

The Status of the International Comparative Political Parties Project

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by Kenneth Janda

For more than ten years, I have been pursuing the goal of an empirically-based analysis of political parties across the world. I became taken by the idea when teaching the undergraduate parties course for the first time in 1962. I believed that one could construct a set of coding categories for the prominent variables in party theory and then extract from library sources the information necessary to score parties in different countries on those variables for the purpose of testing theory. After experimenting with this idea in my classes and adapting some information processing technology to my problem, I sought and obtained funds from the National Science Foundation in late 1966 for my International Comparative Political Parties Project. My NSF support ended in 1971 before the project was finished, but I am pleased to report that the data collection phase has finally ended and that the data will soon be available for distribution through the Inter-University Consortium for Political Research.

The ICPP data set pertains to 155 political parties operating in 52 countries roughly from 1950 to 1962, with the exact time period adjusted somewhat for particular countries. The countries constitute a stratified sample of five countries selected at random from each of ten cultural-geographic areas of the world, with the U.S. and U.K. being added when they were not drawn in the sample. Parties within each country were selected for study upon meeting some minimum levels of strength and stability. For legal parties, we required that they hold at least five per cent of the seats in the lower house of the legislature during two sessions in our time period. For illegal parties, criteria of strength were harder to apply, but we sought evidence of support by ten per cent of the population for five years during our time period.

Despite its concern with party politics during the basic thirteen year period from 1950 to 1962, the ICPP Project is essentially cross-sectional rather than longitudinal in design. We try to score the parties for their predominant scores during this time slice, producing a thirteen year time exposure rather than a snapshot picture. But we do allow for recording some movement during our period by coding the parties separately for the first and second parts of the period. Usually this division was made between 1956 and 1957, but for some countries the time period was adjusted to conform to major political developments within the country. Thus for France, our break is between 1957 and 1958 to correspond to the Fourth and Fifth Republics. A listing of all fifty-two countries in our project, the number of parties selected for study from each country, and the corresponding time periods is given in Table 1.

TABLE 2: Coverage of the ICPP Project: Areas, Countries,
Number of Political Parties, and Time Periods

Cultural-Geographical Area	Country	Parties	1st Part	2nd Part
0- Anglo-American	United States	2	1950-56	1957-62
	United Kingdom	2	1950-56	1957-62
	Australia	3	1950-56	1957-62
	New Zealand	2	1950-56	1957-62
	Ireland	3	1950-56	1957-62
	Rhodesian Federation	4	1953-57	1958-63
	India	2	1950-56	1957-62
1- West Central Europe	Austria	3	1950-56	1956-62
	France	5	1950-57	1958-62
	West Germany	3	1950-56	1957-62
	Greece	4	1950-56	1957-62
	Portugal	1	1950-56	1957-62
2- Scandinavia and Benelux	Denmark	4	1950-56	1957-62
	Iceland	4	1950-56	1957-62
	Sweden	4	1950-56	1957-62
	The Netherlands	6	1950-56	1957-62
	Luxembourg	4	1950-56	1957-62
3- South America	Ecuador	5	1950-56	1957-62
	Paraguay	3	1950-56	1957-62
	Peru	5	1950-56	1958-63
	Uruguay	2	1950-56	1957-62
	Venezuela	3	1952-57	1958-63
4- Central America	Dominican Republic	1	1950-56	1957-61
	El Salvador	2	1950-56	1956-60
	Guatemala	7	1950-54	1955-62
	Nicaragua	3	1950-56	1957-62
	Cuba	4	1952-58	1959-62
5- Asia and the Far East	Burma	4	1950-57	1958-61
	Cambodia	2	1950-56	1956-62
	Indonesia	4	1950-56	1957-62
	North Korea	1	1950-56	1957-62
	Malaya	5	1950-56	1957-62
6- Eastern Europe	Albania	1	1950-56	1957-62
	Bulgaria	2	1950-56	1957-62
	East Germany	5	1950-56	1957-62
	Hungary	1	1950-56	1957-62
	USSR	1	1950-56	1957-62
7- Middle East and North Africa	Sudan	3	1953-58	1959-62
	Tunisia	1	1950-56	1956-62
	Lebanon	4	1950-56	1957-62
	Iran	4	1950-56	1957-62
	Turkey	2	1950-56	1957-60
8- West Africa	Dahomey	3	1950-56	1957-62
	Ghana	4	1951-56	1957-62
	Guinea	1	1950-56	1957-62
	Upper Volta	1	1950-56	1957-62
	Togo	4	1950-58	1959-62
9- Central and East Africa	Central African Republic	1	1950-56	1957-62
	Chad	2	1950-56	1957-62
	Congo-Brazzaville	2	1950-56	1957-62
	Kenya	2	1950-56	1957-63
	Uganda	3	1952-57	1958-62

The parties themselves have been coded on approximately 190 separate variables in my conceptual framework.¹ Each of these variables has its place in a set of indicators pertaining to one of the eleven major dimensions of variation which I think are most relevant to cross-national research on political parties. A party's "internal organization" is analyzed according to four concepts: degree of organization, centralization of power, coherence of behavior, and involvement of its members. A party's "external relations" with society is judged according to the other seven variables: institutionalization, governmental status, social aggregation, social articulation, issue orientation, goal orientation, and autonomy. Preliminary analysis of my data for 90 parties shows that the indicators chosen for each dimension do form scales at acceptable levels of reliability (most above .80 as judged by Cronbach's alpha) for every concept except autonomy, which will require each of its five components to be treated separately.²

For the most part, the coding categories for the variables have been elaborated into multi-point ordinal scales, not simple dichotomies or nominal-level polychotomies. Moreover, each variable has been tagged with an "adequacy-confidence" code which indicates the *adequacy* of the information underlying the coding judgment and the *confidence* that the coder places in his variable score.³ Finally, each of the variables is accompanied by a sentence to a paragraph discussing the coding judgment. Like the variable codes and the adequacy-confidence codes, this textual information exists in machine-readable form as part of the ICPP data file. With each party requiring almost five full pages of computer printout for the codes and comments, the listing of the data file itself is approximately 750 pages.

The parties were coded with reference to an information base of more than 70,000 pages from 3,500 documents on party politics in our countries. Each of these pages had been indexed with one or more three-digit code numbers and photographed on 16mm microfilm with the code numbers encoded alongside. With the use of Eastman Kodak's MIRACODE information retrieval system, we were able to scan the film of any given country at the rate of 100 pages a second, searching for index codes which were relevant to the variable which we sought to code for the parties in the country.⁴ Pages that met our keyboard command were then displayed for study. Even aided by this rapid retrieval system, the actual coding of parties on our variables amounted to preparing 156 detailed case studies and took far more time than anticipated. The bibliography searches for material on party politics in our countries, the indexing, and the microfilming were all accomplished from 1967 through 1969, when we completed the information base for our research. It has taken the last four years simply to code the parties on all our variables.

The full data set will be published by The Free Press sometime in 1974 under the tentative title, *Comparative Political Parties: A Cross-National Handbook*. In addition to the codes and comments, the *Handbook* will contain the conceptual and operational definitions for each of the variables in the conceptual framework and complete bibliographies of the literature used in our research. The quantitative data from the ICPP Project (*i.e.*, the variable codes and adequacy-confidence codes) will be provided to the ICPR for distribution when the

manuscript is sent to the publisher, which will be as soon as the documentation is completed. Barring unforeseen problems, the data should be available for analysis from the Consortium in early 1974. In late 1974 The Free Press will begin publishing a series of four volumes over three years involving the analysis of the ICPP data. They are tentatively titled, *American Political Parties in World Perspective*, *Political Parties: Their Internal Organization and External Relations*, *The Origins of Political Parties*, and *The Effects of Political Parties on the Political Systems*. Some day, I hope, this project will finally come to a graceful conclusion.

NOTES

1. Kenneth Janda, *A Conceptual Framework for the Comparative Analysis of Political Parties*, (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Professional Papers in Comparative Politics, 01-002, 1970.)
2. Kenneth Janda, "Conceptual Equivalence and Multiple Indicators in the Cross-National Analysis of Political Parties," Paper delivered at the Workshop on Indicators of National Development, sponsored by ISSC/UNESCO/ECPR and held in Lausanne, Switzerland, August 9-14, 1971.
3. Kenneth Janda, "Data Quality Control and Library Research on Political Parties," in Raoul Naroll and Ronald Cohen (eds.), *A Handbook of Method in Cultural Anthropology* (Garden City, New York: Natural History Press, 1970), pp. 962-973.
4. Kenneth Janda, "A Microfilm and Computer System for Analyzing Comparative Politics Literature," in George Gerbner et al. (eds.), *The Analysis of Communication Content* (New York: Wiley, 1969), pp. 407-435.

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