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Author(s): Hans J. Eysenck

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Political Psychology*, Vol. 3, No. 1/2 (Spring, 1981 - Summer, 1982), pp. 234-238

Published by: [International Society of Political Psychology](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3791293>

Accessed: 06/11/2012 03:00

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Left-Wing Authoritarianism: Myth or Reality?

HANS J. EYSENCK
Institute of Psychiatry
University of London, England

Stone (1980) in his paper on "The Myth of Left-Wing Authoritarianism" attempts to present evidence to the effect that authoritarianism is essentially right-wing, and that although there are some left-wing authoritarians, their number is much smaller than that of right-wing authoritarians. Unfortunately his review of the literature is not as factual or objective as it might be, and his conclusions do not follow from the available data. It may be sufficient to list just a few of the omissions and problems with Stone's paper.

1. Stone quotes the historian Schlesinger as arguing for the similarity between persons attracted to communism and those attracted to fascism. Stone (p.13) goes on to say that: "Such similarity has not been documented, but contemporary social scientists can be expected to nod sagely when this point is made today." I do not know any references to the amount of nodding done by contemporary social scientists when this point is made today, but Stone is wrong in thinking that there is no evidence on this point. He, himself, mentions the study by Eysenck and Coulter (1972), which has done precisely this, and has resulted in data which strongly support Schlesinger. (See also Eysenck and Wilson, 1978.)

2. Stone disregards the obviously toughminded attitudes of communist regimes, like the anti-semitism shown by the Russian communist government, or the virulent anti-Algerian prejudices shown by Marchais and other leading members of the French communist party. Such fascist-like prejudices are too well documented to be disregarded in this fashion.
3. There is no mention in the Stone study of evidence supporting the Eysenck (1954) factor analysis model, such as the work of Wilson (1973), Kerlinger (1967), and others. A survey leaving out most of the evidence supporting the view the author is attacking can hardly be regarded as convincing scientifically.
4. Stone also fails to mention some of the strongest evidence in favour of Eysenck's hypothesis regarding the important part played by personality in the causation of both radicalism and toughmindedness. Thus, there is no mention of the Eaves and Eysenck (1974) study, demonstrating not only the strong genetic determination of the two major social attitude factors, but also the relationship to personality. This demonstration is strong evidence in favour of the view criticized by Stone.
5. Stone fails to mention the very important fact that the original findings of Eysenck (1954) have been replicated in different countries (e.g. Dator, 1969), and after a lapse of 25 years (Hewitt et al., 1977). Even former critics like Rokeach (1973) have come out with similar dimensions to those originally isolated by Eysenck. As Rokeach points out: "The two-value model presented here most resembles Eysenck's hypothesis." Rokeach mentions several other models which also show similarities to that of Eysenck. One would have expected Stone to have paid attention to such findings.
6. Stone fails to take into account political reality in countries like England, where the existence of "left-wing fascism" has now been officially recognized by leading members of the Labour party, who deplore the infiltration of Trotskyites, militants, and communists into their party under the slogan of "Entryism." The recent split in the Labour party, leading to the

foundation of the SDP (Social-Democratic Party) was produced precisely by the drift towards toughminded, fascist attitudes on the part of some leaders of the Labour party. Thus, even politicians who at the time The Psychology of Politics was published disbelieved its message have now been forced by political reality to acknowledge its relevance.

7. Stone alleges bias in social psychology, and quotes (p. 13) with approval Brown (1936), "who castigated the 'academic' social scientist for his neglect of Marx's insights." But Marx clearly recognized the difference between revolution and evolution, just as Lenin recognized the difference between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. These differences are along the lines of toughminded vs. tenderminded, not right vs. left. Followers of Marx should indeed be the first to recognize the importance of the dimension of toughmindedness; in one form or another it contains an important part of their social message.
8. In looking at the empirical literature, Stone makes two errors which are almost endemic in much of the work done by social psychologists. The first one is to disregard the fact that the fascist left has made good use of the rhetoric of liberalism. Thus, the communist leaders of the USSR talk about equality and egalitarianism, while living in great luxury that contrasts vividly with the misery of the general population. The only difference from capitalist countries is that "conspicuous consumption" has been replaced by less conspicuous and more hidden consumption! In a similar manner, one of the most odiously repressive regimes of our time, that of East Germany, has adopted the proud name of the Deutsche Demokratische Republik, using the term "democratic" to characterize one of the most undemocratic regimes in the world today. Many other examples of Orwell's "Double Think" could be given, illustrating the use by left-wing fascists of Hitler's and Goebbels' "big lie." This abuse of liberal rhetoric on the part of left-wing fascists often makes for difficulties in phrasing questions in questionnaires, where terms like "freedom", "democracy," etc. may be used in entirely different senses by the author

of the questionnaire and the left-wing fascist replying to it.

9. The second error concerns a problem which is usually disregarded by social scientists in this area, namely the fact that students who become members of the communist party are usually differentiated from long-term working-class members by an idealism quite alien to the latter. This is fully recognized by long-term party members, and, indeed, very few student members remain in the party for more than a year or two. Thus, to administer a few questionnaires to such easily available but quite untypical persons reduces the research process to a charade, and the results so achieved are quite meaningless. It is for this reason that in the Eysenck and Coulter (1972) study real, long-term, working-class communists and fascists were interrogated and tested. The results reported for this group cannot be questioned because quite unrepresentative student groups may give different results! Failure to recognize this fact may give substance to Brown's (1936) remark quoted above, about the neglect of Marx's insights by academic social scientists.

These are only some of the problems with Stone (1981) and his attempt to dub the existence of left-wing authoritarianism a "myth." It may be that left-wing authoritarianism is much less obvious in strongly capitalist countries like the United States and Canada, but no one living in England or continental Europe at the present time can have any doubts about its strength and importance. As Eysenck (1954) suggested in The Psychology of Politics, the degree to which left-wing authoritarians express or disguise their authoritarianism depends on the strength of their appeal in a given country. That appeal is clearly greater in England and continental Europe than in the United States and Canada, and, consequently, the authoritarianism in such people and parties will be heavily disguised in the latter countries, and much more apparent in the former. Stone is taking a very provincial approach in his paper. If he could only have looked at the situation from a more global perspective, he might not have come to the conclusion that left-wing authoritarianism is "a concept which may have no foundation in fact." The truth, alas, is otherwise. No reader of Eysenck and Wilson's (1978) Psychological Basis of Ideology can be in any doubt on this point.

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