis of individual attitude statements represents a model of implicit ideological dimensions (for a review see Todosijević, 2014). However, individuals are not necessarily conscious of their position in a particular multidimensional ideological space defined in this manner. Moreover, given the literature questioning political competency of the mass public (e.g., Converse, 1964, Luskin, 2003), it is likely that one's

political views do not necessarily follow the major political-ideological narratives that define the contemporary political world.

As a result, one's specific substantive political attitudes may be inconsistent with one's self-image concerning the ideological orientation. For instance, someone identifying herself as a 'socialist' may hold certain socially conservative and/or in-egalitarian opinions.

In order to investigate this problem, the paper analyzes the relationship between the basic attitudinal ideological dimensions and respondents' self-identification with various ideological labels (e.g., identification with the label 'nationalist'). The analysis is based on survey data collected in Serbia on a random sample of Belgrade residents.

The results show that most associations follow the pattern expected on the basis of the existing research literature. However, certain tendencies seem to be specific for the case in question, or to a broader post-communist context. For instance, in Serbia self-identification with the label 'socialist' is positively associated with traditionalist and militarist attitudes, while in the Western Europe, this association would typically be negative.

**Objectives.** Theoretical aim of the study is to contribute to the study of ideological sophistication (or incompetence) of the general public. According to the literature critical of public competence (Converse, 1964, Luskin, 2003), public interest in politics is low, and understanding of ideological debates is poor. Hence, the public apparently cannot think ideologically, and holds non-attitudes rather than meaningful political attitudes. On the other hand, there is literature that finds rationality in public opinion, and structure in political attitudes that resembles the abstract ideological dimensions.

Hence, the main questions this paper addresses are: To what extent the public identifies with and uses ideological labels to express political views? How does ideological self-labeling relate to ideology expressed in attitudes?

How ideological self-labeling is related to party preferences?

The results are also expected to reveal peculiarities of the political and cultural history of the case in question that is Serbia.

**Method and procedure.** The study is based on a public opinion survey, conducted in Serbia on a random sample of Belgrade residents (N=502), interviewed in 2002. Ideological self-identification with 7 typical ideological labels is operationalized by the following questions:

Indicate to what extent you identify yourself with the following political labels terms. If you would entirely accept certain political orientation, please chose 10, if you find it does not suit you at all, please choose 1.

So, to what extent would you identify with being: Conservative, Liberal, Socialist, Nationalist, Patriot, and Feminist?

Ideological orientations measured via substantive political attitudes are operationalized with a list of 60 political attitude items. The full list of attitude statements is published in Todosijević (2005). The following is a sample item, designed to measure economic liberalism: "The state ought to be involved in economy as little as possible."

This set of items is reduced to the following 15 primary attitudinal dimensions, via factor analysis: Nationalism, Militarism, International integration, Clericalism, Traditionalism, Regime attitude, Socialist economy, Environmentalism, Work ethic, 'Philosophical' Liberalism, Economic Liberalism, Collectivism, Punitiveness, Elitism, Feminism. In the next step of data reduction, these 15 factors are reduced to four second-order ideological dimensions: Socialist conservatism, Right-wing conservatism, Social order and hierarchy, and Post-materialist orientation. Details of the attitude scales and items are provided in Todosijević, 2005.

**Results.** The results show that the Serbian public readily expresses ideological self-identification. The most accepted ideological label is

‘Patriot’ (average score on a 1 – 10 scale of identification with the label is 7.43), while the least popular labels are Feminist and Conservative (average scores are 3.18 and 3.37 respectively).

Analysis of intercorrelations between ideological self-labeling and 15 primary political attitude dimensions revealed a number of significant associations. The largest number of significant associations concerns the label of Patriotism. Its highest associations are with nationalist ( $r=.49$ ,  $p<.01$ ), militarist ( $r=.45$ ,  $p<.01$ ), and traditionalist ( $r=.39$ ,  $p<.01$ ) attitudes. Socialist identification is primarily associated with the negative attitude towards the regime change ( $r=-.46$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and positive towards socialist economy ( $r=.29$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Liberal identification is associated with the positive attitude towards Serbia's international integration ( $r=.24$ ,  $p<.01$ ), and negative towards nationalist attitudes. Nationalist identification proved associated with militarist, clericalist and nationalist attitudes.

Correlation coefficients between ideological self-identification and second-order, more abstract ideological attitude dimensions are shown in Table 1.

The highest associations concern the self-labeling item Patriotism. It is associated with socialist conservatism, right-wing conservatism and negatively with social order and hierarchy.

*Table 1 Correlation between 2<sup>nd</sup> order attitude dimensions and ideological labels*

<i>2<sup>nd</sup> order ideological factors</i>	<i>Ideological self-identification</i>					
	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Liberal</i>	<i>Socialist</i>	<i>Nationalist</i>	<i>Patriot</i>	<i>Feminist</i>
1. Socialist conservatism	.13**	<b>-.27***</b>	<b>.37***</b>	.21***	<b>.41***</b>	
2. Right-wing conservatism				.18***	<b>.34***</b>	
3. Social order and hierarchy		-.10*			-.15**	-.13**
4. Post-materialist orientation		.10*		-.16***		.24***

\* $p<.05$ ; \*\* $p<.01$ ; \*\*\* $p<.001$

Table 2 Correlation between ideological self-labeling and party sympathies

<i>Political parties:</i>	<u>DS</u>	<u>DSS</u>	<u>SPS</u>	<u>SRS</u>
	Democratic Party	Democratic Party of Serbia	Socialist Party of Serbia	Serbian Radical Party
<i>Ideological labels</i>	('Democratic opposition')	('Dem. opposition' - conservative)	(Milošević party)	(Nationalist-populist)
Conservative	-.09	.12 **	.06	.12 *
Liberal	.22 ***	-.08	-.14 **	-.23 ***
Socialist	-.31 ***	-.02	.48 ***	.26 ***
Nationalist	-.18 ***	.16 ***	.13 **	.25 ***
Patriot	-.22 ***	.19 ***	.18 ***	.20 ***
Feminist	.01	.05	.12 *	.06

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001

Ideological self-understanding is also associated with political party preferences. The associations presented in Table 2 indicate the meaningful ideological self-labeling in Serbia. Socialist identifiers, for instance, are more sympathetic towards the Socialist party and the Radical Party, and negatively disposed towards the main opponents at the time – Democratic Party. The remaining associations also appear meaningful in the context of the contemporaneous political relationships.

Additional analyses, not presented here, showed that attitude dimensions are also associated with party preferences. For instance, Socialist conservatism is strongly associated with positive attitude towards Socialist Party and Radical Party, and negative towards DS. On the other side, Right-wing conservatism proved associated, modestly, only with sympathies for the Democratic Party of Serbia.

**Conclusions.** Serbian public expresses ideological self-identification, and is capable of using the ideological labels in a meaningful, although locally colored manner. Moreover, ideological self-labeling is associated with specific substantive political attitudes of different generality. Thus, for instance, patriotic self-identification is associated both with specific nationalist attitudes and with a broader orientation of socialist conservatism.

The observed associations between labels and attitudes follow, in broad terms, the European intellectual and political traditions. For instance, ‘Liberal’ identification is associated with lower nationalism, while ‘Socialist’ identification is associated with protectionist economic attitudes. However, the local political and historical context is important and visible as well. This is illustrated, for instance, by the association between the ‘Socialist’ identification and traditionalist and militarist attitudes. This ideological

constellation characterized the ideological profile of the Socialist Party of Serbia during 1990s.

The results also demonstrate that ideological self-labeling is politically relevant. Namely, both ideological self-labeling and political attitudes are associated with party preferences. For instance, sympathies for DS (then the ruling ‘democratic opposition’ party) are associated with liberal identification, and rejection of socialist, nationalist, and patriot labels. The Socialist Party sympathizers show the opposite ideological identifications. Likewise, the attitudinal ideological dimensions are strongly associated with party preferences, Socialist conservatism in particular.

The overall conclusion is that self-identification with ideological labels provides valuable information about citizens’ political orientations. The ‘ideological illiteracy’ thesis is not supported by the Serbian data.

## **Psycho-economic aspects of organizational activities**

### **Representative reflexivity for advanced economic self-constitution of youth**

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