

# **The Political Right in Postindustrial Democracies**

## **A Comparative Sketch**

**Herbert Kitschelt**

**Department of Political Science**

**Duke University**

**Coloquio internacional**

**“¿Cambio o continuidad de las derechas?”**

**Trayectorias partidarias en Europa y las Américas”**

**Santiago de Chile, 4-5 de noviembre de 2008**

# Overview

- 1. Is there a parsimonious way to characterize the “right”?**
- 2. Bottom-up Demand Side Analysis: What creates preferences for “Right-Wing” politics?**
- 3. Top-down Supply Side Analysis: How do Politicians Service right-wing Preferences? Options in Postindustrial Democracies.**
- 4. Right-Wing Options across Regions of the World: Comparison to Post-Communist Eastern Europe and Latin America**

# 1. Left-Right Semantics

Historically variable meaning of left and right, and configurations of meaning, but underlying dimensions of meaning:

- (1) ***“group” boundaries and collective identities:*** exclusionary-particularistic (and communitarian) or inclusionary-universalistic conception of citizenship?
- (2) ***“grid” norms of appropriate conduct:*** collectively given/compulsory norms and standards or individually or collectively chosen and alterable standards (“democray”)?
- (3) ***“greed” interests to appropriate scarce material resources:*** standards of fairness based on free, spontaneous market exchange and inviolability of property or based on egalitarian standards of equal entitlement and redistribution from haves to have nots?

## 2.1. (Re)distributive Preferences

TRAIT	GROUP	GRID	GREED
INCOME	?	?	CAPITAL OWNERSHIP + HIGH INCOME = "RIGHT"
SECTOR	?	?	FOR PROFIT + COMPETITION EXPOSED = "RIGHT"
ASSET SPECIFICITY	SCARCE, HIGH-PRICED ASSET → CLOSURE?	?	ASSET SPECIFICITY WITH COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE → RIGHT
EDUCATION	LOW SKILL → RIGHT, EXCLUSIONARY	LOW SKILL → AUTHORITARIAN RIGHT	LOW SKILL → REDISTRIBUTIVE LEFT

## 2.2. Grid/Group Preferences

TRAIT	GROUP	GRID	GREED
POSITION OF AUTHORITY	HIGHER UPS FOR MORE EXCLUSION?	?	HIGHER POSITION → MORE RIGHT
WORK TECHNOLOGY	SIMPLE, CERTAIN, MONOLOGICAL → RIGHT	SIMPLE, CERTAIN, MONOLOGICAL → RIGHT	?
GENDER	?	CONTINGENT: IF WOMEN IN FAMILY + LABOR MARKETS → MORE LEFT	CONTINGENT: IF WOMEN IN FAMILY + LABOR MARKETS: → MORE LEFT
RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS	CONTINGENT	CONTINGENT, RIGHT?	CONTINGENT
ECONOMIC ASSOCIATIONS	?	?	LABOR UNIONS → LEFT POLITICS

## *Societal Preference Profiles*

**Non-random distribution of preference types across society → in the long-run political economy and public policy affect population distribution profiles;**

*Encompassing redistributive welfare state?*

- (1) strong *economic leftist* support; (protection from market)
- (2) strong *libertarian left* (publicly employed, high education, social service professionals with preponderance of women);
- (3) weak *authoritarian left* (manual workers vote on distributive economic issues);

# 3. From Preferences to Partisan Alignments

## 3.1. Assumptions about Party Strategy

- **VOTERS: spatial voting, with behavioral constraints:**
  - (1) *non-policy preferences*: party ID, politicians' charisma and competence, ascriptive attributes, selective incentives/clientelism;
  - (2) *Policy preferences*: valence, direction, position → *lexicographic ordering of choices*;
- **POLITICIANS: vote and office maximization:**
  - (1) *Simplification of the issue space*;
  - (2) *Limits of Strategic Movement Due to Reputational Effects and Voters' Discounting of New Positions* (“sincere” and “credible” commitments)

## 3.2. Configurations of Party Alternatives

	Type of Welfare State?	Party System Polarization on “greed”?	Thresholds to Entry of New Parties?	POSITIONING AND DIFFERENTIATION OF THE PARTISAN RIGHT * grid/group/greed?
<b>“NORTHERN” POLITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•encompassing</li> <li>• redistributive</li> </ul>	Medium to high	low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•likely: separate parties serving different right-wing constituencies (but Sweden?)</li> </ul>
<b>“CONTINENTAL” POLITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•encompassing</li> <li>• less redistributive</li> </ul>	Low to very low	Low to medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•likely: separate parties serving liberal, moderate and radical right (partial outlier: Germany?)</li> </ul>
<b>“ANGLO-SAXON” POLITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Residual</li> <li>• less redistributive</li> </ul>	Medium to high	high	* likely: little partisan differentiation, but intra-party conflict

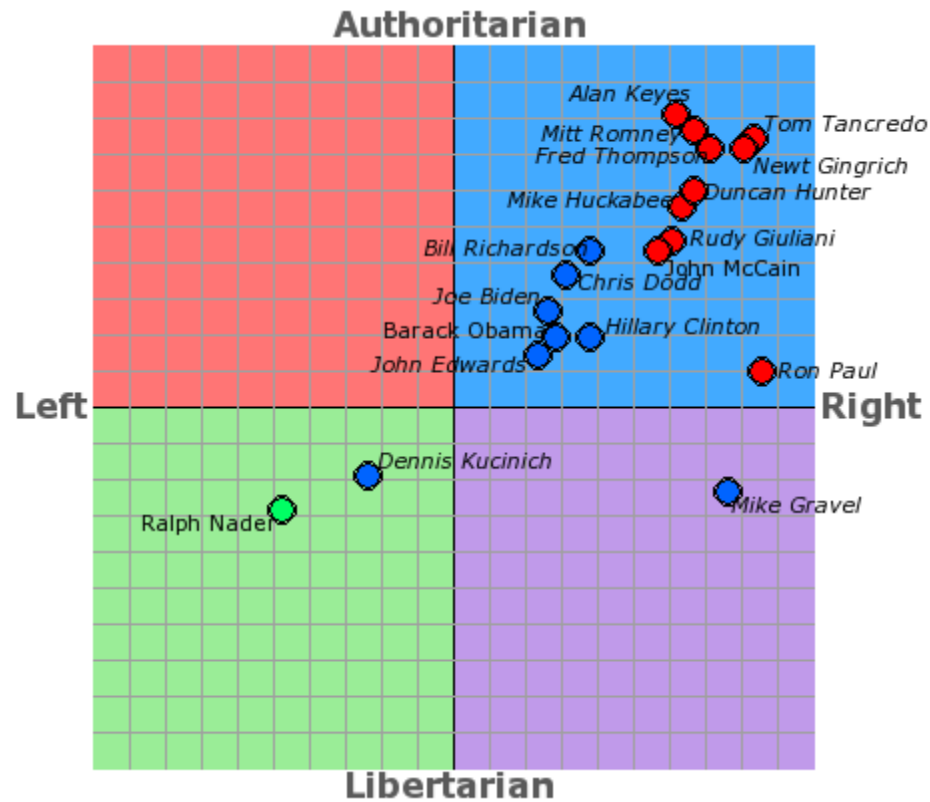


# *Strategic Options in the United States*

- The United States as a Constitutive Member of the “Anglo-Saxon” Group: weak welfare state, strong economic interest polarization, high thresholds to entry of new challenger
- Unique features of the United States that fuel Grid-Group Conflicts and Express them Inside Major Parties:
  - (1) Strong religious affiliation, in interaction with a weak welfare state; (religion  $\leftrightarrow$  welfare state)
  - (2) Race and politics (lower class whites, authoritarianism and racism);
  - (3) Presidentialism and relative disjointed party system, even in an era of “contingent partisan government”

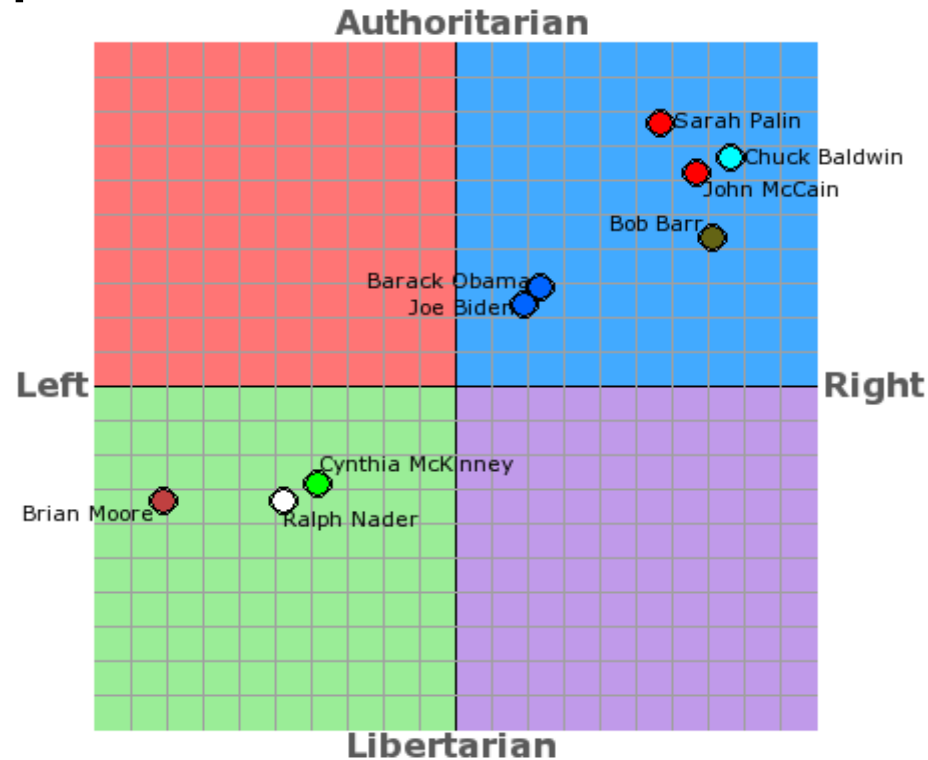
# 2008 primaries: grid/group and greed candidate positions

Political compass:



# *2008 final campaign: grid/group and greed candidate positions*

## Political Compass 2008:



# *U.S. Voter Choice and Party Strategy*

## 1. Voters:

1.1. *greed voting*: less-well off prefer the Democrats, if sufficient inter-party difference on the greed dimension (salience of distributive politics in the financial crisis)

1.2. *grid/group voting*: over-rides greed voting when there is little inter-party difference; also: baseline of religion fundamentalism and white racism;

## 2. Long-term Party strategies:

2.1. *Democrats* lost the Southern white voters, as the party became *integrationist in terms of group/race and culturally libertarian in terms of grid positions*;  
*economic “greed” position*: move to the center diluted affiliation with less educated;  
→ new “COASTAL” strategy of combining postindustrial service middle strata with ethnic minorities;

2.2. *Republicans* gained the South by *resisting libertarian cultural grid/group agenda*, but antagonized large swaths of the middle strata (postindustrial client-interactive, cultural symbol producing professionals + growing minorities);  
→ reproduction of mirror image of the post-Civil War Democratic party: hegemonic in the economically weak Deep South, minority in the north and the West Coast regions

## *4. Comparative Perspective on Right-Wing Strategies*

*Here only briefest of overviews of the argument in part 4 of the paper;*

*General observation:*

- (1) Little libertarian left and authoritarian right without postindustrial economies + welfare states;*
- (2) Strong presumption that many democracies are not programmatic/issue-oriented at all, but rely more on charismatic politicians and clientelistic inducements*

*(predictors: poverty, former oligarchical parties as democratic contenders, import-substituting industrialization/state governance in the political economy)*

# *Differentiation within Latin America and Post-Communist Eastern Europe*

## *4.1. Eastern Europe*

*KEY: displacement of the old communists? Stable democracy? Market liberalism? ...but limited inequality + comprehensive welfare state (all highly correlated)*

- A. FULL DISPLACEMENT: left-right divide with convergence on economic issues, but center-right embraces exclusionary and authoritarian group/grid positions, as citizens disaffected by welfare state cut-backs; (Czech, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, possibly Croatia, Baltic Republics)*
  
- B. NO FULL DISPLACEMENT OF THE FORMER COMMUNISTS: red-brown and brown-brown Right, combining authoritarian and exclusionary grid/group positions with anti-market populism; (Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, Russia)*

## ***4.2. Latin America***

***KEY: early economic development, displacement of the rural oligarchy by an urban business-wage worker coalition, construction of a modicum of a welfare state+ISI policy; frequent/lasting episodes of democratic competition and party construction since the 1940s at the latest;  
→ more market liberalism since 1980, better economic performance;***

### ***A. COUNTRIES DISPLAYING MOST OF THESE FEATURES:***

***→ partisan left-right divide over “greed” distributive-economic issues, pitting a moderate center-left and against a center-right (albeit with some party system reorganization); subordinate religions “grid” divide; no regime “grid” divide; little group divides; (Chile, Costa Rica, Uruguay, possibly Argentina)***

### ***B. COUNTRIES WITH SOME OF THESE FEATURES: movement toward programmatic party competition centered around economic distributive issues, but less crystallized (Mexico, also Brazil, possibly Colombia)***

## ***4.2. Latin America (continued)***

### ***C. COUNTRIES WITH FEW FEATURES POINTING TOWARD PROGRAMMATIC PARTY COMPETITION:***

- \* backdrop of clientelistic and personalistic politics, whenever democratic competition; urban social coalition never displaced the landed oligarchies;**
- \* in most instances, deep ethnocultural divide reinforcing economic inequality; movements for agrarian redistribution;**
- \* natural resource curse rentier systems;**

**➔ since the 1980s, inconsistent market liberalization, very bad economic performance**

**HERE: recent “hyper-polarization” around populist-socialist new left .... But how stable? Will it give way to a new clientelistic (and authoritarian) political regime?**



## 5. Conclusion

- \* *No effort here to explain the victory or defeat of individual parties but the alignments of parties in a left-right space and the resulting strategic options;*
- (1) *To understand the left-right options in a polity, one needs to examine “sociological” and “political economic” constituent mechanisms of preference formation (“bottom up” approach)*
- (2) *These sociological mechanisms by themselves do not fully account for party strategy, but must be combined with a “top down” analysis of the trajectory of party competition and existing partisan alternatives in a polity;*
- (3) *Left-right strategic appeals and alternatives vary within and across regions; Geographical “region” by itself is not a good analytical criterion to explain the kinds of politics, i.e. strategic games played among parties, prevailing in any particular polity;*