

# Left–Right Political Scales: Some ‘Expert’ Judgments

FRANCIS G. CASTLES

*The Open University, United Kingdom*

PETER MAIR

*European University Institute, Florence, Italy*

## 1. SOME RESEARCH PROBLEMS

Much recent cross-national research is highly dependent on the classification of the ideological stance of political parties in a variety of nations, usually measured in terms of some more or less explicit Left–Right ideological scale. The need for such classification is quite apparent in the plethora of studies attempting to evaluate the relationship of political parties to public policy outcomes. In virtually all such research, Left parties are distinguished from all other parties (see, for example, Hewitt, 1977; Tufte, 1979), while in a few, the focus is tighter, with Castles (1978; 1982) discussing the role of Right and Centre parties and Cameron (1982), in addition, examining the impact of Christian Democratic parties. Once the problem of classification is more complex than distinguishing the Left from the rest, it becomes necessary to locate the political positions of parties on some sort of unidimensional or multidimensional scale, where the dimensions are related to the explanations being offered for public policy variation. The location of political position is also crucial in a range of more descriptive studies of shifting electoral allegiances. Clearly, the problem is minimized when describing shifts between individual parties, but when the intention is to assess shifts between ideologically defined blocks or ‘tendances’, it again becomes necessary to locate parties *vis-à-vis* each other in order to determine block coherence and block boundaries (see Bartolini and Mair, 1982).

Although Left–Right scales are an inherent feature of research efforts of these kinds, they have necessarily been created on a somewhat *ad hoc* basis, since the empirical foundation for valid cross-national scales rarely exists. Whether the Right–Left dimension be measured in terms of adherence to political ideas (ideology in the strict sense and possibly operationalized through content analysis of party programmes), party support deriving from various social strata (i.e. class basis) or propensity to carry out particular party programmes (obviously a somewhat tautological measure, where the intention is to explain variation in policy outcomes),

there are few adequate data-bases which are transitive across more than a few nations. This is, of course, one of the primary reasons why the predominant focus of policy research has been on socialist parties, since these parties declare by their party labels the nature of their ideological allegiance. Christian Democratic parties can be located on a similar self-labelling basis, but Centre and Right parties cannot so readily be isolated in this way. Certainly, so-called Liberal or Democratic parties have a wide ideological span from country to country and, similarly, the common label of Christian Democracy actually covers a wide diversity of political ideas, class support and policy platforms. Finally, there are many parties whose primary goals cross-cut the Left–Right ideological dimension and whose names may reveal little concerning their ideological position. Given this situation, the only real options are (a) to rely on opinions, implicit or explicit, of those in a position to make informed judgments on the ideological location of parties in particular national contexts – so-called ‘expert’ judgments, or (b) to use mass survey techniques in an effort to see how voters divide up the party system in Left–Right or other terms.

These two options have given rise to three main strategies for the creation of party location scales:

1. The most common is to rely on a reading of country experts, normally journalistic commentators or academics. This is always to some extent unsatisfactory, since it depends on an individual assessment of an idiosyncratic range of sources and consequently leads to rather diverse specifications of party locations. For instance, and to adopt a consciously self-critical stance, Bartolini and Mair (1982) read their sources as implying the existence of a Centre block in Denmark but not in the other Scandinavian countries. This is, however, a classification which might readily be contested by many scholars of the Nordic political scene.
2. A somewhat more elaborate strategy is to combine a reading of country experts with *ad hoc* decision rules which specify party location. The disadvantage here is that any such specification is necessarily arbitrary, and to various degrees is likely to do injustice to the complex reality of particular national contexts. To continue in self-critical vein, the decision rule adopted in all Castles’s work on public policy outcomes to determine whether or not a Christian Democratic party should be counted as a party of the Right (the existence of a secular party of the Right polling more than 10% of the popular vote) seems to be particularly precarious in the Italian context where, despite the absence of such a secular alternative, many commentators consider the Christian Democrats to be a party of the Centre (see Sartori, 1976).
3. Finally, there has been some use of mass survey techniques to devise scales measuring the perception of national respondents as to the ideological positioning of parties in one or more countries. One common method is to ask a sample of voters to locate parties on a ten-box Left–Right scale (for instance, Damgaard and Kristensen, 1981), and it is possible to generate potentially comparable measures by conducting surveys across a range of countries (Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976; Sani and Sartori, 1978; 1983). Such a methodology is probably both less idiosyncratic and arbitrary than other strategies, but it suffers from major operational disadvantages, in so far as research costs in terms of time and resources are extremely high.

## 2. AN ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY

It is our view that a further alternative is the creation of party location scales based on the views of country experts, but devised in such a way as to make judgments of ideological position both explicit and non-idiosyncratic across as wide a range of countries as possible.<sup>1</sup> Such scales should also avoid the sort of injustice to national contexts inherent in arbitrary decision rules, whilst research costs are markedly reduced compared to mass opinion surveys. Our first effort to create such scales has involved a preliminary questionnaire survey of leading political scientists in Western Europe, the United States and the Old Commonwealth.<sup>2</sup> The questionnaire contained one basic question asking the respondents to place all the parties represented in their national parliaments on a ten-point Left-Right scale as follows: Ultra-Left (0); Moderate Left (2½); Centre (5); Moderate Right (7½); Ultra-Right (10).

Although, as some of our respondents pointed out, such a procedure necessarily does some damage to a multifaceted reality in which two or more political dimensions coexist and cross-cut each other, the 115 or so respondents found it possible to comply for the most part with the instructions given. Indeed, scoring on the ten-point scale was often done with a fine precision, distinguishing between closely located parties by the use of decimal points. The only real difficulties related to the number of parties scored: in some cases respondents provided information about parties not represented in parliament and in others some respondents failed to score the smaller parties which were represented. In the Country Tables below we report on all those countries and parties for which there were three or more respondents, giving party location scores based on pooled data, and comment on the remarkably few instances where there was any substantial disagreement demonstrated by the responses.<sup>3</sup> While we consider it worth while at this preliminary stage of developing a research strategy for party location to report on as few as three responses – after all, given the expert status of the judgments, this is equivalent to consulting the views of three country specialists – the reader should be constantly aware of the variation in response for the different countries. Further, in order to highlight awareness of the variation hidden in aggregate scores for each party, we provided a summary of the absolute range of variation in each case.

### COUNTRY TABLES AND COMMENTS

#### AUSTRALIA

**N Respondents: 4**

Party	Abbreviation	Range	Score
Labour Party	ALP	2.5–4	3.1
Australian Democrats	AD	5–6	5.3
Liberal Party	LPA	7–8	7.5
National Country Party	NCP	7.5–8	7.8

It will be noted that the degree of variation for each party is very small and that overlap occurs only between the Liberal and Country parties which have been in coalition for much of the postwar period.

**AUSTRIA****N Respondents: 3**

Party	Abbreviation	Range	Score
Kommunistische Partei (Communist Party)	KPÖ	0–1	0.5
Sozialistische Partei (Socialist Party)	SPÖ	2–4.5	3
Volkspartei (People's Party)	ÖVP	5.5–6	5.8
Freiheitliche Partei (Freedom Party)	FPÖ	6.5–7.5	6.8

With the exception of the SPÖ, the degree of variation for each party is quite low. The parties also occupy quite distinct locations as is demonstrated by the complete lack of overlap.

**BELGIUM****N Respondents: 4**

Party	Abbreviation	Range	Score
Parti Communiste/Kommunistische Partij (Communist Party)	PCB/KPB	1–2.5	1.4
Parti Socialiste (Socialist Party – W)	PS	2.5–3	2.5
Rassemblement Wallon	RW	1.5–3.5	2.6
Socialistische Partij (Socialist Party – F)	SP	2.5–3.5	2.9
Agalev/ECO (Ecologists)	A/E	4–5	4.5
Front Democratique des Francophones	FDF	5–7.5	5.6
Christelijke Volkspartij (Christian Social Party – F)	CVP	5–7	5.8
Parti Social Chretien (Christian-Social Party – W)	PSC	5–7.5	6.3
Volksunie	VU	5–8.5	6.8
Parti Reformateur Liberal (Liberals – W)	PRL	7.5–8	7.6
Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang (Liberals – F)	PVV	7.5–8	7.8
Respect voor Arbeid en Democratie/Union pour la Democratie et le Respect du Travail	RAD/UDRT	8.5–10	9.2
Vlaams Blok	VB	9.5–10	9.8

The range of scores for a number of the Belgian parties is quite high, and there is substantial overlap, particularly at the centre between FDF, VU and the two Christian Democratic parties. Despite the expectedly high degree of overlap between the Fleming and Walloon sections of each of the Socialist, Liberal and Christian Democratic parties, it is interesting to note not inconsiderable differences in their average scores (.4, .2 and .5 respectively), with the Walloon side scoring more left in the case of the secular parties and the Fleming side more left in the case of the Christian parties.

**CANADA****N Respondents: 3**

Party	Abbreviation	Range	Score
New Democratic Party	NDP	2.5–4	3.2
Liberal Party	L	5–6	5.3
Progressive Conservative Party	PC	6–7.5	6.5
Social Credit Party	PCS	7.5–8	7.8

Despite the absence of a self-labelled socialist party in Canada, these scores are remarkably similar to the distribution in Australia. While there is some overlap between the PC and the parties to its left and right, all four of the parties occupy reasonably distinct locations.

**DENMARK****N Respondents: 5**

Party	Abbreviation	Range	Score
Venstre Socialisterne (Left Socialist)	VS	0–2	0.8
Kommunistiske Parti (Communist Party)	DKP	0–2	1
Socialistisk Folkeparti (Socialist Peoples)	SF	0–2.5	1.9
Socialdemokratiet (Social Democrat)	SD	2.5–4.5	3.8
Radikale Venstre (Radical Liberal)	RV	4.5–5	4.8
Centrumdemokraterne (Centre Democrat)	CD	5–6	5.7
Kristeligt Folkeparti (Christian Peoples)	KRF	6–7.5	6.2
Venstre (Agrarian Liberal)	V	6–7.5	6.7
Konservative Folkeparti (Conservatives)	KF	7–7.5	7.3
Fremskridtspartiet (Progress Party)	FRP	7–10	8.7

Excluding the parties of the non-Social Democratic Left as well as the Progress Party, the low range of the scores of the remaining parties indicates a substantial degree of agreement among our respondents. Two main groups of parties can be identified – the non-Social Democratic Left on the one hand and the Centre-Right on the other, with the Social Democrats bridging the gap between the two and with the Progress Party on the far right. The SD is also incidentally the most right-scoring of the European Social Democratic parties.

**FINLAND****N Respondents: 3**

Party	Abbreviation	Range	Score
Suomen Kansan Demokraattinen Puolue (People's Democratic League – includes Communists)	SKDL	1.5–2	1.8
Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue (Social Democrat)	SDP	2.5–3.5	3
Keskustapuolue (Centre Party)	KESK	5–5.7	5.2
Liberaalinen Kansanpuolue (Liberal Party)	LKP	5–6	5.6
Suomen Maaseuden Puolue (Rural Party)	SMP	5–7	5.8
Ruotsalainen Kansanpuolue (Swedish Party)	RKP	6–6.3	6.1
Suomen Kristillinen Liitto (Christian League)	SKL	6–8	6.8
Kansallinen Kokoomus (National Coalition (Conservative))	KOK	7–7.6	7.2

Despite the small number of respondents, the degree of unanimity concerning the placings of parties is impressive in the context of a multi-party system. However, there is also substantial overlap between the non-left parties here.

**FRANCE****N Respondents: 6**

Party	Abbreviation	Range	Score
Parti Communiste (Communist)	PCF	1–2	1.4
Parti Socialiste (Socialist)	PS	2–3	2.6
Ecologiste (Ecologist)	E	2.5–4.5	3.5
Radicaux de Gauche (Left Radicals)	MRG	3.5–4	3.8
Union pour la Democratie Française	UDF	6.5–6.8	6.6
Rassemblement pour la Republique	RPR	8–8.5	8.2
Centre National des Independants et Paysans	CNIP	8.5–9	8.6
Front National	FN	9.5–10	9.8
Parti des Forces Nouvelles	PFN	9.5–10	9.8

Notwithstanding evident confusion over party labels and over what constitutes a separate party as opposed to simply a component in a wider *tendance*, there is exceptional unanimity concerning the placement of all the parties (the Ecologists excepted), and very little overlap between them.

**GERMANY****N Respondents: 12**

Party	Abbreviation	Range	Score
Kommunistische Partei (Communist)	DKP	0–2.5	1.4
‘Die Grünen’ (Greens)	G	2–4	2.8
Sozialdemokratische Partei (Social Democrat)	SPD	2.5–5	3.3
Freie Demokratische Partei (Free Democrat)	FDP	4.5–6	5.1
Christlich Demokratische Union (Christian Democrat)	CDU	5–8.2	6.7
Christlich Soziale Union (Christian Social)	CSU	6–9	7.9

There is substantial overlap here between the individual parties, but there was general agreement about the order of the parties on a left–right scale. The high score of the CSU makes it the most right-wing Christian Democratic party in our sample.

**IRELAND****N Respondents: 6**

Party	Abbreviation	Range	Score
Workers Party	WP	1–3	1.8
Labour Party	LAB	2.8–4	3.6
Fianna Fail	FF	5–7	6.3
Fine Gael	FG	6–8	6.8

Despite frequent assertions concerning the non-applicability of left–right scales in the Irish case, there was complete agreement on the ordering of the four parties. The pattern which emerges is one of moderate Left versus moderate Right, with the Centre completely unoccupied, and with the lion’s share of the votes (c. 80%) going to the moderate Right. Labour joins the PSOE as the second most right-scoring Social Democratic party in Europe. The final point of interest is that coalition formation does not follow this ideological ordering, in that it pits Fine Gael and Labour against Fianna Fail.

**ITALY****N Respondents: 10**

Party	Abbreviation	Range	Score
Democrazia Proletaria	DP	0-1	0.5
Partito di Unità Proletaria	PdUP	0-1	0.6
Partito Comunista (Communist)	PCI	1-2.5	1.6
Partito Radicale (Radical)	PR	1-3.5	2.3
Partito Socialista (Socialist)	PSI	2-4.5	3.1
Partito Repubblicano (Republican)	PRI	3-7	4.8
Partito Socialdemocratico (Social Democrat)	PSDI	3-8	5.4
Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democrat)	DC	4-7.5	5.4
Partito Liberale (Liberal)	PLI	5-8	5.9
Movimento Sociale	MSI	7.5-10	9.1

Despite the large distance separating leftmost from rightmost party in Italy, the range of scores for each of the parties is remarkably wide. The result of this is substantial overlap between the parties. Interestingly enough, the relatively low score of the DC makes it the most left-scoring Christian Democratic party in Europe.

**NETHERLANDS****N Respondents: 9**

Party	Abbreviation	Range	Score
Pacifistisch Socialistische Partij (Pacifist Socialists)	PSP	0-1.5	0.6
Communistische Partij (Communist)	CPN	0-2	0.8
Politieke Partij Radikalen (Radical Political Party)	PPR	0-4	1.6
Partij van de Arbeid (Labour)	PvdA	2-3	2.6
Democraten '66 (Democrats '66)	D'66	3.5-5	4.4
Christen-Democratisch Appel (Christian Democratic Appeal)	CDA	5-7.5	5.7
Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (Liberal)	VVD	6-8	7.4
Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond	GPV	8-10	9
Reformatische Politieke Federatie	RPF	8-10	9.2
Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij	SGP	8-10	9.2

The range of scores for the Dutch parties is also high, particularly in the case of the PPR, while there is also some considerable overlap. There is general agreement on the placing of the secular parties of the Left and Right, PvdA and the VVD, but less so concerning the CDA, which some respondents place exactly in the Centre and others on the moderate Right.



**NEW ZEALAND****N Respondents: 4**

Party	Abbreviation	Range	Score
Labour Party	LAB	3–4.5	3.8
Social Credit Political League	SC	5–6.5	5.6
National Party	NP	5.5–6.5	6

This case is most interesting for the sheer narrowness of the overall political spectrum, which gives a picture of an extremely centre-orientated party system. The score of Labour ranks it with the Danish SD as the most right-scoring Social Democratic party in our sample.

**NORWAY****N Respondents: 7**

Party	Abbreviation	Range	Score
Sosialistisk Venstreparti (Left Socialists)	SV	0–2	1.2
Det Norske Arbeiderparti (Labour)	DNA	2.5–4	3
Venstre (Liberal)	V	3.8–5	4
Senterpartiet (Centre Party)	SP	5–7.5	5.8
Kristelig Folkeparti (Christian People's Party)	KrF	5–7	6.1
Høyre (Conservative)	H	7.5–8	7.7
Fremskrittspartiet (Progress Party)	Fp	8.5–10	9.4

The only real overlap in this case is that between the SP and KrF, which are long-standing coalition partners. Otherwise, there seems a clear case of two groups: Left (SV and DNA) and the Right (SP, KrF and H), with only the small Liberal Party (Centre) and Progress Party (Ultra-Right) departing from the pattern. The clear divide between the two basic groupings may well be indicative of an emerging two-block/party polarization of the system, long predicted by some Norwegian specialists (see Valen and Katz, 1964).

**SPAIN****N Respondents: 7**

Party	Abbreviation	Range	Score
Herri Batasuna	HB	0-1.5	0.5
Union del Pueblo Canario	UCP	0-1	0.7
Euskadico Esquerra	EE	2-3	2.4
Partido Comunista (Communist)	PCE	2-4	2.7
Partido Socialista Obrero (Socialist)	PSOE	2.5-5	3.6
Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya	ERC	2-6.5	4.1
Partido Socialista de Andalucia (Andalusian Socialists)	PSA	2.5-6.5	4.5
Convergencia y Union	CiU	6-7.5	6.6
Partido Nacionalista Vasco	PNV	6-8	6.7
Union del Centro Democratico	UCD	6.5-7.5	7.1
Partido Aragonés Regionalista	PAR	7.5-8.5	8.2
Alianza Popular	AP	7.5-9	8.4
Union Nacional/Fuerza Nueva	UN/FN	9-10	9.8

The range of scores for most Spanish parties is surprisingly low, the exceptions being PSOE, ERC and PSA. The distance between leftmost and rightmost parties is also very wide. What is perhaps most interesting about this case is the relatively high scores for the PCE, PSOE and UCD with respect to their equivalents in other countries: the PCE is the most right-scoring Communist party, whilst the PSOE and UCD are the second most right-scoring socialist and Christian Democratic parties respectively. We have treated the UCD as a Christian Democratic Party due to its affiliation to the European Christian Democratic Union (cf. Day and Degenhardt, 1980, 304).

**SWEDEN****N Respondents: 10**

Party	Abbreviation	Range	Score
Vansterpartiet Kommunisterna (Communist)	VPK	0-2.4	1.2
Socialdemokratiska Arbetarpartiet (Social Democrat)	SD	2.5-4	2.9
Folkpartiet (People's Party)	FP	4-7	5.5
Centerpartiet (Centre Party)	CP	5-7.5	5.9
Moderata Samlingspartiet (Conservative)	M	6-10	7.7

The overlap here occurs on the Centre to Right of the system, among the FP, CP and M, all recent coalition partners. Respondents were fairly evenly divided about the respective ordering of the FP and CP, with a third opting for the FP to the Left of the CP, another third opting for the CP to the Left of the FP, and the others opting for placing both in the same position.

UNITED KINGDOM

N Respondents: 17

Party	Abbreviation	Range	Score
Labour Party	LAB	1–3.5	2.3
Plaid Cymru	PC	1–6	3.4
Scottish National Party	SNP	2.5–6.5	4.4
Social Democratic Party	SDP	3–8	4.6
Liberal Party	Lib	3.5–7.5	5
Conservative Party	Con	6.5–9	7.8
Ulster Unionists	UU	7.5–10	8.3

The present confusion in the British party system has perhaps been mirrored here in the very wide-ranging scores for each of the parties. This was particularly evident for the newly emerged Social Democratic Party, which some ten respondents saw as being to the Left of the Liberals, three as being to the Right, and three as the same position as the Liberals. The average score for the Labour Party makes it, astonishingly in light of its history and origins, the most left-scoring Social Democratic party in our sample.

UNITED STATES

N Respondents: 6

Party	Abbreviation	Range	Score
Democrats	D	4–6	4.8
Republicans	R	5.8–8	6.8

This case needs little comment. Though there is some overlap between the parties, there was complete unanimity about their respective ordering.

3. SOME TENTATIVE COMPARISONS

Although there is nothing intrinsic in our research design that should make the scales useful outside particular national contexts, there are some signs that political scientists, when confronted with labels of the kind attached to the scale on the questionnaire, have taken into account considerations which might make the scales potentially comparable. In particular, the absence of any obvious tendency to spread scores in such a way as to fill the party space available suggests that labels like Ultra-Left or Ultra-Right are being judged by general standards rather than purely national considerations. This is, perhaps, hardly surprising given that all the countries are advanced democratic states with a reasonably similar range of parties, and that the respondents are all likely to be familiar with the ideological positions taken by parties in several of those states – this latter being an important advantage compared to scales derived from mass surveys of voters.

This being so, we thought it worth while to present a graphic summary (Figure 1) presenting all the national data in a form which may be compared cross-nationally in terms of our five Left–Right categories.<sup>4</sup> We also present a summary table (Table I) of these positions in terms of party types. While any conclusions which may be derived from such a comparison must be tentative, they are interesting in relation to continuing efforts to categorize party ideologies.

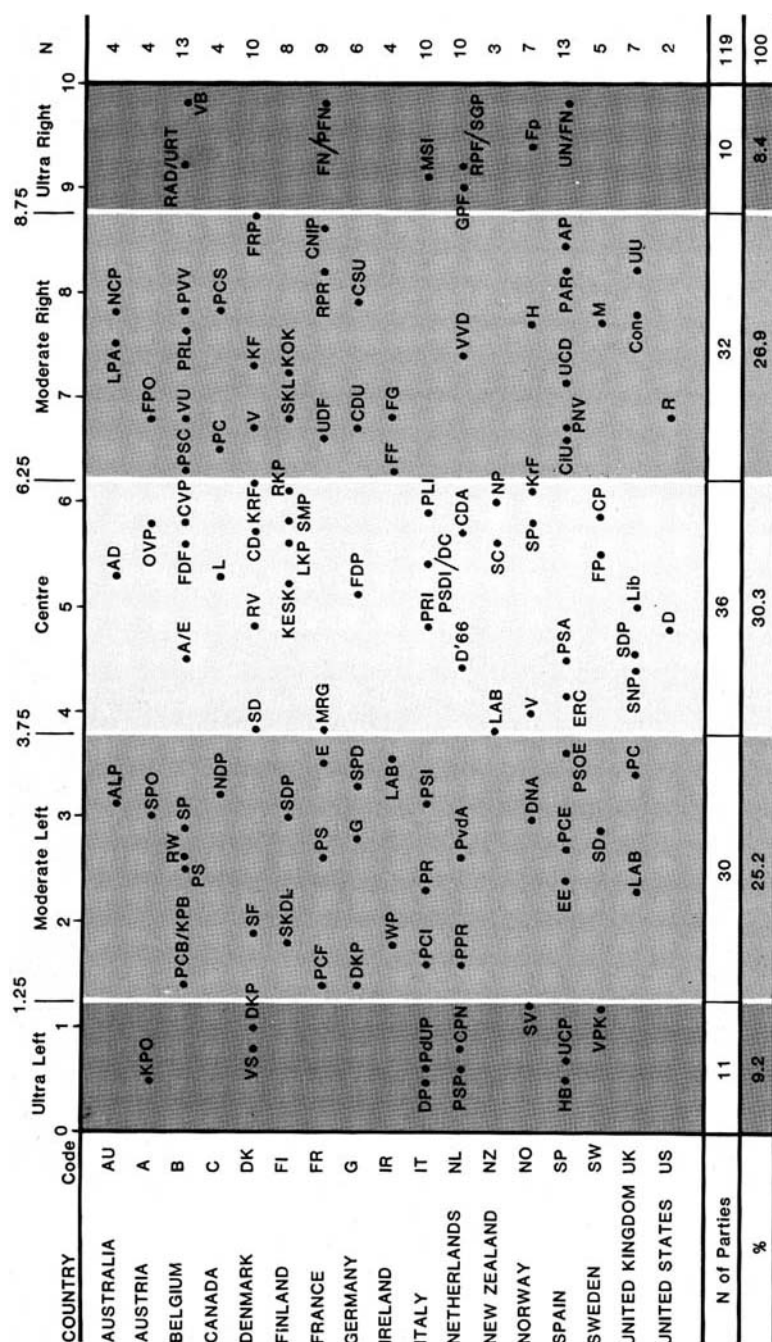


Fig. 1. Parties' positions on the Left-Right scale: a summary.

**TABLE I. Party scores and types of party: ranked from leftmost score to rightmost score**

Communist parties		Social Democratic parties		Liberal parties		Christian Democrat parties	
KPÖ (A)	0.5	LAB (UK)	2.3	V (No)	4	DC (IT)	5.4
CPN (NL)	0.8	PS (B)	2.5	Lib (UK)	5	CDA (NL)	5.7
DKP (DK)	1	PS (FR)	2.6	FDP (G)	5.1	CVP (B)	5.8
VKP (SW)	1.2	PvdA (NL)	2.6	L (C)	5.3	ÖVP (A)	5.8
PCB/KCP (B)	1.4	SP (B)	2.9	FP (SW)	5.5	KrF (No)	6.1
PCF (FR)	1.4	SD (SW)	2.9	LKP (FI)	5.6	KRF (DK)	6.2
DKP (G)	1.4	SPÖ (A)	3	PLI (IT)	5.9	PSC (B)	6.3
PCI (IT)	1.6	SDP (FI)	3	V (DK)	6.7	CDU (G)	6.7
SKDL (FI)	1.8	DNA (NO)	3	FPÖ (A)	6.8	SKL (FI)	6.8
PCE (SP)	2.7	ALP (AU)	3.1	VVD (NL)	7.4	UCD (SP)	7.1
		PSI (IT)	3.1	LPA (AU)	7.5	CSU (G)	7.8
		NDP (C)	3.2	PRL (B)	7.6		
		SPD (G)	3.3	PVV (B)	7.8		
		LAB (IR)	3.6				
		PSOE (SP)	3.6				
		LAB (NZ)	3.8				
		SD (DK)	3.8				
N	10		17		13		11
Range	0.5-2.7		2.3-3.8		4-7.8		5.4-7.8
Mean score	1.4		3.1		6.2		6.3

The first point to be noted is the very normal distribution of the 119 parties between the five categories, with 9.2% falling within the Ultra-Left block, 25.2% in the Moderate Left, 30.3% in the Centre, 26.9% in the Moderate Right and 8.4% in the Ultra-Right block (Figure 1). In terms of the average electoral support won by parties of these blocks, however, there is a tendency for parties of the Moderate Left and Moderate Right to be rather more successful. Employing the results of the most recent election in each country (up to summer 1982), the distribution of the overall vote was as follows:

<i>Category</i>	<i>Average vote, by party</i>
Ultra-Left	2.2
Moderate Left	18.7
Centre	15.9
Moderate Right	17.8
Ultra-Right	2.3

A second point to note is the narrowness of the bands in which Left parties are located. Communist parties range from 0.5 to 2.7, the latter being the relatively isolated position of the Spanish PCE. Those Social Democratic and Labour parties whose ideological allegiance is to the Socialist International range from 2.3 (Labour in the UK) to 3.8 (Labour in New Zealand and the Social Democrats in Denmark); all but the latter two borderline cases fall within the Moderate Left block. Further, in only one case, that of the PCE, is a Communist party to be found to the Right of the leftmost Social Democratic or Labour party, although six of the ten Communist parties are to be found in the Moderate Left block.

Thirdly, as expected, the range of the Liberal and Christian Democratic parties is

much wider than those of the Left parties. This is particularly true in the case of the Liberals, who range from 4.0 to 7.8 with an average score of 6.2, while the Christian Democratic parties range from 5.4 to 7.8 with an average score of 6.3. There is also considerable overlap between these two groups of parties. There is little evident pattern in the distribution of these two groups, although it is interesting to note that three of the four Scandinavian Liberal parties score more to the Left than the Liberal average.

Fourth, with the exception of Ireland and possibly of France, where the MRG is a borderline case, the Centre block is physically occupied by at least one party in each system; indeed, in the case of New Zealand, all three parties are located in the Centre block. Excluding these three cases, however, it is possible to identify three groups of countries which differ in the role accorded to Centre block parties: (1) those with large parties of the Centre – Austria, Canada, Italy (DC), Netherlands (CDA) and the United States; (2) those with only small parties of the Centre, but where these parties are nevertheless often crucial to the process of government formation – Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway and Sweden; (3) those with small Centre block parties which are largely irrelevant to the main political battle – Australia, Spain and the United Kingdom.

The data provided here may also be relevant to answering the question of whether or not there exists an independent Centre in some of the 17 countries under consideration (Daalder, 1984).

The presence of a party or parties in the Centre block is clearly a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the existence of such an independent Centre, since there must also exist parties to the Left and Right against which the Centre can be defined. With these considerations in mind, we would therefore propose the following criteria for the definition of an independent Centre:

- i. The Centre block (3.75–6.25) must be physically occupied by one or more parties.
- ii. There must also be at least one party on the Left (0–3.75) and at least one party on the Right (6.25–10).
- iii. There should be a reasonable distance between the Centre and the parties on the Left and Right. In this particular case, we propose that this distance be at least two intervals away from the exact Centre. This latter requirement implies that the only parties with a score between 3 and 7 should be those which are actually in the Centre block itself.

On the basis of these criteria, independent Centres can be said to exist in only three countries in our sample: the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. Despite the fact that New Zealand is all Centre, it does not meet the second criteria, since there are no parties to Left or Right.

Finally, it should be noted that, with the exception of Italy and New Zealand, the remaining countries all have larger or smaller parties of the Moderate Right. However, their status as major aspirants to governmental status is much more varied than in the case of the Moderate Left parties. Ireland appears to have two major parties of the Moderate Right, and in Australia, France, Germany and the United Kingdom the Moderate Right is the major contender for power with the democratic socialists. In Canada and the United States, the contest for power is almost exclusively between Moderate Right and Centre. Whilst Norway appears to be moving

towards a situation of contestation between Moderate Right and Left, in all the remaining countries the Moderate Right must align itself with the Centre to attain governmental status. This picture of a relatively common ideological and structural position on the Left and a much more varied set of alignments in the Centre and on the Right is continuing confirmation of Lipset and Rokkan's view that the advent of class politics imposed a degree of similarity on the emergent party alignments in Western Europe (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967).

Isolating these points from Figure 1 and Table I does not by any means exhaust the comparative potential of these scales. On the basis of the data provided here, it would be possible to devise a variety of indices of the weight of Left and Right opinion in different national political systems (e.g. by multiplying each party's score on the Left-Right scale by its percentage vote at the most recent election and summing the results) or to create measures of ideological polarization (e.g. on the basis suggested by Sani and Sartori, 1983). However, the presentation and discussion of such indices and measures would take us far beyond the bounds of what is already a somewhat extended research note. The points which have been mentioned above are simply those which emerge most clearly when viewing the data in comparative perspective. It is our hope that the scales we have derived by relying on our colleagues' expert judgments may prove useful in a wide variety of contexts of comparative research.

## NOTES

- 1 We understand that a similar method was usefully employed by Michael-John Morgan for a thesis entitled *The Modelling of Governmental Coalition Formations: A Policy-Based Approach with Interval Measurement* (University of Michigan Ph.D., 1976).
- 2 For Europe the questionnaire was addressed to all members of the ECPR Council. Given the differential national representation on the Council, other political scientists were approached in an effort to increase the number of respondents from the smaller countries. For the United States and the Old Commonwealth, selected professors of political science were approached. We would wish to thank all those who made the effort to respond, some with very helpful comments and further information. Further we would wish to acknowledge our debt of intellectual gratitude to the members of the project on *The Future of Party Government*, directed by Professor Rudolf Wildenmann at the European University Institute, in which context our research developed.
- 3 Four countries from which we sought respondents are not included. We obtained no responses from Greece or Switzerland and only one each from Iceland and Portugal.
- 4 To make sense the range of Ultra-Left and that of Ultra-Right should not be as wide as that of Moderate Left, Moderate Right and Centre. If then we allocate the same space on the spectrum to Moderate Left, Centre, Moderate Right and the combination of Ultra-Left and Ultra-Right, we get a span of 2.5 units for the first three, and 1.25 for the others. This means that the divisions are as follows:

0-1.25:	Ultra-Left
1.25-3.75:	Moderate Left
3.75-6.25:	Centre
6.25-8.75:	Moderate Right
8.75-10.00:	Ultra-Right

## REFERENCES

- Bartolini, S. and Mair, P. (1982). 'Report on a New Framework for the Analysis of Changes in Western European Party Systems', *ECPR Joint Sessions*, Aarhus.
- Cameron, D. R. (1982). 'On the Limits of the Public Economy', *Annals*, AAPSSS, 459.
- Castles, F. G. (1978). *The Social Democratic Image of Society*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- Castles, F. G. (ed.) (1982). *The Impact of Parties: Politics and Policies in Advanced Capitalist States*. London: Sage.
- Daalder, H. (1984). 'In Search of the Centre in Western European Party Systems', *American Political Science Review*, forthcoming.
- Damgaard, E. and Kristensen, O. P. (1981). 'Party Government Under Pressure', Nordic Political Science Congress, Abo.
- Day, A. S. and Degenhardt, H. (eds.) (1980). *Political Parties of the World*. London: Longman.
- Hewitt, C. (1977). 'The Effect of Political Democracy and Social Democracy on Equality in Industrial Societies: A Cross-National Comparison', *American Sociological Review* 42, 450–64.
- Inglehart, R. and Klingemann, H. D. (1976). 'Party Identification, Ideological Preferences and the Left–Right Dimension among Western Mass Publics', pp. 243–73 in Budge, I., Crewe, I. and Farlie, D. (eds.), *Party Identification and Beyond*. New York: Wiley.
- Lipset, S. M. and Rokkan, S. (eds.) (1967). *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*. New York: Free Press.
- Sani, G. and Sartori, G. (1978). 'Frammentazione, Polarizzazione e Cleavages: Democrazie Facile e Difficili', *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica* 8, 339–61.
- Sani, G. and Sartori, G. (1983). 'Polarization, Fragmentation and Competition in Western Democracies', pp. 307–40 in Daalder, H. and Mair, P., *Western European Party Systems*. London: Sage.
- Sartori, G. (1976). *Parties and Party Systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tufte, E. R. (1979). 'Political Parties, Social Class and Economic Policy Preferences', *Government and Opposition* 14, 18–36.
- Valen, H. and Katz, D. (1964). *Political Parties in Norway*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.