

**Classifying Party Systems:
Where Have All the Typologies Gone?**

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The paper examines the ways in which students of parties classify party systems. Most typologies which we use (e.g Dahl, Blondel, Sartori) were developed in the 1960s, and few new typologies have been developed or mooted since then. Most students of parties rely on Sartori's 1976 typology, which distinguishes among one party dominant systems, two party systems, moderate pluralism, and extreme multipartyism. However, parties and party systems have changed considerably since then. As Mair has pointed out, there are fewer and fewer current instances of pure two party competition and none of polarized pluralism. Instead, party systems in most liberal democracies fit into the increasingly crowded category, moderate pluralism.

The dearth of new typologies reflects the success of the Sartori's scheme and the availability of indices such as Laakso and Taagepura's Effective Number of Political Parties, which can be used to assess the impact of electoral laws. However useful the Effective Number of Electoral Parties (ENEP) or its legislative variant, Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties (ENPP), might be for correlation and regression, the index blurs key features of party systems – the ways in which parties regularly interact with each other and has minimal heuristic value. Newer typologies, such as Mair's distinction between open and closed systems of competition (see Mair, 1996; 2002) or Siaroff's extension of Blondel's classification, exist, but have yet to gain significant attention.

The paper argues that a new typology can be developed, following Sartori's approach. The first criterion is the number of relevant parties: there is considerable difference between limited multipartyism (with three to five relevant parties) and extended multipartyism (with six to eight or more relevant parties). In addition to number, we can differentiate party systems according to degrees of polarization, particularly whether competition is unipolar or centripetal, bipolar, or multipolar, and according to the presence or absence of clustering – whether parties regularly ally with each other in permanent or semi-permanent electoral alliances. The paper draws on contemporary European party systems, particularly the Dutch, French, Italian, German and Austrian to begin elaborating provisional classifications, a necessary step in the development of a new typology.

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Introduction:

Two party? Multiparty? Students of political parties have been classifying party systems for almost as long as they have been studying parties. The number and kind of parties contesting elections affects not only the choices which voters confront, but also government formation and the ease which political executives can secure passage of their legislative programmes. Like blood pressure or heart rate, the number of parties contesting elections is a marker in any description of how countries, liberal democratic or authoritarian, are governed.

Initially, the principal distinctions were either between two-party and multiparty systems or, if one party systems were included, among, one, two, and multiparty systems.¹ However, by the 1960s and 1970s, political scientists had equipped themselves with a more sophisticated toolkit. Included were new categories which not only refined the multiparty category but highlighted similarities between two party systems and some multiparty systems. Blondel's (1968) investigations added two-and-a-half party systems to the mix. Sartori (1966; 1976) contributed not only his counting rules, but also the key distinction between moderate and polarized pluralism. This has survived, both in the terms which Sartori delineated and in alternate terms, moderate and extreme multipartyism.

¹Because parties exist in some authoritarian regimes, it sometimes makes sense to refer one party systems, but the referent is the political system and not the party system. Writing in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, A.N. Holcombe (1933), argued that one party systems were qualitatively different than two-party or multiparty systems. Insisting that systems consisted of parts, Sartori (1976) maintained that a one party system was a contradiction in terms.

Attempts to classify party systems ebbed in the 1980s and 1990s. Parties specialists concentrated on patterns of continuity and change. The retreat from taxonomy reflected not only the effectiveness of the new classifications, but also the development of continuous or weighted measures such as Rae's (1967) fractionalization (Fe), Laakso and Taagepura's (1979) effective number of political parties (N or ENEP and ENPP)² and Molinar's (1991)NP. Distilling party system characteristics to a single number, continuous measures enabled scholars to avoid troubling problems of classification.

Questions of taxonomy are reappearing. Transitions to liberal democracy have increased the numbers of party systems which political scientists can study. Some are relatively contained, like Hungary or the Czech Republic, with comparatively few parties regularly contesting elections or winning seats in parliament, while others, like Poland or Russia have a large number of parties, some of which are considerably less permanent than others. Important changes have also occurred in the party systems of older liberal democracies. The number of parties contesting elections and winning seats in several older liberal democracies has increased. The modest success of green and left-libertarian parties, and more recently, the growth of new right populist parties (Zaslave, 2003a; 2003b.) have added new elements to already crowded political spectra. Although in some instances, the success of new or rejuvenated parties, particularly on the right, has forced older parties to take notice, the crowding of the political spectrum has not led to polarized pluralism. Instead, we confront a different phenomenon: As Mair (1996; 2002) points out, both the two party category and polarized pluralism have emptied out, while moderate pluralism has become increasingly crowded. There are few instances of pure two party competition – only Malta fits – and no instances of polarized pluralism. Almost all cases now fit into the category of moderate pluralism: even if more than five parties contest elections,

²Laakso and Taagepura (1979) designated the statistic N, but this is sometimes used with a bewildering variety of subscripts (see Dunleavy and Boucet, 2003), as well as designations for electoral and legislative parties. Because acronyms indicating their meaning are often clearer, this paper uses Siaroff (2000) designation ENEP, for effective number of electoral parties, and ENPP for effective number of parliamentary or legislative parties.

competition is primarily centripetal rather than centrifugal.

The crowding of moderate pluralism would not be a problem if we could be sure that there were no significant distinctions among the party systems of liberal democracies or if measures such as the effective number of political parties provided us with the information which we need to distinguish countries with more parties from those with less. Neither is the case. Even though instances of polarized pluralism and its deleterious consequences are increasingly rare, there is considerable difference among party systems with three, four, or five political parties and those with six or more, and considerable difference among party systems, and party systems in which parties cluster together in semi-permanent coalitions or blocs and those which do not. These relationships – whether and on what terms and for how long work parties with each other – are at the core of the literature. Indices such as the effective number of political parties provide a summary measure of the relative weights of political parties, but as Mair (forthcoming) points out, they also obscure enduring relationships among parties.

This paper is an attempt to develop a typology which can differentiate contemporary party systems. Following Sartori, the first criterion is the number of relevant parties: there is considerable difference between limited multipartyism (with three to five relevant parties) and extended multipartyism (with six to eight or more relevant parties). Next, we differentiate party systems according to the degree of polarization, particularly whether competition is unipolar or centripetal, bipolar, or multipolar, and according to the presence or absence of clustering – whether parties regularly ally with each other in permanent or semi-permanent electoral alliances. Doing so enables us to sort out Sartori's increasingly crowded moderate pluralism. We begin by examining existing typologies and the uses which we make of them.

Existing typologies: a look at the toolkit

The typologies of party systems which we use today date from the 1960s and 1970s. The time of their development is no surprise. Initially narrow, the scope of comparative politics broadened considerably in the 1950s and 1960s. Instead of generalizing on the basis of limited knowledge about Britain, France, and Germany, political scientists confronted a broader array of liberal democracies and multiparty systems. Most of these not only worked but worked well enough to raise questions about the presumption that multipartyism fed political instability (Almond, 1956; Almond and Coleman, 1960; Lijphart, 1968a; 1968b). Studies of smaller democracies led to new thinking. Robert Dahl's *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies* (1966) demonstrated not only the variety of sites to which opposition might be directed, but also that relations among parties could range from coalescent to competitive. The consociational democracy literature reinforced this view (see Lijphart (1968a; 1968b; 1977).

Blondel's contribution: two and a half party systems

Sorting out party systems was another matter. Although Dahl (1966) masterfully distinguished patterns of opposition, his typology, differentiating systems which were strictly competitive, cooperative and competitive, coalescent and competitive, or strictly coalescent, did not take hold. One put forward by Jean Blondel did. Blondel (1968) used the share of the vote won by parties from 1945 through 1946 to construct a fourfold typology. Blondel distinguished

two party systems, two-and-a-half party systems, multiparty systems with a predominant party and multiparty systems without a predominant party. His typology was derived by investigating clusters in the average share of the vote won by the largest two parties and then considering the ratio of the first party's share to that of the second and third parties. In the five two party systems (the United States, New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Austria), the two party share was greater than 89% and closely balanced between the two parties. In the next cluster, the two party share ranged from 75-80% of the vote cast but there was a wider average difference (10.5%) between the first and second parties. Taking account of imbalance in the share of the vote, Blondel categorized these as two-and-a-half rather than three party systems. These included Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany and Ireland. Blondel then considered party systems with four or more major parties: Those with one larger party winning 40% or more of the vote and typically twice as much as the second party in the system were multiparty systems with a predominant party (e.g. Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Italy, and Iceland) or, if this is not the case, multiparty systems without a predominant party (Netherlands, Switzerland, France, Finland).

Blondel's typology was useful because it highlighted differences and similarities among pure two party systems and systems like the Federal Republic of Germany, with two larger parties, and a relatively smaller 'half' party, able in some instances to play a balancing role between them. Although a refinement over simple counting, the scheme is problematic. As Mair (1996, 2002) points out, Blondel's scheme disaggregated the multiparty category. However, his categories brought together party systems whose dynamics were not necessarily the same: Multiparty systems with a dominant party included Norway and Sweden, with strong Social Democratic parties, and the much more polarized pre-1993 Italian party system. Multiparty systems without a dominant party grouped consociational democracies such as the Netherlands and Switzerland in the same category as more polarized party systems such as France and Finland.

The designation of two-and-a-half party systems captured differences between pure two party systems, on one hand, and moderate multiparty systems, on the other. However, the two-and-a-half party category brings together party systems in which the role of the smaller half party differs considerably. As Siaroff (2003) notes, the role of the 'half party' varies from hinge parties, located between two larger parties, such as the German Free Democrats, influential because their votes were needed to make parliamentary majorities, and 'wing parties' such as the Canadian New Democratic Party, less influential because their votes were rarely needed either to form coalitions or ensure that legislation was passed. In the first instance, the hinge party determined who governs; in the second, its influence was confined to agenda setting and proposing policies which might be taken over by larger parties. There is also a question of why smaller 'half parties' should be highlighted in what otherwise would be three party systems but not in multiparty systems with a larger number of parties. Finally, the scheme was based on the ways in which parties clustered in elections between 1945 and 1966. Party strengths and the number of parties have changed since then. Alan Siaroff (2000) has updated the scheme, incorporating a broader range of party systems. However, using relative size in isolation from other characteristics is problematic because it does not necessarily get at recurring relationships among parties.

Rokkan's contribution:

Blondel was not the only one to try to sort the cases. Rokkan (1970) used patterns of government formation to classify the party systems of smaller democracies. Rokkan distinguished among party systems, such as Austria and Ireland, which display a 1 vs. 1+1 format, akin to a British and German pattern, Scandinavian 1 vs. 3-4 patterns (Norway, Sweden, Denmark), and "even multiparty systems" which display a 1 vs. 1 vs 1 +2-3 pattern of competition. Like Blondel's typology, Rokkan's scheme was an attempt to disaggregate the multiparty category (Mair, 1996; 2002). However, the organizing principal was not relative size but patterns of government and opposition. Like Blondel's scheme, questions arise about whether and how effectively it can be used not only to differentiate party systems, but also to assess patterns of continuity and change.

Sartori's typology: moderate v. polarized pluralism

Sartori's (1976) typology is the most finely developed of those which we have considered. Sartori argued that the standard distinction among one party, two party, and multiparty competition was too crude to explain very real differences among party systems. Numbers of parties, properly counted, can distinguish among party systems. After separating out party-state systems, he established rules telling practitioners which parties to count and which to exclude. The next steps were selecting cutoff points, establishing classes, and taking account of special cases like segmented societies. Classes were then distilled into distinct types. Sartori ended up with a typology based on numbers (properly counted) whose principal distinction was not number, *per se*, but rather, the degree of polarization and whether party competition and thus the mechanics of the system were centripetal or centrifugal.

Sartori began by establishing explicit counting rules. Rather than distinguishing among major and minor parties or establishing a minimum threshold above which parties should be counted, he argued that the criterion by which parties, large or small should be counted was their effect on party competition. Smaller parties were relevant when they had either *coalition potential* or *blackmail potential*. Coalition potential depends on parties having sufficient seats to make coalitions feasible and is measured by their having participated in or made cabinet coalitions possible; parties whose seats are never needed are deemed irrelevant. Closely related, blackmail potential describes the ability of a party to block the formation of coalition which others desire. The second criterion is their impact on the direction of party competition: parties, large or small, are relevant when their existence alters the direction of party competition leftward or rightward, changing the direction of competition from centripetal to centrifugal.

Sartori's next step was to establish classes of party systems. He began by breaking down the one party and multiparty "lumps." The first consisted of a mixed bag of one party and hegemonic party political systems, not properly competitive, and predominant party systems in which one party regularly winning 50% of the seats in parliament dominated smaller parties; no other party could govern because of the predominance of the first. Multiparty systems were grouped into two classes: limited pluralism, with 3-5 relevant parties, and extreme pluralism, with six, seven or eight. Finally, Sartori added a residual category, atomized party systems, which were so fragmented that the addition of one more party made no difference to the pattern of competition. These party systems were insufficiently structured or consolidated to be considered.

Sartori then refined the multiparty categories. Here no party had or was likely to obtain an absolute majority. Sartori argued power structures (relations among the parties) were important and proceeded to differentiate party systems according to their mechanical predisposition, or more specifically, relations among the parties. Doing so enabled him to establish criteria for moderate and polarized pluralism. The crucial factors were the direction and character of competition: Competition under moderate pluralism resembled competition in two party systems. The system was bipolar and competition was centripetal: parties on either side of the spectrum competed for votes in the centre. Polarized pluralism was different. Although the centre was occupied, the dynamics of the system were centrifugal rather than centripetal. Anti-system parties at the extremes competed with parties in the centre, pulling parties and voters toward them. Because bilateral oppositions, located “two poles apart,” could not coalesce, parties in the centre governed without the benefit of an alternate government which could replace them. As such, the system was characterized by ideological divisions, centrifugal drives, “irresponsible oppositions” and a politics of “outbidding or over promising.”

The initial criterion for distinguishing between moderate and polarized pluralism was the number of political parties, but the cutoff point, five or more, was in Sartori’s view an artifact. Segmented systems characterized by elite accommodation were cases of moderate pluralism because the mechanics of the system were centripetal rather than centrifugal. The mechanics of competition and particularly the extent of polarization were more important than the number of relevant parties. Sartori ended up with a fourfold typology: predominant party systems, two party systems, moderate pluralism, and polarized pluralism.

Of the classificatory schemes we have explored, Sartori’s has had the longest shelf life and most widespread acceptance. Reasons for this are not difficult to fathom. Although Blondel’s typology is remembered principally for his introduction of the two-and-a-half party category, Sartori’s typology provided an explanation to an important puzzle: why certain kinds of multiparty systems led to cabinet instability and system collapse, while others did not. Distinguishing between moderate and polarized pluralism enabled Sartori and others to separate out highly polarized party systems, such as 3rd and 4th Republic France, Weimar Germany, and 2nd Republic Spain, in which not only the number of parties, but also their pattern of competition had led to cabinet instability and system collapse, from other forms of multipartyism. Remembered primarily for the distinction between polarized and moderate pluralism, Sartori also managed to incorporate lessons from Dahl and Rokkan – that patterns of cooperation in some multiparty systems resembled those in some (but by no means all) two party systems. Moreover, Sartori’s typology focussed directly on how parties relate to each other. In doing so, it addressed the most central facets of party systems, that which occurs at the core (Smith, 1989; Mair, forthcoming)

More recent schema

The typologies which we have been considering were developed and refined in the 1960s and 1970s. Since then, there have been relatively few efforts to augment or replace them. Instead, as Mair (1996; 2002) has observed, Sartori’s polarized pluralism has emptied out, while moderate pluralism has become increasingly crowded. Included are not only the German, Austrian and Scandinavian party systems, as well as the Dutch and Belgian, but also the French and the post-1993 Italian party system. Like its predecessor, the post-1993 Italian party system contains a large number of relevant political parties, but it lacks anti-system parties at its

extremes.³ There are also fewer two party systems: Following a change in its electoral law in 1994, New Zealand changed from a pure two party system to a multiparty system. Dominated by a single party from 1979 to 1997, Britain in the Thatcher-Major era should be classified as a predominant party system (Mair, 1996; 2002).

Students of party systems have yet to come grips with the changed situation. Building on Dahl and Rokkan, Peter Mair (1996; 2002) has suggested using competition for government as a device for distinguishing among party systems. In party systems in which competition for government is closed, there is wholesale alternation between parties or groups of parties, governing formulas are familiar rather than novel or innovative, and access to government is typically restricted to only a few parties. In contrast, systems in which the structure of competition is open, there is partial alternation: some parties rotate in and out of government, while others remain. If the structure of competition is open, new parties can be incorporated by recourse to innovative governing formulas. Closed structures of competition have been typical of the United Kingdom, pre-1994 New Zealand, as well as Japan, and Ireland from 1948-1989. Open patterns of competition characterize both the Netherlands and Denmark, as well as newly emerging party systems: In the Netherlands, new parties have been incorporated into governing coalitions. In Denmark, novel coalitions and new forms of minority governments were used to accommodate changes in the number of parties. (Mair, 1996; 2002)

Mair argues that focussing on structures of competition not only directs attention to key relationships among political parties, but also allows the party system to function as an independent variable to which parties and voters may respond. He illustrates his point by

³This of course depends on how we define anti-system parties. Capoccia (2002) argues that the concept has been stretched considerably. In order to retain it, he suggests distinguishing between *relational anti-system parties*, which advance an ideology different than other parties, and polarize in the way that Sartori argues that anti-systems parties do, and *ideological anti-system parties*, which oppose liberal democracy or in some instances, the predominant ideology advanced by those who control the system.

demonstrating the ways in which changes in Irish coalition patterns – the willingness of Fianna Fail to enlist coalition partners after refusing to do so since the 1940s – paved the way for shifts in voting alignments and further shifts in coalition patterns. (Mair, 1996; 2002) Using open or closed competition for government is novel. Its full potential has not yet been explored. However, it cannot substitute for categorizations describing differences and similarities among the party systems now crowding Sartori's moderate pluralism. We need to consider not only the structure of competition, but also the number of parties, the extent to which they are polarized, and the number of dimensions on which they compete. If, in Sartori's terms, the mechanics of these systems are fundamentally the same, then there is no problem. If, however, we conclude that they are different, then we need think more about how these party systems can be differentiated.

An alternate approach is to sort moderate pluralism according to the size and relative strength of parties. Alan Siaroff (2000) does this by refining and building onto Blondel's earlier typology. Siaroff uses multiple measures to tap the relative size and strength of political parties winning more than 3% of the vote. He ends up with an eight fold classification distinguishing 1) pure two party systems, with a mean two party share of 95%, 2) moderate multiparty systems with 3-5 parties above 3% (which he argues are in fact 2.5 party systems), 3) moderate multiparty systems with one dominant party, 4) moderate multiparty systems with two main parties, 5) moderate multiparty systems with a balance among parties, 6) extreme multiparty systems with one dominant party 7) extreme multiparty systems with two main parties, and 8) extreme multiparty systems with a balance among parties. The resulting scheme categorizes party systems according to the number of parties (two party systems, moderate multiparty systems with three to five parties, and extreme multiparty systems with six to eight) and the relative balance among parties (one dominant party among others, two main parties, or an even or nearly even balance among them), which can then be related to electoral systems, length of cabinet formation, type of cabinet (e.g. minimum-winning or not), as well as duration of governments. As table 1 demonstrates, Siaroff's categories tap variations in the effective number of parliamentary parties.

Table 1 Siaroff's classification of party systems
ENPP

| | | |
|---|------|------|
| two party system | | 1.92 |
| two-and-a-half | 2.56 | |
| moderate multiparty with one dominant party | | 2.95 |
| moderate multiparty with two main parties | | 3.17 |
| moderate multiparty with balance among main parties | | 3.69 |
| extreme multiparty with one dominant party | | 3.96 |
| extreme multiparty with two main parties | | 4.41 |
| extreme multiparty with balance among the parties | | 5.56 |

Source: Siaroff (2000)

If the aim is to disaggregate moderate pluralism, then Siaroff has succeeded. In place of a single overloaded category, we now have a more refined scheme with several categories. The large number of categories permits Siaroff to analyze changes over time. However, some 'party systems' last no longer than a single election period. This is difficult to accept if, following Sartori, we believe that party systems consist of recurring rather than one-off relationships. Siaroff is in fact referring not to party systems but rather to patterns of party strengths which have

resulted from particular election outcomes. This difficulty can be overcome, either by changing the terminology so that we are referring to patterns of party competition, some more permanent than others, or by averaging results over two or more elections to tap more durable features. More problematic is the complexity of the scheme. With eight categories, more or less arrayed on two dimensions (see table 2), Siaroff's scheme lacks simplicity or parsimony. However, this may be unavoidable. More important is whether the scheme has indeed brought together party systems whose mechanics -- the ways in which parties relate to each other on a recurring basis requires further investigation. Equally important is whether it will gain acceptance. Put forward in a volume with complex and daunting tables, the scheme has thus far not received much notice.

Table 2. Siaroff's classification arrayed on two dimensions

| relative balance among parties | two party | two and half party | moderate multiparty | extreme multiparty |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| one dominant party | | | 2.95 | 3.96 |
| two main parties | 1.92 | | 3.17 | 4.41 |
| balance among parties | | | 3.69 | 5.56 |
| three parties of different sizes | | 2.56 | | |

Cell entries are the effective number of parliamentary parties
Adapted from Siaroff, 2000.

Using weighted indices: do we need typologies?

Not everyone will mourn the fading of typologies. Building typologies and classifying systems is inherently difficult, and typologies which are parsimonious and easy to comprehend invariably obscure certain differences. Some political scientists argue that ordinal or even interval measures are preferable to tiresome exercises in taxonomy. Although some features of party systems -- the degree to which they are polarized -- are more difficult to measure, the relative size and strength of parties, or more specifically the proportion of the vote and legislative seats won, are key data which are readily. In addition to simple and more complex counting of the number of parties, the use of summary measures to assess the degree of fragmentation and the number of parties has become a standard practice.

Douglas Rae (1967) was among the first to bring forward such a measure. Rae's fractionalization (F_e) estimates the probability that any one voter or legislator will choose the same party as a second, third, fourth or ...*nth* voter. Ranging from zero to one, the index is equal to one minus the sum of the squares of the percentage of vote received by each party, and increases as the number of parties increases. The index can be calculated either for shares of the vote (F_e) or shares of legislative seats (F_p) (Rae, 1967). Alternate measures include Laakso and Taagepure's effective number of political parties, sometime designated N (Laakso and Taagepure, 1979) and Molinar's NP (Molinar, 1991). The effective number of parties is measured by dividing one by the sum of the squares of percentage of votes (effective number of electoral parties, ENEP) or seats won by each party (effective number of parliamentary parties, ENPP). This results in a series of decimals which are typically smaller than the actual number of parties

contesting elections or represented in parliament.⁴ Based on the sum of the squares of the percentage of the vote or seats held by each party, the two measures are related. Squaring the percentage of votes or seats won gives additional weight to larger political parties. Smaller parties which would be excluded under Sartori's decision rules are counted, but their contribution to the overall measure is small and diminishes as the percentage of the vote received shrinks (Laakso and Taagepure, 1979). Molinar's index is slightly different; it counts the largest party as 1, giving it greater weight in the index (Molinar, 1991).

These measures have been used in different ways and to different degrees. Rae's fractionalization was used by Rae in *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws* (1969), Rae and Taylor in *The Analysis of Political Cleavages* (1970), as well as Taylor and Herman (1971). In contrast, Molinar's NP barely took off. Laakso and Taagepure's Effective Number of Political Parties comes closest to being a standard not only in parties research, but particularly in the analysis of electoral laws (Lijphart, 1994; 1999; Dunleavy and Boucek, 2003). The utility of such indices varies considerably. As Rae (1967) argues, questions of classification are indeed finessed, and we end up with measures which can not only be compared from election to election and across party systems, but also can be used in correlation and regression. Sartori's (1976) comments are telling: Sartori argued that Rae's index "actually overvalues the larger parties and compresses too quickly the smaller parties—as is obvious, since the party percentages are squared (p. 307)." In his view, quantitative measurement alone failed to bring out fundamental differences in the mechanics of party systems. These reflected not only relative size and share of the vote, but also whether the party was involved in or could influence the formation of coalitions and its ideological positioning. He made similar objections to cumulative counting (Blondel's approach). According to Sartori, taxonomy and classification based on a thorough and deep understanding the cases are essential. Quantitative measures work only if the cases were properly examined and sorted in the first place. (Sartori, 1976)

Although Sartori's objections have been taken to heart by some students of party systems, the use of cumulative and weighted indexes has become increasingly common. Of these, Laakso and Taagepera's index is used with greatest frequency. Both ENEP, the effective number of legislative parties, and ENPP, the effective number of parliamentary parties, have been used to great advantage in analyses of the effects of different types of electoral laws.⁵ Nevertheless, we need to remember Dunleavy and Boucet's (2003) observation that the index (and others related to it) is quirky rather than continuous for certain values. Even if this were not the case, despite their advantage for correlation and regression, ENEP and ENPP tell us little about relationships among parties or the dynamics of different types of party systems. Both have limited heuristic value. Ultimately, what we do should be intelligible not only to students but also to an informed public.

⁴Laakso and Taagepure (1979) designated the index N, as do Dunleavy and Boucet (2003). Following Siaroff (2000), I use ENEP and ENPP because fuller descriptors are easier to bear in mind. Dunleavy and Boucet view ENEP and ENPP are part of a larger series of measures based on summing the proportion of the vote won by each party raised to a specified power. They argue that these indices are not as continuous or smooth as they appear, but behave radically for certain values.

⁵See for example Lijphart, 1994, Taagepera and Shugart, 1989, and Cox, 1997.

One advantage of simple counting, with or without explicit cutoffs for smaller parties, is that it produces outcomes which are readily (if not always correctly) understood. We can explain differences among two, three, four, six or eight party systems. Explaining that a country has 1.8, 2.5 or 3.7 parties is more likely to confuse than enlighten.

Toward a new typology:

Developing typologies is a difficult task. Drawing on Carl Hempel, Lijphart (1968b) and Lange and Meadwell (1991) argue that an effective typology should be not only exhaustive and mutually exclusive – that is be capable of sorting all relevant cases into one and only one category, but should also be parsimonious (use as few categories as possible) and “*natural* rather than *artificial* (p.7)”. According to Lijphart (1968b):

The naturalness of a classification is a matter of degree: the more it aids in the discovery of empirical relationships, the more natural it is. A natural classification is, in Julian Huxley’s words, ‘one which enables us to make the maximum number of prophecies and deductions.’ (Lijphart, 1968b, p. 7)

A natural typology is one which can be used for a wide range of purposes in addition to the one for which it was constructed:

In comparative politics, a natural typology of political systems should ideally perform two functions: (1) It should facilitate comparison among different types and aid in the discovery of significant characteristics that are logically independent of the criteria defining the types but empirically associated with the different types, (2) It should also facilitate comparisons within each type, with the attributes held in common by all of the systems within the type serving as the ‘control’ variables, or parameters. (Lijphart, 1968b, p. 7)

Only after a typology has been fully developed and used in research can we determine whether it meets the criterion of naturalness. Our immediate problem is to develop a typology which sorts the relevant cases in ways which are meaningful for the study of party systems. An effective typology needs to sort cases which are substantially alike from those which are not, and it needs to do so in terms which are clear, parsimonious, and sufficiently neutral that they do not suggest relationships which are not necessarily valid.

What do we want to know?

The most obvious starting point is to ask what we want to know, or more specifically, what is it that we want to differentiate. The most salient characteristic of party systems remains the number of parties, the next most important, the ways in which they habitually relate to each other. The number of parties is important because it is the first thing which strikes us when we investigate a country or consider its election outcomes. Anyone who has studied parties or party systems is all too aware that there are substantial differences between two party systems, multiparty systems with relatively few parties contesting elections and winning seats in parliament, and multiparty systems with a large number of parties. The more parties there are, the more complicated the tasks of voters, cabinet *formateurs* (to borrow a Dutch term), and scholars

trying to make sense of the system. A distinction between two party systems, more limited multiparty systems, and multiparty systems with a larger number of parties makes sense and helps to sort the available cases. However, two caveats are in order: Like Sartori, we don't want to count all parties, but only those which are relevant. We therefore include all parties with coalition or blackmail potential, and also all parties whose presence affects the direction of competition. The reason for this will be readily apparent.

Second, we want to avoid loaded or biased terminology. Multiparty systems with fewer parties (three to five) are typically designated moderate multiparty systems, but this suggests that the parties, themselves, are moderate, which may or may not be the case. There are times when the parties in a three, four, or five party system may not be all that moderate. Possible examples of this include the British Conservatives under Margaret Thatcher, and Jorg Heidar's Freedom Party (FPÖ) in Austria. Multiparty systems with large number of political parties are typically described as extreme multiparty systems, but this conjures up images of a multiparty systems whose mechanics are not only influenced by extreme or anti-system parties, but also teetering on the brink of instability. This was the case in Weimar Germany, Spain's Second Republic and to a lesser degree in Third and Fourth Republic France. However, it has not been the case in the Netherlands, post-1970 Belgium, post-1973 Denmark, or Poland after 1990, among others. In addition, many Italian specialists dispute Sartori's categorization of Italy as a prototype for polarized pluralism (Tarrow, 1990). The term 'extreme' should be used for parties at the extremes of the political spectrum and parties whose positions are extreme when compared to modal or typical parties with whom they compete. We use the term *limited* multipartyism to characterize multiparty systems with relatively few parties (three to five, outside six) and *extended* multipartyism to characterize multiparty systems with a large number (six or more) of relevant parties. The term suggests that the party spectrum is long rather than short and can include multiparty systems with or without extreme political parties. In contrast to limited multiparty systems – typically those with three, four, or five parties – extended multiparty systems typically have six, seven, or eight or more contesting elections and winning seats in the legislative assembly.

Once we know the number of parties, we need to know how they relate to each other. Two facets are crucial: 1) distance among parties and 2) the extent, if any, to which parties regularly cooperate with each other, operating in permanent or semi-permanent alliances. Distance can refer to ideological or psychological distance and can be measured in different ways including analysis of party programs, interviews with participants, and classification by panels of experts. Party systems can be more or less polarized, and competition, in Sartori's terms, can be centripetal or centrifugal. Following Sartori (1966; 1976), we can think of competition taking place in different ways and in different parts of political spectrum. In some party systems, all parties may compete with each other. But this is not always the case. In segmented societies, parties may compete for votes not among all voters but only along certain dimensions or within certain subcultures. Even if this is not the case, it is possible for a party system to have two or more 'zones' or poles, with parties competing not for the electorate as a whole, but only for the support of voters who place themselves in that portion of the spectrum. For example, parties of the left have competed, both historically and in the present, not only with parties of the right, but among themselves. This has been recognized in the literature on cleavages and electoral volatility. Arguing for the long term durability of class and other cleavages, Bartolini and Mair

(1990) maintain that a substantial portion of the overall or aggregate electoral volatility which others have detected is **inter-area** or localized volatility, and thus the product of localized competition.

We can use this in rebuilding classifications of party systems. Focussing on ideological distance, combining it with numbers, Sartori highlights a crucial dimension of party competition. We know of party systems which are more polarized and those which are less polarized, as well as ones which have changed over time. In Sartori's classification, polarization is a separate dimension, which ends up folded into the distinction between moderate and polarized pluralism. Although not necessarily the case in the detailed process of taxonomy in which he engaged to build his typology, polarized cases are ones which also have a large number of political parties.⁶ However, this is too important a dimension to confine to a single subset of parties; it is possible for two or 'few' party systems to be as polarized as some more extended multiparty systems. Examples include interwar Austria, divided into distinct *lager*, almost at war with each other, Britain under Thatcher, and, increasingly, the United States, a country in which the gulf between Democrats and Republicans has been widening since the 1980s. Conversely, not all extended multiparty systems are polarized.

We can use polarization in different ways. One is to separate party systems which are more polarized from those which are less. Another is to differentiate party systems in which competition centres on a single pole or centre from party systems in which competition is bipolar (competition between two distinct blocs) and those in which competition is multipolar. In this case, there are three or more clusters of parties, competing not only with each other, but also for the support of different segments or portions of the electorate. This enables us to isolate different patterns of competition and to consider the effects which new right populist parties (Zaslove 2003a; 2003b) have on party competition. Articulating a mixture of anti-immigrant, anti-establishment, and anti-European Union themes, parties as diverse as *Front Nationale* in France (FN), the Freedom Party in Austria (FPÖ), and the Pim Fortuyn List in the Netherlands (LPF), have had effects, perhaps temporary or perhaps more permanent, on the direction of party competition on a least a portion of the political spectrum. Confronted with new or resurgent competition on their flank, parties of the right and centre (and occasionally parties of the left as well), have taken up some of their demands, most typically for stricter control of legal and illegal immigration. The possibility that such parties open up (or reinforce) a new front or pole of competition enables us to consider what impact **relational anti-system parties** (Capoccia, 2002) have on party competition. The process in question – pulling other parties toward one of the extremes – constitutes part, but not all, of what Sartori included under polarized pluralism. Thus far, none of the party systems in which either left-libertarian or, more recently, new right parties have entrenched themselves have exhibited the full panoply of polarized pluralism. Nevertheless, if successful at the polls, relational anti-system parties alter the tone and content of political discourse, pulling some (if not all) established parties toward them on selected issues – typically a harsher stance toward immigrants and refugees – but both because they lack an equally strong

⁶In his 1966 chapter, Sartori suggested that “a minimum of five parties is required to produce or reflect a polarized society” (Sartori: 1966, p. 153). However, systems with a large number of parties need not be cases of polarized pluralism. Sartori uses the absence of polarization to assign consociational democracies to the moderate pluralism category.

counter-part at the opposite end of the spectrum, and because anti-democratic rhetoric does not resonate in ways that it once did⁷ – we do not find bilateral oppositions pulling apart the centre. We need to be able to consider what difference the growth or addition of such parties makes without classifying party systems incorrectly or stretching Sartori's well-defined polarized pluralism. One possibility, more readily investigated with a refined classification of parties, is that distance among parties increases and becomes more polarized, without taking on all of the traits of polarized pluralism. Another, is that party competition becomes more complex, with different subsets or sub-patterns of competition taking place on different parts of the political spectrum.

The final condition which we need to consider is the extent to which parties cluster together, competing regularly in permanent or semi-permanent alliances or coalitions. Clustering has been most apparent in Fifth Republic France, but occurs in other systems as well. The French pattern is well known. Parties on the moderate right, and the left have been coming together in divergent forms and constructions since the 1960s in order to maximize their electoral strength. The double ballot-runoff system used both National Assembly and Presidential elections allows some competition on the first ballot – assuming of course that appropriate candidates are able to advance to the second ballot – but puts a premium on cooperation on the second ballot. The result is a multiparty system which is distinctly bipolar, with competition within and between well defined blocs on both the right and the left. A different variant of clustering was mooted in the Netherlands in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Progressive forces, grouped around the Dutch Social Democratic Party (Labour, PvdA) tried to polarize the party system, forcing voters to choose among progressives, grouped around a shadow cabinet in 1972 and an common program in 1973, Liberals on the right, and Catholic and Protestant parties, who were to be divided, but came together instead, as the interconfessional Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA). In this instance, clustering was a temporary phenomena. More recently, it has become common, both in Poland, where the remnants of the Solidarity Party, and then the Peasants and ex-communists came together in blocs facing off against each other, and in post-1993 Italy. In the latter instance, the implosion of the pre-1993 party system, and with it the governing Christian Democratic (DC) and Socialist Parties (PSI), and the introduction of an additional member system (election of three quarters of the Chamber of Deputies in single member districts and the remainder through a proportional component), has led to an even more fragmented multiparty system in which complexity has been reduced by the emergence of bipolar competition between two opposing blocs: *Ulivo* (Olive Tree) on the left and *Casa del Liberta* (the House of Liberty, originally the *Polo del Liberta*, the Pole of Liberty) on the right. Although internally divided, each bloc cooperates with each other on elections, sharing out single member districts in areas of strength, and with some difficulty, govern or oppose together. With ten or more parties, the system is not only distinctly multiparty, but also bipolar (Bartolini, *et al.*, 2004).

Building a new typology:

We now have three dimensions on which we can classify party systems and build a new typology. Two of these, the number of parties, counted following Sartori's rules and polarization

⁷This may reflect the availability of viable or successful alternatives. Unlike the interwar period or even the 1950s, there are few successful models of authoritarianism around which anti-democratic forces might rally.

are identical to those used by Sartori, but the third, the presence or absence of clustering, or semi-permanent alliances is new. Also different is that we are using a more open or relaxed use of the term polarization, allowing us to capture more variation among countries classified as cases of moderate pluralism in Sartori's typology. In the following section, we will explore selected cases and demonstrate how they would be classified, showing how the new scheme can be used.

Some cases:

If we follow Sartori, the only way in which we can establish a new typology is to inspect the cases. Space does not permit a full examination of the full range of party systems which we need to consider, but examination of a limited number of more troublesome cases can point us in the right direction. Our starting point is to consider instances and phenomena not well accounted for either by Sartori or by existing typologies. There are several points of friction. These include the crowding of party spectra by new parties, and particularly new right populist parties, the fact that parties in countries as diverse as France, post-1993 Italy, Poland, and to a lesser extent, Israel, regularly contest elections in semi-permanent alliances with each other, and more broadly the treatment of party systems of Fifth Republic France, and pre- and post-1993 Italy. Equally important, but beyond the scope of this paper are questions about how we should treat the party systems of presidential and semi-presidential democracies (are these the same as those in parliamentary systems or qualitatively different because of different circumstances under which parties contest elections) and the question of how we deal with parties and party systems in multilevel systems of governance as diverse as Canada, in which the federal and provincial party systems are increasingly detached from each other (Carty and Wolinetz, forthcoming), and the European Union.

Clustering

Some of these phenomena can be dealt with more readily than others. The fact that parties in some systems compete together in alliances, some more durable than others, is well known, but usually treated discretely, noting the exception, taking account of it in analyses of the country in question, but ignoring the fact in comparative analysis. The country most frequently treated this way is France. When the Fifth Republic was established, few students of French politics expected it to outlast De Gaulle. It has, in part because its strong institutions ended up reshaping the French party system. Few analyses of French politics have failed to note the reorganization and restructuring of the French right in the first two decades of the French Republic, when it was possible to talk about the Gaullist family or the majority (Charlot, 1969), clustered into two or more parties (the Gaullists under various labels, and Giscard's Republican Independents, for a time, referred to as the minority within the majority), or similar but somewhat more belated clustering on the left. At times denoted as the Federation of the left, or simply the left, when the Socialists and Communists came together under the common program, or more recently, as the plural left, the phenomenon is well known. More difficult has been how to treat the French case and other instances of clustering. Few deny that France continues to have a multiparty system very different than it had under either the Third or Fourth Republics. Most note that competition takes place both within and then between well defined blocs, most commonly known as the right, or more recently, the moderate right, and the left. But these conventions are for internal (and sometimes) longitudinal rather than cross-national comparison. In cross-national analysis, the more distinctive features of Fifth Republic parties and its party system are generally ignored.⁸

⁸Lijphart (1999) has suggested averaging the number of parties competing in semi-

Doing so made sense when the Fifth Republic was the only instance of either a semi-presidential democracy, and for the most part, the only instance in which parties clustered in semi-permanent blocs or alliances.

Neither condition holds today. Transitions to democracy have increased both the number of presidential and semi-presidential democracies. The number of instances in which parties cluster together in alliances of varying duration has increased as well. The Polish party system, by the far most fragmented of the newer central European democracies and EU member-states, provides us with another instance of clustering. So too does the post-1993 Italian party system, which we will discuss in greater detail below. In the Polish case, parties of the right and parties of the left, have come together in alliances or clusters. On the right, the phenomena reflects an attempt to bring order to section of the political spectrum whose disarray conjures up images of the French centre and right in the Third or Fourth Republics. Duverger (1954[1951]) described the former as a *marais*, or swamp. Short term alliances among parties and labels, themselves transient, were the best that parties descended from the Solidarity Trade Union movement, more unified when it was the principle opposition to Communism than afterward, could muster. If this were the only instance of clustering, we could probably ignore it, but two stronger parties, the Peasants (SLP) and the former Communists (Social Democracy for the Republic of Poland, SdRP), have also contested elections in a semi-permanent alliance, the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD).

If clustering is common, then it is something which should be taken into account in the classification and analysis of party systems. Clustering affects the mechanics or dynamics – what happens within the core. Voters' choices are different if they know that two or more parties are likely to ally with each other, either between ballots or after elections. Voters have more information about what certain parties will do with the seats they receive. The process of forming a cabinet can also be different because some predilections are not only known but also public. Were parties always to ally with each other, we could solve the problem of classification by counting them as one. But this is not always the case. The experience of the Fifth Republic suggests that parties will sometimes defect. This can occur before the first ballot, between ballots, or later on. To be sure, the latter is uncommon in France; however, defection from earlier agreements has been a problem both in post-1993 Italy and more recently, in Poland.

The Italian case:

If there is any party system which is instructive for our purposes, it is the Italian. Invariably described as Byzantine, the pre-1993 Italian party system was not only a prototype and model for Sartori's polarized pluralism, but also a system whose classification was disputed by many other scholars, who have argued that it was underpinned both by quiet cooperation among its principal opponents, Christian Democrats (DC) and Communists (PCI), but also a case of soft hegemony, in which the centre, far from being enfeebled by bipolar competition between anti-system parties at the extreme, ruled by sharing power with an increasingly broader range of parties, who very much became part and parcel of the system which collapsed under the weight of

permanent alliances or blocs. This solution facilitates calculation of measures such as ENEP, but begs the question of whether party systems in which clustering is a regular feature have distinct mechanics or dynamics.

judicial investigations (*Tangentopoli*) after the demise of international communism (Tarrow, 1990).

Sartori regarded the pre-1993 Italian party system as a prime example of polarized pluralism. Other scholars, often but not always younger, argued that over time, polarization was more apparent than real, and the Communists, governing in the red belt, emphasizing the importance of alliances and an Italian route to socialism (*Via Italiana*), organized as a mass party rather than one with revolutionary cells, and particularly after 1973, promoting an historic compromise with Christian Democracy, had long since ceased to be a revolutionary or anti-system party (see among others, Tarrow, 1990). If we accept much of the latter, the Italian case becomes an example not of polarized pluralism, exactly delineated by Sartori, but rather a case of a party system whose numbers were considerably more than we would expect under moderate pluralism, but whose dynamics were centripetal rather than centrifugal. The number of parties makes pre-1993 Italy an obvious example of extended multipartyism, whose exact classification depends on the extent of polarization in different periods.

If the pre-1993 party system is problematic, then the post-1993 Italian party system is even more so. The combination of judicial investigations into corruption, mounting disaffection and the fall of the Berlin wall and break-up of the Soviet Union prompted on most far-reaching reorganizations of a party system in any western democracies. This was facilitated not by regime change – although the First Republic may be deemed to have ended, it is not clear whether a second has actually begun – but the combination of disaffection, implosion of the Christian Democratic centre, and changes in the electoral law passed under moderate duress by sitting parties and politicians and an increasingly discredited political class. Prospective changes in the electoral law, including adoption of French-style two ballot system (‘binomial’), had been under examination by a joint parliamentary committee. Internal disagreement delayed action until a voter initiated a referendum that repealed the proportional component of elections to the upper house in 1993. Realizing that something had to be done, Italian politicians adopted their own variant of Germany’s additional member system. This provided for the election of three quarters of the members of the Chamber of Deputies in single member districts, with a first-past-the-post or plurality decision rule, and election of the remaining one quarter via proportional representation (Bartolini, *et al.*, 2004; Katz 1996).

The reform had unanticipated results. An already complex and fragmented system became even more fragmented and even more complex. Some of this reflects the implosion of the Christian Democratic centre, as well as the establishment or growth of newer parties. On the right, a new party founded by media and soccer magnate, Silvio Berlusconi, *Forza Italia* (FI), joined the Northern Leagues (*Lega del Nord*, led Umberto Bossi), and the reconstituted (and cleaned up) neo-Fascist party, the National Alliance (AN), led by Fini. Since 1993, these three parties have operated in an uneasy alliance or cluster, initially designated as the *Polo della Libertà* (pole of liberty) and more recently, as *Casa della Libertà* (or the House of Liberty, for the most part governing or opposing together). Changes on the left have been almost as dramatic. The Communists (PCI), already social democratic in their orientation if not their name, transformed themselves into the PDS or more recently, DS, the Democratic Left, and have ended up competing in alliance with fragments of the Christian Democracy (Prodi’s group), environmentalists and others, under the name *Ulivo* or Olive Tree. Competition is bipolar, but not polarized in the way

which Sartori specifies in his delineation of polarized pluralism. Instead, *Polo* and more recently *Casa del Liberta* have alternated in power with *Ulivo*. Neither cluster or bloc is completely unified. Berlusconi's first coalition government collapsed when Bossi and other deputies from the Northern Leagues defected. Allegiances on the left have been somewhat more durable, but the *Refundazioni* (refounded Communists) have defected. Political life within, between, and around each cluster is complex. Small parties vie for nominations, using potential strength on the proportional segment of the ballot to bargain for clearer shots at winning constituencies. In addition, parties of the right, now organized as the House of Liberty have regional pockets of strength. Bossi's Northern Leagues dominate constituencies in the North, Fini's National Alliance predominates in the south, while Berlusconi's *Forza Italia*, (built in the first instance around the advertising arm of Fininvest, the holding company for Berlusconi's private TV empire) is stronger in centre. Classifying such a party system would be a challenge under any typology. One solution would be to designate it as a case of complex multipartyism. (Bartolini *et al.* 2004) Using the dimensions we have outlined, it is a relatively polarized case of extended multipartyism, different from other cases of this type, because clustering in semi-permanent alliances is a feature without which its mechanics could not be understood. Thus, we can tentatively say that post-1993 Italy is an example of relatively polarized extended multipartyism with pronounced clustering. In contrast, France might be considered a case of limited, relatively polarized multipartyism with clustering.

Austria: more polarized limited multipartyism?

Typically, Austria, dominated by two mass parties, which more often than not have shared power, even when one was nominally in opposition, has presented far fewer problems of classification than either Italy or France, let alone Poland. Depending on the weight assigned to the smaller National Liberals, Austria from 1945 to 1990 could either be classified as a two or a three party system, or in Blondel (1968) and Siaroff's (2000) terms, a two-and-a-half party system (from 1949) onward. After 1990, the pattern has changed. Taking account of the growing strength of the Freedom Party (FPÖ) and the Greens, Siaroff classifies post-1990 Austria as a moderate multiparty system with balance among the parties. This is instructive, but misses the fact that balance among the parties was shifting rapidly as Heidar's FPÖ gained strength, and that the party system was becoming increasingly polarized (Müller and Falland, forthcoming). Allowing variation on degree of polarization allows us to track some of this variation and consider the ways in which this and other party systems are changing.

New classifications?

Neither time nor space permit detailed examination of other party systems, but it is useful to consider some very provisional classifications. This paper has taken Sartori's dimensions and proposed using one, the number of parties, in a less value-laden formulation, distinguishing among two party systems, limited multiparty systems, and extended multiparty systems, and using his second dimension, polarization, in different ways. One, which follows Sartori, is to differentiate party systems according to whether they are more or less polarized. However, rather than attempting to subdivide multiparty systems into those which exhibit moderate or extreme polarization, we have used a more extended categorization ranging from minimal, moderate, greater, and extreme polarization. Although this requires refined measurements, difficult but not impossible to obtain, doing so enables us to track ways in which party systems may have changed over time, and at the same time, to preserve the definition of polarized

pluralism which Sartori so carefully delineated. Polarized pluralism is, in the terms we have been using, a case of extended multipartyism characterized by extreme polarization. It is defined not so much by the number of parties, but also by the degree of polarization, and the centrifugal character of competition. As such, it is different from less polarized and less centrifugal instances of extended multipartyism. Table 3 provides a preliminary classification of the ways in which different party systems in different periods of time might be categorized. Party systems characterized by clustering are bolded in the chart.

Table 3 about here

This, of course, is not the only way in which these dimensions might be used. In our earlier discussion of polarization, we suggested that competition could not only be more polarized or less polarized, but also unimodal (in Sartori's terms, centripetal), bipolar (competition among two distinct groups of parties, which may be clustered into blocs), or in the case of some extended multiparty systems, multipolar, with intra-area competition going on three or more sectors of the party system. Table 4 provides a preliminary classification of the ways in which party systems in different periods might be categorized using these dimensions. As in table 3, party systems with distinct clustering are bolded.

Table 4 about here

Balance sheet: what has been achieved?

At this stage, a conclusion is in order. The original objective of this paper was to moot a new and parsimonious typology of party systems. This has not been achieved. What has been done is to consider a problem and suggest possible solutions. We have ended up with schema which, in a very preliminary and rough and ready fashion, disaggregate the Sartori's overcrowded moderate pluralism, and enable us to think about the ways in which party systems differ from each other and may have changed over time. However, we are a long way from a new typology, let alone a parsimonious one or one which would fit the requirements of a natural typology. In order to achieve that, we need to examine the cases in far greater detail, and consider ways in which key dimensions, particularly polarization, and the form of competition might be operationalized. Following Castles and Mair (1983), polarization might be operationalized by reputational analysis or following Abedi (2002) by measuring distance between parties at the extremes of the spectrum. Whatever approach is used, it is important to have historical and contemporary data, which in one way or another is comparable. The form or polarity of competition also requires operationalization. Of the dimensions which we have suggested, only the number of parties, operationalized using Sartori's counting rules, or to ensure consistency, Siaroff's (2000) convention of counting all parties which have won 3% or more of the popular vote, is relatively straightforward. Operationalizing key dimensions, however, is only a first step. We need to examine the cases, and consider the extent to which likes are grouped with likes, reduce the number of categories, and determine whether the resulting typology has predictive value. In view of this agenda, this paper is a first step, and hopefully an important one, but at this

stage, not much more.

Table 3. A provisional categorization: limited vs. extended multipartyism and degree of polarization

| | | two party | limited multiparty | extended multiparty |
|------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Number of parties | | 2 major parties | 3-5, outside 6 | 6-8 outside 10 |
| degree of polarization | minimal | Austria 1945-1990 | Austria 1990-1998 | Denmark |
| | moderate | UK 1945-70 UK 1997-present | FRG 1957-1998 Sweden Norway Netherlands 1918-39 Netherlands 1945-1967 Netherlands 1986-1998+ Austria 1990s Czech Republic 1993-present Hungary 1993-present Slovakia 1993 present | Italy 1970-1993 Netherlands 2002-present Poland 1990-present |
| | greater | UK 1979-1997 | Austria 1998-present Netherlands 1967-1986 5th R France | Italy 1945-1970 Italy 1993-present Israel |
| | extreme | | | polarized pluralism Weimar 2 nd R Spain 3 rd R France 1930s 4 th R France |

Provisional categorization by author. **Bolded** cases are instances of party systems with some or pronounced clustering of parties.

Table 4. Provisional categorization: limited vs. extended multipartyism, mode of competition and degree of polarization

| | | two party | limited multiparty | | extended multiparty | | |
|------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|--|--|----------------------|--|---|
| Number of parties | | 2 major parties | 3-5, outside 6 | | 6-8 outside 10 | | |
| form of competition | | | unimodal | bipolar | unimodal | bipolar | multipolar |
| degree of polarization | minimal | Austria 1945-90 | | | | | |
| | moderate | UK 1945-70 UK 1997-present | Austria 1990-1998 FRG 1957-1998 Belgium to 1970 Norway Netherlands 1918-39 Netherlands 1945-67 Netherlands 1986-2002 Austria 1990s Hungary? Czech R | FRG 1998-present Sweden Norway Denmark pre-1973 | Netherlands 2002- | Poland 1990-present | Italy 1970s-80s Belgium since 1970 Denmark after 1973 |
| | greater | UK 1979-1997 | Netherlands 1967-1986 | Austria 2000 5th R France | | Italy 1993-present Israel | Italy 1950s-60s |
| | extreme | Austria 1918-38 | | | | | polarized pluralism: Weimar 2 nd R Spain 3 rd R France 1930s 4 th R France |

Provisional categorization by author. **Bolded** cases are instances of party systems with some or pronounced clustering of parties.

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