12

The Left, The Right, The Establishment and the Swiss Electorate

RONALD INGLEHART and DUSAN SIDJANSKI*

INTRODUCTION

Since the era of the French Revolution, the concept of a left–right dimension has shown remarkable vitality. Its usefulness has undoubtedly contributed to the concept's longevity in political discourse. Although a nation's dominant political forces and issues may change over time, it is convenient, indeed almost essential, to have a simple shorthand term that provides a general orientation toward a society's political leaders, ideologies and parties.

The left–right dimension is especially helpful to the voter in multi-party systems. In a two-party system electoral choice is relatively simple: the voter is faced with a single pair of alternatives. But in a system with five major parties there are ten pairs of alternatives; in a system with ten parties there are forty-five pairs. In many West European democracies, five to ten or more parties are represented in Parliament. If electoral choice were made by comparing each pair of alternatives, it would be virtually unmanageable. The concept of an underlying left–right dimension simplifies a complex reality and generates a handy set of decision rules: responding to the key issue, the voter decides how far 'left' he or she is and supports the nearest party on the left–right continuum. If that party doesn't present a candidate, or is elminated from a run-off election (as often happens in France), the voter shifts his or her support to the next nearest party. Similarly, when faced with the need to form governing coalitions, political élites have their choices greatly simplified: in theory, they ally with the parties nearest to them on the left–right dimension.

The concept also seems to have explanatory value. Downs (1957), for example, has developed it into a simple but plausible explanation of electoral competition. His model implies that, given a normal distribution of voters on the left–right dimension, the parties will cluster together near the median voter. With a multi-modal distribution, one might expect to find political parties near the mid-point of each cluster of voters.

Although it may be an extremely convenient abstraction, the idea that a left–right

dimension underlies political behaviour has been subjected to considerable scrutiny. Stokes (1966) has raised the question, 'To what extent does Downs's model correspond to reality in a given political system?' He argues that its applicability depends on the extent to which four conditions are present.

(1) *Uni-dimensionality.* Political choice in the given society must be dominated by a single dimension. While Downs's model assumes that the dominant question is the degree of government intervention in the economy, it is quite conceivable that religious or other cleavages might complicate the picture.*

(2) *Ordered dimensions.* It must be possible to rank the parties according to their stand on the dominant dimension.

(3) *A common frame of reference.* In order for political parties to take positions that correspond to the distribution of voters' preferences, both élites and mass must have similar perceptions of the dominant issue dimension.

(4) *A fixed structure.* This is more or less a corollary of point (3): for élites and mass to respond to the same underlying issue, that issue must remain stable over time. The same result might conceivably be attained if both party leaders and voters simultaneously reoriented themselves according to a new dimension, but practically speaking this seems unlikely.

Stokes concluded that American politics did not meet these four assumptions. But analysts of French, German and Italian politics have argued recently that the concept of a left-right dimension does indeed provide a useful basis for analysis of political choice (Deutsch, Lindon and Weill, 1966; Barnes, 1971; Barnes and Pierce, 1971; Klingemann, 1972; Converse and Pierce, 1973). The difference in conclusions may be attributed to a variety of causes.

(1) The latter studies were based on the analysis of multi-party systems. In such systems there is probably a greater need for a simplifying abstraction such as the left-right concept. Both élites and mass consequently have a greater incentive to view politics according to this frame of reference. In a two-party system, one can be either, say, a Republican or a Democrat without needing to seek some underlying ideological dimension that might explain why one prefers a given party.

(2) Stokes's conclusions referred to American politics in the 1950s. At that time and place, political choice seems to have been governed largely by candidate preferences and traditional party loyalties; the electorate showed little tendency to polarize along *any* issue dimension. In contemporary Western Europe, the left-right cleavage may be significantly more important. One can cite a number of reasons why this might be the case. Unlike the United States, France, Germany and Italy have major parties that developed from the Marxist tradition; this may encourage the electorate to polarize along a single Marxist–anti-Marxist axis. Furthermore, the major American parties tend to be organized on a statewide, rather than nationwide basis: the Democratic Party in Georgia may take a quite different stand on issues from that of the Democratic Party of New York. In such conditions, it is difficult for national politics to polarize along a single left-right dimension. In comparison with their American counterparts, the European parties have relatively centralized national organizations. Moreover, the French, German and Italian cultures may have characteristics (apart from their Marxist parties) that are relatively conducive to

left-right polarization. American society has traditionally placed less stress on one's social class origins, for example: this may minimize tendencies towards polarization along social class lines.

(3) Finally, the 1950s in retrospect appear to have been an era of relatively low political polarization. Contemporary politics in *both* Western Europe and the United States may be more conducive to the emergence of what Stokes called a 'strong ideological focus' than were the bland politics of the Eisenhower era in America (Pomper, 1972; Miller *et al.*, 1976).

In this article we shall explore the extent to which the left-right dimension is a useful concept for the interpretation of Swiss politics, using data from the first representative national survey ever made of Swiss electoral behaviour.* Switzerland provides a particularly interesting site in which to test the applicability of this concept. In several respects she resembles her European neighbours, and consequently we might expect her to show a similar pattern of left-right polarization. Culturally related to Germany, France and Italy, Switzerland has a multi-party political system; moreover, the system incldues both a Socialist Party (which is Switzerland's largest party) and a smaller but well-known Communist Party.

In other respects Switzerland might be expected to show a low level of left-right polarization. For one, her politics in recent years have been characterized by a relatively low level of overt conflict. Governed almost continuously since 1943 by a coalition of the four largest parties, decisions are reached by a process of 'amicable agreement' rather than by majority rule (Steiner, 1973). This decision-making style has obvious advantages in an ethnically heterogeneous society, where linguistic or religious minorities might otherwise risk being perpetually outvoted. But it also implies that the parties rarely present the electorate with a coherent set of opposing programmes. Some major political choices *have* been brought before the people in recent years, but they have been presented in the form of national referenda in which all major parties endorsed a common position. One might argue that much the same is true of the parties in the neighbouring countries—they rarely present drastically different alternatives—but there is undeniably a difference in the *degree* to which this is true. Contemporary Swiss politics have shown an exceptionally low level of conflict. We might expect this to lead to a relatively low degree of political polarization among the electorate.

This tendency might be accentuated by the fact that, until 1971, Switzerland was an anomaly among Western democracies: women could not vote in national elections. Even more than in other countries, women were socialized into a role that tended to exclude politics. For the feminine half of the Swiss electorate, we would expect to find low levels of political interest and consequently low levels of ideological constraint and polarization.

Furthermore, Switzerland has a highly decentralized set of political institutions. With the exception of the German CSU, Swiss parties have a greater degree of local autonomy than those of her neighbours. Despite her small size, cultural and geographic barriers help maintain an extreme political diversity from one canton to

another. As in the United States, decentralization may impede the emergence of any clear and commonly accepted left–right orientation at the national level.

For the foregoing reasons, we should expect a left–right dimension to provide a less adequate basis for interpretation of Swiss politics than is the case in Germany, France or Italy. But before we can test this hypothesis, we must clarify an essential point: exactly what does the left–right dimension *mean*?

The research already cited makes it clear that large proportions of the French, German and Italian electorates are able to situate themselves on a left–right scale. But there are two possible interpretations of *why* they place themselves at given locations, and the two interpretations have fundamentally different implications. The traditional interpretation is that the left–right continuum reflects an underlying issue dimension: those who prefer the left are change-oriented in a broad and encompassing sense; those who align themselves with the right support the status quo. The *type* of change one supports is important, of course. The left has historical connotations of egalitarianism, internationalism and social progress; the right connotes support for established authority, nationalism and social continuity. But orientations toward social change constitute the unifying thread of the underlying super-issue or ideology. The traditional interpretation implies that those who favour change-oriented policies see themselves as located on the left side of an ideological continuum; they then vote for given parties *because* of their issue preferences.

An alternative interpretation is possible. It is conceivable that left–right self-placement is not the *cause* of party preference, but a derivative of it. One may prefer a given party because of family tradition or religious or other affiliation. One is also aware of the conventional label attached to one's party: for decades, the mass media have spoken of the Communists as a party of the extreme left, the Socialists as the moderate left and so on. Knowing this, the voter locates himself on the left–right scale at about the same location as the party he prefers. These party preferences can, no doubt, be traced back to some powerful political issue or personality that originally won the voter's allegiance (or that of his parents or grandparents). But they may reflect the impact of actors and ideas that have passed from the scene decades or even generations ago.

Which interpretation is correct? We suspect that both processes are at work; we very much doubt that European electorates are wholly devoid of ideological orientation—but this influence may be a good deal less powerful than is suggested by the fact that most voters can place themselves on a left–right scale. The investigators we have cited attempt to validate the meaningfulness of left–right self-placement by demonstrating that it is a good predictor both of political party preference and of electors' positions on important political issues. The relationship between left–right self-placement and political party preference is somewhat suspect: the former *may* be an influence on the latter—or it may simply be a synonym for given party preferences.

The relationship between issue preference and left–right self-placement is more convincing. If the two *are* strongly related, it is at least plausible to view left–right self-placement as a cause rather than a consequence of party preferences, although we cannot draw any final conclusions without longitudinal data. But if, on the other hand, we were to find virtually *no* relationship between left–right self-placement and one's stand on current issues, it would greatly undermine the traditional interpretation, even in the absence of longitudinal data: the first link in the causal chain would be missing.

Our colleagues have shown that left–right orientation *is* related to current issue

preferences in other countries. We believe that this relationship may be comparatively weak in the Swiss setting because, among other things, the dominant political parties are in permanent coalition, ruling by 'amicable agreement'. As a result, new issues are unlikely to become linked with established party loyalties. And in so far as party loyalties provide cues concerning what is 'left' and what is 'right', the left–right dimension would also remain unrelated to current issues.

Thus there are a number of reasons why we would expect contemporary Swiss politics to show a relatively low degree of unidimensionality and relatively little correspondence between left–right self-placement and one's position on current issues. In the following section we shall examine these hypotheses in the light of data from the Swiss electoral survey.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

A first glance at the data seems to confirm the notion that the left–right dimension may be less meaningful in Switzerland than in neighbouring countries. Our colleagues' studies of the French, German and Italian electorates indicate that from 75 to 80 per cent of the public in each of these countries are able to locate themselves on a left–right scale (Deutsch, Lindon and Weill, 1966; Barnes and Pierce, 1971; Klingemann, 1972; Converse and Pierce, 1973). Only 58 per cent of our Swiss sample are able to do so. In part, this contrast reflects the late entry of Swiss women into the electorate. Women were less likely to place themselves on the left–right scale than were men; but even when we control for sex, substantial cross-national differences remain.*

Whether or not an individual can place himself (or herself) on a left–right dimension is closely related to whether or not he or she has a sense of political party identification. And the fact that about 10 per cent more of our respondents have a party identification than can place themselves on a left–right scale might be taken as an indication that party identification precedes left–right self-placement; one cannot explain party preference *entirely* in terms of ideological stance. But clearly, this is not an adequate test of our hypotheses. Some people have party preferences that are not attributable to holding a left–right position; but the question remains whether other people *are* influenced by an underlying super-issue—and if so, to what extent? Another bit of evidence suggests that left–right self-placement may, indeed, reflect exposure to issues and a rational response to them: those who are high on political interest are a great deal more likely to place themselves on the left–right scale than those who rank low on political interest. The same is true of those who report that they 'often' discuss politics with friends and acquaintances, in comparison with those who rarely or never do so.** How well does a left–right dimension 'explain' party preferences among the Swiss electorate? And above all, how accurately does it reflect the major contemporary political issues? The data point to some rather surprising answers. Let us deal with the first question first.

* Women are significantly less likely to place themselves than men in all four countries. But Swiss *males* show a lower rate of left–right self-placement (72 per cent) than the rate for males and females *combined* in any of the other three countries.

** In theory, one might apply causal modelling to sort out this relationship. But it seems very likely that the relationship between left–right self-placement and party identification works in both directions; the same is probably true of the linkages between political interest and party identification and left–right self-placement. Until such time as we have longitudinal data, causal modelling would be of doubtful value.

Our respondents were asked to place themselves and each of the eleven Swiss parties on a scale ranging from 0 to 100; it was specified that 0 represented the extreme left and 100 the extreme right, with 50 being the mid-point.** Table 12.1 shows the mean placement of each party on this scale.

Table 12.1   Left–Right Placement of Parties and Self, Switzerland, 1972*
(Mean rating made by given group)

Party	Placement of given party by entire sample	Placement of given party by its supporters	Self-placement by given party's supporters
Communist	15 (925)	22 (23)	28 (21)
Socialist	34 (939)	36 (249)·	40 (257)
Alliance of Independents	50 (749)	51 (83)	52 (85)
Evang. Protestant	59 (642)	65 (17)	61 (14)
Christian Social	59 (726)	69 (55)	64 (60)
Republican Movement	63 (607)	63 (17)	55 (21)
National Action	64 (640)	62 (16)	60 (17)
Liberal	63 (767)	70 (59)	62 (64)
Christian Democrat	65 (828)	73 (150)	68 (155)
Peasants, Artisans, Bourgeois (UDC)	66 (818)	69 (74)	64 (81)
Radical	67 (923)	68 (196)	62 (207)

* The number of respondents making the ranking appears in parentheses.
The average voter placed himself slightly Right of center, at point 55.

A brief discussion of the Swiss parties may be helpful in interpreting this table. Four parties dominate Swiss politics at the federal level: the Socialists, the Radicals, the Christian Democrats and the party of Peasants, Artisans and Bourgeois (in descending order of size). Combined, they normally poll at least 80 per cent of the vote in national elections, and form a virtually permanent governing coalition. Like other socialist parties of Western Europe, the Swiss Socialists adopted a moderate programme in the late 1950s; as Table 12.1 indicates, both the Swiss electorate as a whole and Socialist supporters in particular see the Socialists as a party of the moderate Left—located about one-third of the distance from the mid-point to the extreme Left. Despite their name, the Radicals are the Establishment party *par excellence.* They were, for decades, *the* dominant national party. Together with the

* The precise wording of the question was: 'People often talk about the political parties of the left, the right or the centre. Here is a scale that goes from left to right. And here are cards with the names of parties. [The cards were presented one by one, in mixed order.] Would you place this card so that the arrow points to exactly where you would place this party on the scale. [Repeated for each party] . . . And where would you place *yourself* on this scale?'

Liberals, they have the closest links with the upper middle class and big business; and the Swiss electorate places the Radicals farther to the right than any other party—but in very close proximity to eight of the ten other parties. Among these other parties, the Christian Democrats are one of two predominately Catholic parties (the other being the Christian Social Party); there is also a small Protestant party. The Peasants, Artisans and Bourgeois are the smallest of the big four, representing a middle-class constituency with a somewhat lower social level than that of the Radicals or Liberals. The Alliance of Independents is the largest party outside the governing coalition; its role is one of mild opposition on economic issues.

The three remaining parties are small but theoretically important. Officially called the Labour Party, the Swiss Communists are more or less comparable to other Western European communist parties and are perceived by the Swiss electorate as situated on the extreme left. The two remaining parties—National Action and the Swiss Republican Movement—might be termed 'reactionary' in the purest sense. They reflect a nativist reaction against cosmopolitan influences that threaten to change traditional Swiss society. Nationalistic, ethnocentric and authoritarian in tone, they are reminiscent of Germany's National Democrat Party, Italy's Neo-Fascists, France's Poujadists or America's Wallace movement. As we shall see, these two parties might be described as genuinely ideological. While they take a coherent stand on a variety of topics, the most important issue underlying their appeal is the problem of foreign workers.

This problem pervades the economically more developed countries of Europe, but nowhere has it reached such an acute stage as in Switzerland. Germany and France have millions of culturally unassimilated and politically powerless foreign workers, and their numbers are growing; but they comprise a rather small minority of the total population. In 1970 foreign workers made up fully 22 per cent of Switzerland's resident labour force—without counting a substantial number of seasonal and daily migrant workers. These foreigners are concentrated at the bottom of the economic scale, performing virtually all of the unskilled and most of the semi-skilled labour in Switzerland. They have caused no unemployment (it is virtually non-existent in Switzerland). But their sheer numbers have given rise to widespread fears that they may engulf Swiss society.

The Swiss Republican Movement and the National Action Party combined have only 11 deputies out of 200 in the national legislature's lower house. But their stand on certain issues evokes widespread support. In 1970 they launched a campaign for a constitutional amendment that would have drastically reduced the number of foreign workers in Switzerland. Although opposed by the leadership of all major parties, the proposal was supported by 46 per cent of the voters in a national referendum. Informed observers would almost certainly locate these two parties on the extreme right. It is astonishing, therefore, to find that the average Swiss voter scarcely distinguishes between these and the other non-Marxist parties on a left/right scale. Indeed, as Table 12.1 indicates, the Republican Movement and National Action are place slightly to the *left* of the three leading bourgeois parties. Could this paradoxical ranking be due to the fact that the two traditionalist parties, being less widely known than the others, are simply misplaced through lack of information? Apparently not. For one thing, they are rather widely known despite their small size. For another, the *supporters* of a given party must have some information about it, even if no one else does. And the supporters of the Republican Movement and National Action *also*

place them slightly to the left of the Radicals, the PAB and the Christian Democrats.

This location of course represents the overall mean among all those who are able to locate the given parties. If we examine the distribution of rankings for each party in detail, we find another interesting phenomenon. A substantial portion of the Swiss electorate *does* place each of the two traditionalist parties on the extreme right: more than a third of those who rank them put them in the range 81–100 (See Table 12.2).

Table 12.2   Left–Right Placement of Swiss Parties by Swiss Electorate

Party	Extreme Left (0–19)	Left (20–39)	Centre (40–60)	Right (61–80)	Extreme Right (81–100)	Total	N*
Communists	69%	19	8	2	2	100	(925)
Socialists	19	39	34	6	2	100	(939)
Alliance of Independents	5	16	59	16	4	100	(749)
Christian Social	4	11	42	28	15	100	(726)
Evang. Protestant	3	7	48	32	9	100	(642)
Liberals	4	5	41	30	19	100	(767)
Christian Democrats	2	6	39	30	22	100	(828)
Peasants, Artisans, Bourgeois (UDC)	2	4	36	40	18	100	(818)
Radicals	3	4	37	31	25	100	(923)
Republican Movement	9	13	24	19	35	100	(607)
National Action	9	13	23	18	38	100	(640)
Respondent's placement of self:	5	10	53	21	10	100	(1,111)

* Numbers in parentheses indicate total number who were able to place the given party on a Left–Right scale. Thus, out of a total sample of 1917, 925 respondents (or 49 percent) were able to place the Communist Party; only 31 per cent could place the Republican Movement; but 58 per cent could place themselves on the scale.

But a surprisingly large portion of the electorate places these two parties on the left or extreme left! Only the Communists and Socialists have larger proportions of placements in the range 0–19. The Republican Movement and National Action are perceived as extremist parties, but it is not entirely clear to the electorate *which* extreme they represent.*

To grasp the peculiarity of this situation fully, one must examine the left–right placement of Swiss parties in comparative perspective. Table 12.3 shows how given

* Almost equal uncertainty exists among the *supporters* of these two parties about where they belong on the Left–Right dimension. Only a few place their party on the Left, but a clear majority place it towards the centre.

parties are located by the Italian, French, German and Swiss electorates.* There is an almost uncanny cross-cultural similarity in where the Communist and Socialist parties are placed in all four countries. Despite important cross-national differences in programmes and leadership, the Communist parties of Italy, France and Germany are

Table 12.3   Left–Right Placement of Selected Parties by Italian, French, German and Swiss Electorates
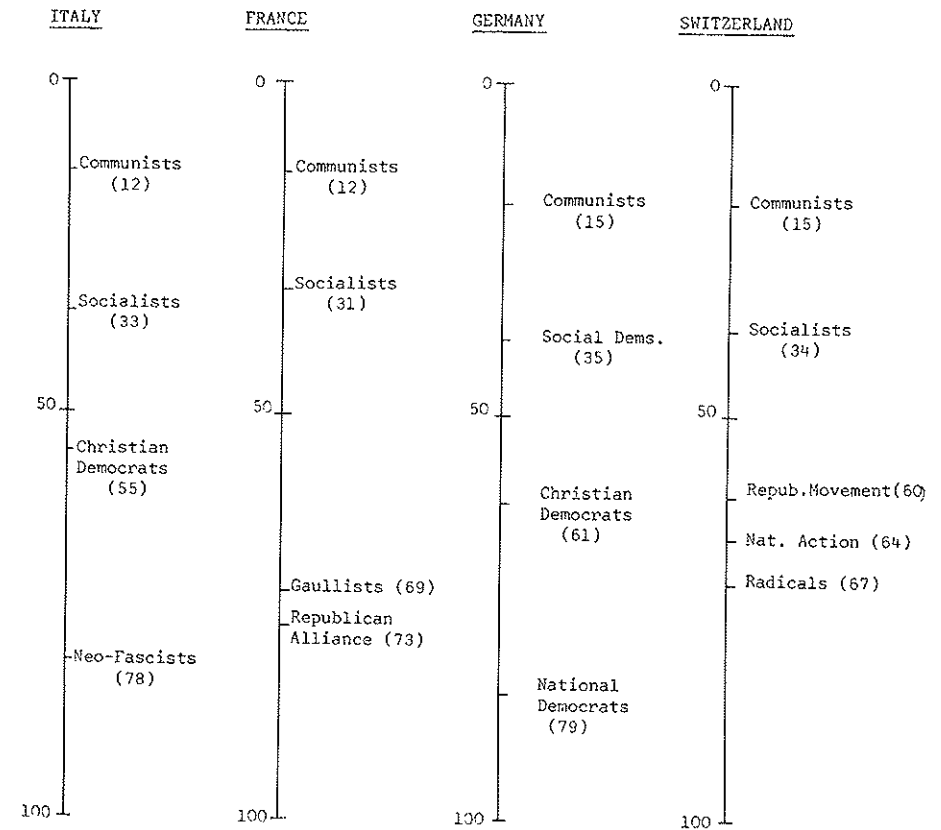
* The Italian and French data are adapted from Barnes and Pierce, (1971, p.647); the German data are adapted from Klingemann, (1972, p.96). The German sample was asked to place the parties on a scale that had ten locations; in the other three countries a scale was used that ran from 0 to 100. Thus, the lowest score that could be given to parties in the other three countries was 0. We must transform the German data for comparative purposes. The first step is simply to multiply the mean element of distortion: the lowest possible score is now equivalent to 10. To correct for this rightward shift, we have also subtracted 10 per cent from the mean score for each party: thus the mean for the Communist Party is reduced from 17 to 15. Unlike the other three samples, the German sample is not a national one, but is drawn from the *land* of Hesse. It is less comparable to the other three data sets—yet the cross-national similarities are striking. The Italian, French and German surveys were carried out in 1967, 1968 and 1970, respectively. At the time of the Italian survey the two larger socialist parties were merged; Table 12.3 shows the placement given to this combined party which, of course, has since broken up into its two constituent elements.

placed within a few points of where the Swiss Communist Party is located; the same is true of the Socialist parties. The leading non-Marxist parties are relatively heterogeneous, but even among them we find a certain uniformity of placement: they are all situated within the range from 5 (the Italian Christian Democrats) to 69 (the Gaullists). The Swiss Radicals fall near the right end of this range (at 67). The Swiss Christian Democrats and PAB, as we have seen, have virtually the same location as the Radicals. Each of the other three countries has one or more parties that are placed near the extreme right by a consensus of the electorate: in Italy, the neo-Fascists; in France, the Republican Alliance and in Germany, the National Democrats.

In the face of this remarkable cross-national uniformity of party placement it is all the more astonishing to find that there is no consensus among the Swiss electorate about the location of the Republican Movement and National Action: their mean location falls squarely in the middle of the other non-Marxist parties. But this placement results from averaging together two sets of widely diverging perceptions. Examined more closely, the evidence indicates that it occurs *not* because the two traditionalist parties are perceived as similar to the others, but because the prevailing notion of left and right gives no clear orientation concerning their location.

To illustrate this fact, let us refer to Table 12.4 which shows the correlations between self-placement on the left–right scale and preference rankings for eleven Swiss parties.* As this table indicates, left–right self-placement is an excellent predictor of preferences toward the Socialists and Communists and a good predictor of preferences toward most other parties—except that there is virtually no correlation whatever between one's location on the left–right scale and whether one likes or dislikes National Action or the Swiss Republican Movement. Table 12.4 is based on the perceptions of a substantial share of the Swiss electorate, skewed toward the better informed and those most likely to vote. More than 800 respondents ranked each of the two traditionalist parties (in other words, a substantially larger share of the electorate was able to indicate a positive or negative *preference* toward these parties than could place them on the left–right dimension).

In answer to our first question, it seems that the familiar left–right dimension is rather effective in 'explaining' preferences among most parties but virtually meaningless in relation to two 'extreme right' parties; one suspects that Swiss politics must involve at least one additional dimension.

Dimensional analysis of party preference rankings reveals that at least *three* dimensions are needed to provide a satisfactory solution. Interestingly enough, we obtain this same result when we perform dimensional analyses of left–right party

* The question about party preferences was worded as follows: 'Here is a deck of cards bearing the names of parties. Could you place the cards on this scale in the following manner: place the party that you like the most in the first box, and the one you like the least in the eleventh box; now would you please place the party which would be your second choice in the second box, and the party that would be your next-to-last choice in the tenth box . . .' The interviewer continued until the respondent had ranked all eleven parties. Not everyone was able to place all of the parties, of course. The two largest parties (the Socialists and Radicals) were ranked by more than 1,000 respondents each, out of a total of 1,917. The Swiss Republican Movement and National Action were ranked by 834 and 838 respondents respectively. Being new and relatively small, the two latter parties were ranked by comparatively few respondents, although they were by no means invisible: the Alliance of Independents was ranked by about the same number of respondents, while three other parties (the Liberals, Christian Social and Evangelical Protestant Parties) were ranked by a *smaller* number of respondents.

Table 12.4   Correlation Between Self-Placement on Left–Right Scale And Party Preference

(Positive correlation indicates that those placing selves on Left give high preference)

Party	Correlation with Left self-placement
Socialists	+.421
Communists	+.417
Alliance of Indpendents	+.150
Republican Movement	.000
National Action	-.040
Liberals	-.108
Christian Social	-.173
Evangelical Protestant	-.187
Radicals	-.197
Christian Democrats	-.252
Peasants, Artisans, Bourgeois	-.275

placement: this is surprising, to say the least, because the concept is supposedly uni-dimensional by its very nature. But the Swiss electorate differentiates between the Swiss political parties along three main dimensions, even when we frame the question in terms of left and right.

A clear three-dimensional structure emerges when we analyse party preference-rankings by themselves. But the pattern becomes much more meaningful when we include electors' attitudes toward major political issues and self-placement on the left–right scale in our analysis. Table 12.5 shows the results of a factor analysis of these variables. The first factor that emerges is, unmistakably, the conventional left–right dimension. One reason why we may be sure that this is what the dimension taps is the fact that self-placement on the left–right scale has a very high loading on this factor. But the individual's preference rankings among the various parties provide additional confirmation: support for the Communists or Socialists has strong positive loadings on this factor; support for the Christian Democrats, Radicals, PAB and most other parties has negative loadings. The striking exceptions are National Action and the Swiss Republican Movement. Positive or negative feelings towards these two parties are strongly correlated with the *second* factor. And, surprisingly as it may seem, attitudes towards most of the important questions of contemporary Swiss politics load on this dimension rather than the first factor.

There are some notable exceptions. Attitudes towards income distribution and the housing problem have their strongest loadings on the first (left–right) factor. Those who feel that the present distribution of income in Switzerland is inequitable, and those who favour a public (rather than private) solution to the housing problem, tend to place themselves at the left end of the left–right scale and are likely to favour the Socialists or Communists rather than the Radicals, Christian Democrats or most other

Table 12.5   Party Preferences, Left–Right Self-Placement And Issue Preferences Among Swiss Electorate (Principle Axes Factor Analysis: All loadings above .240 are shown)

	1. Left/ Right	2. Traditional/ Cosmopolitan	3. Religious/ Secular
Places self on Left	.597		
Swiss Political system is good	-.397		
For more vigourous police intervention		.364	
Allow foreign workers to enter freely		-.411	
Switzerland should enter Common Market		-.458	
Switzerland should join United Nations		-.368	
Conscientious objectors should be obliged to serve		.295	
Women should play same political role as men		-.335	
Private enterprise should solve housing problem	-.259		
Swiss income distribution is fair	-.292		
Retain ban on Jesuit activities		.243	.270
Favourable to Alliance of Independents			
" " Peasants, Artisans, Bourgeois	-.399		
" " Christian Democrats	-.430		-.586
" " Communist Party	.584		
" " Christian Social Party	-.311		-.601
" " Evangelical Protestants	.272		
" " Liberal Party	-.304		.405
" " Radical Party	-.345		.513
" " Socialist Party	.509		
" " National Action		.681	
" " Republican Movement		.667	
TOTAL VARIANCE CONTRIBUTION:	10.4%	9.4%	6.0%

non-Marxist parties.* Response to another question is closely linked with the first dimension: we asked whether the respondent felt that the Swiss political system was on the whole very good, good, passable, bad or very bad. Those who placed themselves on the left were relatively likely to give neutral or negative responses.

A left–right dimension does exist, and an individual's stand on socioeconomic issues is linked with this dimension. But electors' positions on the other, more recent, major political issues are virtually unrelated to this classic left–right dimension. This scarcely conforms to the conventional concept of left and right, but it is logical in the context of contemporary Swiss politics. For Switzerland must be something of a limiting case in the degree to which major issues can be raised, debated and decided

* The exact wording of these questions was: 'If you compare what you earn with what other groups earn in this country, would you say that the distribution of income in Switzerland is fair or unfair?' and: 'In your opinion, how should the housing problem be solved—mainly by private enterprise, mainly by the government, or by both combined?'

(through national referenda) without the major political parties taking opposing sides. In each of the past several years, major issues *have* broken the former calm of Swiss politics. In 1970 the Schwarzenbach Initiative led to a national controversy about the role of foreign workers. If this constitutional amendment had passed (as it nearly did) it would have had an immense impace on the Swiss economy and society.** In 1971, after previous unsuccessful attempts, women's suffrage was finally adopted by a national referendum)—doubling the size of the Swiss electorate overnight. In 1972 another referendum was held: this time the sensitive topic of Swiss neutrality was in question. Switzerland had not even joined the UN for fear that it might compromise her neutrality. Finally, in 1972 the electorate voted to end a constitutional ban on the Jesuits which dates back to a Catholic separatist movement and a brief civil war in 1847.† While this amendment will probably have a little practical impact it has great symbolic importance, removing from the Constitution the implication that the Catholic Church was potentially subversive. These were major issues, and they give rise to a major dimension of political cleavage: the second factor, which taps response to these issues, explains nearly as much variance in our factor analysis as does the left–right dimension. But what does the cleavage imply?

Normally one assumes that the Establishment represents conservatism. But in each of the foregoing cases, the élites of all major parties endorsed the 'progressive' stand on the given issue—that is, *against* the Schwarzenbach Initiative and *for* the other three. Despite this endorsement, large portions of the electorate voted against the Establishment in each of these referenda. Only the two small traditionalist parties offered 'a choice, not an echo—except for the Communist Party, which joined them in opposition to the Common Market treaty. The second factor, then, might be viewed as a dimension that pits a relatively cosmopolitan and change-oriented Establishment against a traditionalism that is represented in Parliament only by National Action and the Swiss Republican Movement. Preferences among the major parties are only faintly related to this dimension.

In view of the widespread support that the traditionalist position evokes on certain major issues, the traditionalist parties might appear to draw surprisingly little support. But as we have seen, these parties are opposed by a relatively monolithic consensus among the established élites and the public tends to perceive them as extremist. Moreover, general satisfaction with the Swiss political system is linked with the *first* more than with the second factor. The first factor, we have noted, taps the classic issues of government intervention in the economy but not the more salient recent issues. The bulk of the Swiss electorate seems to judge whether the political system is basically good or bad primarily on the basis of conventional economic issues. And

** The public's verdict in 1971 did not lay this issue to rest. Another referendum on the expulsion of foreigners was held in 1974; this time it was rejected by nearly 70 per cent of those voting. Diminished support for the proposal was not simply due to a decline in traditionalist sentiment: the traditionalist movement was split in 1974, with Schwarzenbach himself opposing the referendum as 'too much, too soon'.

† Attitudes toward the Jesuits have a relatively weak loading on the second factor because this item is also drawn into the religious–secular factor. But there was a clear tendency for supporters of the traditionalist parties to resist raising the restrictions on the Jesuits: among those expressing an opinion, 43 per cent of those who supported National Action or the Republican Movement opposed ending the ban, as compared with 21 per cent of our samples as a whole.

Switzerland is, second only to Sweden, the most prosperous country in Europe: an overwhelming majority of our respondents rated the Swiss political system favourably. Finally, much of the Swiss electorate is linked with the various Establishment parties by deep-rooted political traditions. A comparison of the vote in elections and in referenda provides a rough idea of the importance of such political party loyalties. In elections one votes for a given party; in referenda one is more likely to vote according to one's personal opinions. And the traditionalist vote is often eight or nine times as large in referenda as in elections to the federal Parliament. Paradoxically, a conservative electoral behaviour on the part of the Swiss electorate may facilitate the attainment of change by established political élites.

The Swiss elector's religious outlook is an important basis of affiliation with the Establishment parties; and it gives rise to the third principal dimension of Swiss political cleavage. This third factor (labelled 'religious-secular') pits the supporters of the two main Catholic parties against the traditionally secular Radicals and Liberals. The only current issue linked with this dimension concerns the ban on Jesuit activities (which is also linked with the second dimension to a lesser extent). The religious-secular dimension is quantitatively less important than the other two, but it is essential to an adequate description of Swiss politics.

The Catholic parties were once parties of emancipation, struggling against a federal government dominated by the anti-clerical Radicals. With the rise of a militant labour movement, the two sides went into permanent alliance shortly after the first World War, but the heritage of this bygone conflict lives on in the party preferences reflected by our third dimension. Today, whether one identifies with the religious or the secular parties, one is linked to a consensual Establishment that took a united stand on the Jesuit referendum, as on other important matters. The most important practical consequence may be the fact that those who feel affiliated with the Catholic parties (or other established parties) are not available for recruitment to new parties such as National Action or the Republican Movement. The traditionalist parties draw disproportionate support from those who lack religious ties: only 21 per cent of their sympathizers attend church weekly or nearly every week; more than a third of our other respondents do. The religious-secular dimension is important. But it is sufficiently straightforward to seem to require little further discussion.

In addition to factor analysis, we performed multi-dimensional scaling and smallest-space analysis of the items just discussed (Kruskal, 1964a and 1964b; Lingoes, 1964; Guttman, 1968). The various forms of dimensional analysis point to virtually identical conclusions: a three-dimensional solution is optimal, and the three dimensions are readily interpretable as a conventional left-right dimension, a cosmopolitan-traditional dimension and a religious-secular dimension. Figure 12.1 depicts the first two dimensions in a smallest-space analysis. It summarizes the structure of responses in an intuitively meaningful way: the stronger the positive correlation between any two items, the closer together they appear in the two-dimensional space. Thus, support for the Communists and Socialists and self-placement on the left are closely correlated, and these three items cluster together at the left end of the horizontal (or left-right) axis. Support for the Radicals, Christian Democrats and Peasants, Artisans and Bourgeois falls at the opposite end of the horizontal axis (but at different levels on the vertical axis, the PAB being more traditional than the other parties). We suggested earlier that the Radicals are the Establishment party *par excellence*. This seems borne out by the fact that support for

them is closely linked with the opinion that the Swiss political system is good: in terms of the left-right axis, the Radicals are clearly a party of the right. But in relation to the vertical axis, the radical electorate is among the least traditionalist. Support for the Republican Movement and National Action falls at one extreme on the vertical axis—virtually at the maximum possible distance from support for free entry of foreign workers. This vertical dimension reflects a coherent structure of attitudes—an ideology, one might say—centring on a concern for maintaining traditional Swiss social patterns. Opposition to the entry of foreign workers goes together with opposition to affiliation with the Common Market, permitting women to participate in politics, permitting conscientious objectors to escape military service or lifting the ban on Jesuit activities.
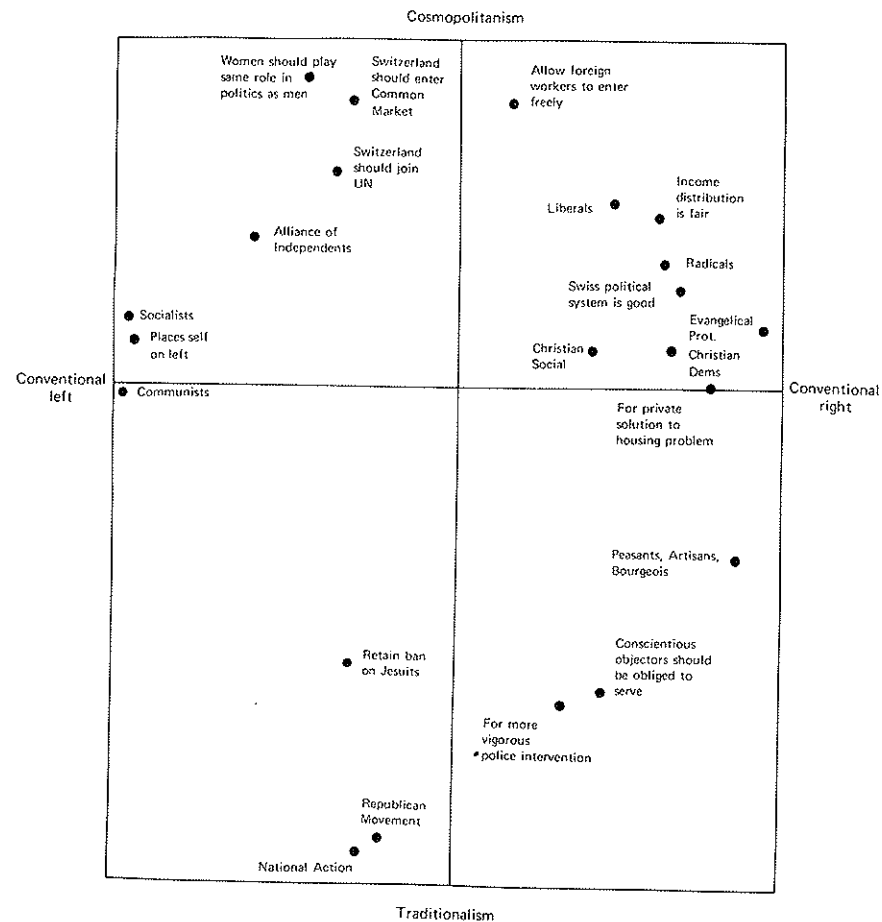

Figure 12.1   Smallest-space analysis: party preferences, left-right self-placement and issue preferences among the Swiss electorate, 1972 (coefficient of alienation=0.124)

This dimension has a flavour reminiscent of authoritarian ethnocentrism—except that the 'authoritarians' do *not* support the authorities. The traditionalist position is in clear opposition to the Establishment's stand on each of these key issues; the

traditionalists seem to see the cosmopolitan élite as all too ready to let the Swiss social fabric disintegrate.*

Early in this chapter we noted the astonishing fact that the parties one would normally regard as the extreme right were actually placed to the left of the leading non-Marxist parties on a left–right scale. The traditionalist parties do indeed represent the conservative extreme on several of the most salient current issues, but this fact has little impact on left–right placement. For the Swiss electorate, the terms 'left' and 'right' still refer primarily to a conventional dimension relating mainly to classic economic issues. And as Figure 12.1 shows, the traditionalist parties *are* located to the left of the dominant non-Marxist parties on this conventional left–right dimension.

Inglehart (1971) has presented evidence that the basic values of Western publics are changing in a manner that may gradually tend to shift the axis of political conflict from economic issues to non-economic issues. The items that he used to measure an individual's value priorities were included in our survey. While self-placement on the left–right scale provides a good predictor of preferences among the established parties, value type is a relatively weak predictor. But conversely, an individual's value type is the stronger predictor of preferences toward the traditionalist parties and the issues that load on this second dimension.** Conceivably, such life-style issues may play an increasingly important role in future Swiss politics. If so, attitudes toward these issues might become assimilated into a new and broader left–right dimension—as seems to have happened with the religious–secular dimension, to a certain extent. For the time being, cultural change issues and the left–right dimension are virtually independent in Switzerland.

CONCLUSION

The left–right continuum has little relationship to the issues that have been most controversial in recent Swiss politics. It 'explains' the political party preferences of this public rather well (apart from support for the two traditionalist parties): the Swiss electorate's preferences are consistent with self-placement on the left–right scale. But these preferences themselves seem to be largely conventional—the result of inherited party loyalties and religious affiliations. Those who lack such loyalties have little sense of where they belong in terms of left and right. In so far as issues *are* involved, the left–right dimension relates mainly to economic issues—which, almost certainly, were the central question a generation ago and might again occupy the centre of the

---

* The correlations between left–right self-placement and support for the National Action Party and the Swiss Republican Movement, respectively, are −0.040 and 0.000 (as shown in Table 12.4). The respective correlations with value type are 0.107 and 0.134—in other words, the 'post-bourgeois' type is significantly less likely to give a favourable rating to these groups than are the 'acquisitives'.

** The traditionalists not only oppose the Establishment position, but perceive the Establishment parties as ill-equipped to handle these questions. Our respondents were asked which party was most capable of handling various problems, including equal rights for women, Swiss entry into the Common Market and the influx of foreigners. Sympathizers of National Action and the Republican Movement gave relatively low capability ratings to the Establishment parites on these issues. Our sample as a whole gave top ratings to either the Socialists or Radicals in regard to most problems. But in regard to foreign influx, confidence in the Establishment was amazingly low: despite their small number of supporters, National Action and the Republican Movement were the two parties most likely to be judged capable of handling this problem by our sample *as a whole*.

stage in the near future. The left–right dimension is complemented by a weaker but still significant religious–secular dimension; together, these two continua reflect the major cleavages of industrial society. But a third dimension also exists, and many of the most pressing contemporary political issues relate to it, rather than to either of the other two dimensions. Like the United States of the 1950s, Switzerland clearly does not have the 'strong ideological focus' described by Stokes.

We emphasize that these findings apply to the *Swiss* public. For Swiss institutions facilitate the existence of a remarkable degree of independence between parties and issues. And the Swiss public is ideologically less polarized than the French, Italian or German publics; indeed, there seems to be a weaker relationship between issue preferences and the left–right dimension in Switzerland than in most other Western countries (Inglehart and Klingemann, Chapter 13 below). For the Swiss, the long-established left–right dimension is largely unrelated to preferences on non-economic issues—and consequently, to how one voted in crucial recent referenda.

If non-economic issues remain central, the major parties will be faced with a difficult choice. As one alternative they may attempt to maintain consensual government based on the present broad Establishment coalition—in which case the terms left and right would tend to become simply conventional (and increasingly outdated) labels. This strategy might minimize overt political conflict; but it would also tend to minimize the significance of public influence through the electoral process. This tendency is already well advanced, as is suggested by the fact that the Swiss public shows one of the world's lowest rates of participation in national elections, with a turnout generally below even the American rate. In the Swiss case, this problem is mitigated somewhat by the existence of referenda. As another alternative, the leading parties might begin to offer a variety of options along the second of our three dimensions.

On general principles, the latter alternative would seem more compatible with the norms of participatory democracy. Yet there are indications that a loosening up of the Swiss Establishment's political cartel would give greater weight to traditionalist opinion. The existence of a political cartel may tend to dampen the advocacy of social change; but under present conditions its most important consequence may be that it hinders the development of a reactionary movement—which might otherwise have considerable potential for growth.

REFERENCES

Barnes, Samuel (1971), 'Left, Right and the Italian Voter', *Comparative Political Studies*, 4, 157–75.

Barnes, Samuel, and Roy Pierce (1971), 'Public Opinion and Political Preferences in France and Italy', *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 15, 643–60.

Converse, Philip E. (1966), 'The Problem of Party Distances in Models of Voting Change', in M. Kent Jennings and L. Harmon Ziegler (eds.), *The Electoral Process*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

Converse, Philip, and Roy Pierce (1973), 'Basic Cleavages in French Politics and the Disorders of May and June, 1968', in Richard Rose (ed.), *Political Behavior in Western Societies*, Wiley, New York.

Deutsch, Emeric, Denis Lindon and Pierre Weill (1966), *Les Familles Politiques d'aujourd'hui en France*, Minuit, Paris.

Downs, Anthony (1957), *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Harper and Row, New York.

Guttman, Louis (1968), 'A General Nonmetric Technique for Finding the Smallest Coordinate Space for a Configuration of Points', *Psychometrika*, 33, 469–506.

Inglehart, Ronald (1971), 'The Silent Revolution in Europe: Intergenerational Change in Post-Industrial Societies', *American Political Science Review*, 65, 991–1017.

Klingemann, Hans D. (1972), 'Testing the Left–Right Continuum on a Sample of German Voters', *Comparative Political Studies*, 5, 93–105.

Kruskal, J. B. (1964a), 'Multidimensional Scaling by Optimizing Goodness of Fit to a Nonmetric Hypothesis', *Psychometrika*, 29, 1–27.

Kruskal, J. B. (1964b), 'Non-Metric Multidimensional Scaling: A Numerical Method', *Psychometrika*, 29, 115–129.

Lingoes, James C. (1964), 'An IBM 7090 Program for Guttman †Lingoes Smallest Space Analysis', *Behavioral Science*, 10.

Miller, Arthur, Warren E. Miller, Alden S. Raine and Thad A. Brown (1976), 'A Majority Party in Disarray: Policy Voting in the 1972 Election', *American Political Science Review*, 70.

Pomper, Gerald M. (1972), 'From Confusion to Clarity: Issues and American Voters, 1956–1968', *American Political Science Review*, 66, 415–28.

Steiner, Jurg (1973), *Amicable Agreement versus Majority Rule: Conflict Resolution in Switzerland*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Stokes, Donald E. (1966), 'Spatial Models of Party Competition', in Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes (eds.), *Elections and the Political Order*, Wiley, New York.