WHAT'S IN A NAME? PARTY LABELS AROUND THE WORLD

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0. Introduction: Ordinary Versus Special Language

Social scientists attempt to communicate among themselves in the midst of confusion among words, terms, and concepts. Sartori has described this forum for communication as a Tower of Babel (1). The Babel is greater in some fields than in others. It often becomes a din in the study of political parties. Parties scholars must not only contend with problems of communicating among themselves, but they must cut through the value-charged language of party politics, in which parties are named as politicians please. Consider the old French Radical Socialist Party, which, scholars contended, was neither "radical" nor "socialist" (2,p.149, 356). Equally misnamed was the Revolutionary Party of Democratic Unification in El Salvador, which was neither "revolutionary" nor "democratic" and did little to unify the country (3,p.16). Such curious examples of party labels entitle those who study parties to ask, "What's in a name?"

Questions about words, terms, and concepts have arisen outside the parties field as well. Troubled by these questions, Fred W. Riggs and Giovanni Sartori in 1970 organized the Committee on Conceptual and Terminological Analysis (COCTA) within the International Political Science Association "to confront the terminological confusion and conceptual morass" in social science research (4,p.1). In the decade since its founding, COCTA has sponsored conferences and papers to improve the clarity and thus the quality of social analysis. It has followed the broad strategy of focusing on concepts rather than words:

> Words may refer to concepts, but they are not concepts. We cannot speak of the concept, "ideology," or "democracy," or "consensus," but only of these words as indicators or symbols for related conconcepts. Such words typically refer to a congeries of concepts or, more accurately, to a set of fuzzily imagined conceptions (4,p.2).

COCTA activities have been devoted to building more precise "special languages" to communicate the carefully defined concepts involved in social analysis -- all within the framework of the "ordinary language" (e. g., English, French, Arabic) that scholars speak. This paper compares concepts in a special language for analyzing party ideology with words used in ordinary language to symbolize political parties. It assumes that we must understand the usage of ordinary language for social phenomena before we can succeed in "semantic passing," which Riggs defines as "the transfer of meaning between ordinary and special language" (4,p.13).

0.1 Party names as ordinary language with symbolic appeal

Edelman, the foremost American writer on symbolism in politics, points out the difference between the research objectives of political scientists and the action objectives of politicians:

> Semantically, and even phonetically, words and phrases have rich associations unless they are deliberately divested of them by an analyst who fits terms into a narrow and clear scheme. This is useful to logic but can be fatal to propaganda (6,p.124).

Edelman notes that political activists engage in cognitive and rational planning in choosing symbols:

> Once a term becomes a vehicle for expressing a group interest it goes without saying that it is in no sense descriptive, but only evocative (p.125)... It is the conventional responses to such words as 'liberal', 'conservative', 'regulation', and 'law' that constitute the prevailing political sign structure, providing an order that permits groups to act, to anticipate the responses of others, and to acquire status (p.127).

Parties choose symbols to evoke mass support from the public in general or from special clienteles. The Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League in postwar Burma was obviously combining symbols for effect. When the AFPFL split in 1958, both fractions claimed the original symbols and each added yet another: one calling itself the "Clean" AFPFL and the other styling itself as the "Stable" AFPFL: "Clean" or "Stable," the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League seemed to be choosing its labels carefully, as one would expect in the practice of symbolic politics.

0.2 Problems posed for comparative analysis

The comparative analysis of party names must begin with their translation into a common "ordinary" language. This study of party labels across the world relies on their English translations. No doubt this introduces many problems in the analysis, but Riggs' study of the "backtranslation" of key

terms in political discourse suggests that the problems are not major for the types of words we will be analyzing (7). There is also the issue of what qualifies as a party 'name'. The Dutch Volkpartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie translates directly into the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, but many commentators refer to the VVD simply as the Liberal Party. Similarly, the Iranian Masses (Tudeh) Party was also called the Communist Party. *A different problem arises when the party explicitly changes its name,* as the Swedish Farmers Party did in 1957 to become the Center Party. While one might argue for the strict position of allowing each party only one official name, this study follows the more generous policy of admitting multiple names closely associated with a party.

Party names that are idiosyncratic to the politics of given countries pose a special problem for comparative analysis. A good example is the Irish Fianna Fail, which translates as "soldiers of Destiny," recalling the Irish Civil War. Another is the defunct Ugandan Kabaka Yekka, which translates roughly as "Only the King," referring to the leader of Buganda. *An English-language example is the Social Credit Party, whose program for* increasing the purchasing power of the masses was unique to Canada. Most parties, however, employ symbols that have political meaning across countries. We confine our analysis to these words in party names.

1.   Words as Symbols in the Names of 158 Political Parties

We will examine the symbols chosen by 158 parties that operated in 53 countries across the world from 1950 to 1962. (A list of all the names of the 158 parties may be secured by writing to the author.) The information comes from Political Parties: A Cross National Survey (8). Five countries were drawn at random from each of ten regions to produce a stratified random sample of 50 countries with operating party systems. Three other countries were added later. The parties had to meet minimum levels of strength and stability (8,p.7), but they represented all types of party politics: competitive, restrictive, and subversive (8,p.78-82). The findings from this heterogeneous sample should be broadly generalizable to political parties across the world.

Most of the variation in the names of these 158 parties can be accommodated under four categories of symbols: popular government, ideological, integrationist, and group-specific. One or more of these symbols appear in a surprising 141 of the 158 parties, or 89 percent!

1.1   Symbols evoking the value of popular government

This category includes parties labeled with five root words connoting

citizens participation in government. The words and their frequencies of occurrence are

democracy	34	people	20
freedom	6	republican	8
liberal	15		

Although there were 83 occurrences of these root words, some appeared twice in the same party name, e.g., the German Free Democratic Party. In all, 68 of the 158 parties (43 percent) contained one or more symbols of popular government in their names. More parties cloaked themselves in "democracy" or one of its variants (22 percent) than any other single mantle. Whether a "democratic" party promotes popular government any more than any other party, however, remains to be seen.

1.2 Symbols describing economic policies or ideologies

These symbols pertain to the familiar left-right ideological continuum and its overtones for social change. The root words, and their frequency of occurrence, are:

center	2	progress	6
communist	11	radical	4
conservative	7	revolution	7
left	3	right	1
moderate	2	socialist	11

The listing of parties under 'ideological symbols' reveals that some, like the Ecuadorian Radical Liberal Party, also had a 'popular government' symbol and were listed there as well. Although more words were used to symbolize parties' ideological appeals than to symbolize popular participation, the extra words actually account for fewer parties, only 46 or 29 percent. Some of these words, like 'communist' and 'conservative', convey a clearer idea of party ideology than words like 'progress' and 'radical'. But it is problematic whether even the clearer labels truly reveal the party ideology.

1.3 Symbols invoking integrationist sentiments: Sartori noted the semantic linkage between 'party' and the Latin verb, partire, (to divide) and stressed the sense of party as 'part-of-a-whole' (9,p.4-5, 24-25). Nevertheless, many parties seek to overcome the imagery of divisiveness with these integrationist symbols:

African	6
national	27
united	11

We listed 39 parties (27 percent) under 44 appearances of these integration-ist root words and their many variants (e.g., "unification", "unionist," and "unity" as expressions of "united"). "African," a word that also has sepa-ratist connotations, is classified as a symbol of integration for its value in superceding tribal loyalties. The integrationist category might have been expanded to include symbols used in place of "party" itself. This would have accommodated two parties that styled themselves as "alliances" and thirty that claimed to be "unions," as in the case of the Christian Democra-tic Union, a party name found in both Germanies. While arguable, this ex-pansion of the category was not pursued in this analysis, which is limited to parties symbolized by one or more of the root words above. The question is whether these parties actually seek to integrate the country.

1.4 Symbols that appeal to specific groups

If parties are indeed 'part-of-a-whole', one might expect them to choose labels that flash the proper symbols to their clienteles. However, a total of only 24 parties (15%) made appeals to specific groups under these symbols:

agrarian	2	labor	10
Catholic	1	Moslem	2
Christian	7	peasants	2
country	1	workers	5
farmers	2		

Apparently, parties are less likely to portray themselves as 'part-of-a-whole' by making symbolic appeals to specific groups than to invoke inte-grationist sentiments.

1.5 Assessing the terminological problem

We have seen that the names of nearly 90 percent of the world's parties contain words that symbolize popular government, left-right ideolo-gy, national integration, or social groups. We recall that scholars have doubted the descriptive validity of these words, as in the case of the French "Radical Socialists" and the Salvadorean "Revolutionary" Party of "Democratic Reunification." We know also that party names are chosen for political communication, not scholarly communication. Underlying our sense that party labels are "misused" for political effect is a belief that the word 'socialist' should describe a particular party ideology as stipulated in a spe-cial language of political analysis. When a word is used quite differently in ordinary language, we despair about the ability to pass semantically between our special and ordinary language. We will assess this problem by consider-

ing a special laguage created for analyzing political parties to see how close-
ly terms in the special language correspond to words in ordinary language.

2. Concepts in a Special Language for Studying Parties

The special language to be discussed is the conceptual framework re-
ported in Political Parties: A Cross -National Survey (8), which analyzes
parties under ten broad concepts embracing 111 'basic variables' that are
themselves less abstract concepts of party properties. The conceptual
framework was structured so that the basic variables serve as indicators of
the concept that subsumed them. We will not be concerned here with des-
cribing the conceptual framework nor with reporting the successful attempt
at its validation. These matters are discussed at length elsewhere (8,
Chapters 3-14). For the present discussion, we will focus on only three of
thirteen basic variables subsumed under the concept of "issue orientation",
which is defined simply as the set of party positions on issues with cross-
national significance. The three that have special relevance for us are
'Electoral Participation', 'Government Ownership', and 'National Integration'.
Like all basic variables in the conceptual framework, these issues have both
a conceptual and an operational definition. Both are discussed below for
each concept.

2.1 Electoral Participation

The conceptual discussion of electoral participation is ʄather long. Here
are the key portions:

> The abstract issue of popular participation in government can be trans-
> lated into the concrete issues of the extent and nature of participation
> in elections to choose governmental leaders ...
> A party's response to the extent of electoral participation relates to its
> position on extension of the franchise, which depends not only on its
> commitment to political equality but also on the practical consequences
> of extending the franchise to segments of the population previously
> excluded from the electorate ....
> The nature of electoral participation, however, is as important as the
> extension of the franchise. Universal suffrage cannot yield meaningful
> participation if the voters do not have a choice among candidates in
> elections...(8, p.69)

The operational definition of this scale involved scoring the parties on an
11-point scale. The low point of -5 was given to parties advocating a reduc-
tion in the enfranchised population or opposing free elections to select go-
vernment officials. The high score of +5 awarded to parties favoring uni-
versal adult suffrage and competitive elections.

2.2 Government Ownership: The full name of this variable is 'government ownership of the means of production'. Here are the relevant portions from its conceptual definition:

> The 'means of production' is defined as the operative capacity to manufacture, construct, fabricate, grow, or otherwise produce goods to be marketed domestically or exported. Our interest in means of production is largely limited to "basic industries" -- those that produce capital goods for use in production (e.g., lumber, mining, steel) or furnish services that are essential to an industrial economy (e.g., communications, transportation, and utilities) ...
> Conceptually, the party with a strong proposition on this issue is thought to reflect the classic Marxist position as represented in the Communist Manifesto: "The proletariat will use its political supremacy ... to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state" (8, p.55).

Our measurement of party positions on this issue involved rating parties on an 11-point scale ranging from −5 (assigned to parties that strongly opposed government ownership) to +5 (for those strongly in favor of government ownership).

2.3 National Integration

Again, the conceptual discussion of this concept was so long that only excerpts are proviced:

> It is the intent of this variable to identify the focus of functional and symbolic authority advocated by the party and to note whether national or subnational influences predominate ...
> The extreme nationalist position on this issue is clearly advocacy of the obliteration of subnational loyalties, whether regional, ethnic, linguistic, traditional, or some combination of these. (8,p.67-68)

The operational definition for national integration employed an 11-point scale, ranging from −5 to +5. The low score of −5 was given to parties that advocated subnational autonomy or succession. The high score of +5 was assigned to parties advocating obliteration of subnational autonomy or assimilation of social groups in a national political culture.

3. Relationships between Party Symbols and Party Concepts

We now have the opportunity to compare party labels with party content. Do the "popular government," "ideological," "integrationist," and "group-specific" symbols attached to 89 percent of the party labels have any systematic relationship to party scores on carefully-defined concepts in a special language? If we find a close fit between the symbols and the ostensibly matching concepts, the problem of passing between ordinary and special

languages in the study of parties would seem to be minor. If we find a lack of relationship, however, the problem would seem to be major.

The task is to match the symbols to the concepts. One might think that this is a simple matter for correlation analysis, but that technique has limitations for this study. Remember that our interest is whether party practice is faithful to the party label. Technically, that means that we are interested not only in the mean difference in concept scores between groups of parties with and without the symbols, but we are even more interested in observing low variance among parties sharing symbols of the same type. This point will be illuminated in the analysis below.

A total of 68 parties used symbols of popular government in their names. Due to missing data, not all of these were scored for their positions on the concept of electoral participation. The 49 parties for which we have data, however, scored distinctly higher (3.4) on electoral participation than did the 71 other parties (2.8). But the correlation between symbolizing popular government in the party label and standing for electoral participation is only .10. The low correlation is due to the high scores on electoral participation by parties (like the British Labour and Conservative parties) that do not wear symbols of popular government. This is shown by the larger standard deviation among these parties. Parties that use labels of 'democracy', 'freedom', 'liberal', 'people's' or 'republican' not only have a higher mean score for electoral participation but a lower standard deviation (2.5 to 3.3). A succinct way of summarizing the pattern is through discriminant analysis, using electoral participation as the sole predictor. The discriminant function generated from this analysis allows us to say that 71% of the parties that parade under a label of popular government are "correctly" classified by high scores on electoral participation. On the other hand, 66% of those parties that lack the symbols also score high on electoral participation. So in essence, the symbols tell us something about party practice concerning popular government, but not much.

The findings are quite different for the fit between party symbols and concepts dealing with party ideology, although the analysis was substantially modified to fit the situation. The proper comparison here is not between parties with ideological symbols in their names and those without, but among the parties with the symbols. Of the ten root words that symbolized party ideologies, four were too vague to allow placement on a left-right continuum ("moderate," "progress", "radical", and "revolution"). Two other words ("left" and "right") merely overlapped with one of the other six that entered the analysis, e.g., the Swedish Right or Conservative Party. This left 11 "communist" parties, 11 "socialist," 1 "center," and 7 "conserva-

tive". If we array these four types of parties on a 4-point scale with 4 assigned to "communist," we can appropriately compute a simple correlation coefficient to determine the match between the labels and government ownership. In this instance, the product-moment correlation is a startling .88. For these 30 parties, their ideological labels are good, but not infallible, guides to their positions on government ownership of the means of production. The two parties that deviated the most from the relationship were the French Radical Socialist Party, which tended to oppose government ownership, and the Canadian Progressive Conservative Party, which opposed government ownership less strongly than the other conservative parties. With these exceptions (and some lesser ones) the relationship between ordinary words and special concepts for party ideology is surprisingly strong.

The remaining two classes of party symbols, integrationist and group-specific, can be combined for anlysis. One might suspect little overlap between the 39 integrationist parties and the 24 group-specific symbols in their names. One, the Bulgarian National Agrarian Union, offers no basis for classification in one category or the other on the basis of words alone. But the other does. The Burmese National United Front (integrationist symbols) had evolved from the former Workers and Peasants Party (group-specific symbols). This party was assigned to the 'integrationist' category due to its appeal to both 'workers' and 'peasants'. Excluding the Bulgarian National Agrarian Union, we have disjunct sets of parties: one offering integration and the other appealing to specific groups. We would expect that the group-specific parties would rank low. Parties that avoided both types of symbols should be intermediate on national integration.

The findings only partially support these expectations. For the 31 integrationist parties in the analysis, the mean score on national integration is 2.6, distinctly higher than the mean scores for the other two sets of parties. But the group-specific parties unexpectedly rank higher (1.7) on national integration than the 67 parties that lack either symbol (1.2). Again, the discriminant analysis says we do well in classifying the integrationist parties (71 percent right) but not so well on the others.

4. Conclusion

This effort to compare ordinary words for naming parties with concepts in a special language for analyzing parties produced some predictable findings but also more surprising ones. The findings can be summarized under two headings: what we learned about the usage of ordinary words to label parties, and what we learned about the comparison between ordinary words

and special terms.

There is considerably more order than chaos in the way parties are labeled in ordinary language. Nearly 90% of the world's parties have names that symbolize popular government, political ideology, integrationist sentiment, or specific groups. Fully 22 percent, one party in every five, is stylized in some way or other as 'democratic', with 'national' being the most frequent symbol (17%). Contrary to the common view of party as 'part' of a society, more parties (27%) make integrationist appeals than group-specific appeals (15%). These findings are new to the literature.

The fit between party labels and party practice, as might have been expected, is not extremely good, except for those that use ideological symbols -- which is probably unexpected. Most of the parties that use symbols of popular government and national integration actually advocate such policies (about 79%), but so do many parties that do not use those symbols. Although parties that make group-specific claims tend not to contradict themselves by using integrationist symbols as well, they are slightly above average on national integration compared to all other parties.

Concerning the general topic of conceptual and terminological analysis, a message emerges from this study. It is to have hope for the enterprise. The gap between ordinary words and special terms appears bridgeable at least in the study of political parties, where one might have expected a yawning chasm.

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