

LANE ERSSON
Politics and Society in Western Europe

3 Political Parties

parties in Western Europe. On the other hand, new and emerging parties that challenge the traditional large parties face an uncertain future as their electoral base is easily undermined. Lawson and Merkl state that 'Disaffection with the world's major parties is widespread, but the exact nature of that discontent, and the action it prompts the disaffected to take, vary widely' (1988: 5).

The purpose of this chapter is to survey the many West European political parties in terms of their role as intermediaries between civil society and the state. What kinds of parties have been operating and in what ways are they supported by civil society?

The shifting nature of parties

The first theories of West European political parties as the major free associations of civil society in its democratic age focused on the rise of the mass party and its implications for internal party democracy. The transformation from parliamentary elite parties to mass parties was analysed by Ostrogorski and Michels at the beginning of the twentieth century (Ware, 1996). Then there was the transformation from ideological parties towards catch-all parties in the 1950s and 1960s, as analysed by Kirchheimer. Kirchheimer argued that the integrative tasks of political parties have become stronger than their articulative functions, meaning that they tend to emphasize broader ideological themes and party appeals:

Under present conditions of spreading secular and mass consumer-goods orientation, with shifting and less obtrusive class lines, the former class-mass parties and denominational mass parties are both under pressure to become catch-all people's parties. (Kirchheimer, 1966:190)

Furthermore, it has been suggested that recent developments in the 1990s indicate that a new type of political party has emerged in several party systems: the cartel party (Katz and Mair, 1995). Such a party is not only characterized by rational management by a professional core of salaried people, but it is typically financed to a large extent by state subsidies. A cartel party stands upon two pillars, civil society and the state, which means that the demarcation line between the two becomes blurred.

Now, political parties have always been able to use the resources of the state for their own purposes, as their representation in representative bodies is paid for by government. This fact sets them apart from other kinds of voluntary association in civil society, which need to concentrate on the narrow interests of their members. Tocqueville pointed out the difference between political parties and interest organizations by focusing on the problem of collective action, or how to match benefits and costs when groups of individuals engage in collective behaviour. On the one hand, 'Men

Political parties may be seen as intermediaries between civil society and the state with its political decision-making and policy implementation in government structures. Tocqueville wrote:

Civil associations, therefore, facilitate political associations; but, on the other hand, political associations singularly strengthen and improve associations for civil purposes. (Tocqueville, 1990: II, 115)

In political systems characterized by representative government political parties are the principal vehicles for political action. Interacting with citizens' and interest organizations, parties express and organize political demand and support in relation to social cleavages; parties recruit government decision-makers whose behaviour has a profound impact upon society by means of the implementation by bureaucracies of government decisions and actions. Party government is characteristic of democracy in large-scale polities. Not even small Switzerland with its tradition of direct democracy in numerous referendums can do without political parties and governments recruited by them. If the electorate were to decide on each and every issue by means of a referendum, then the transaction costs would be overwhelming. It is no wonder that the study of political parties has attracted the attention of political sociologists. In the words of Blondel:

Political parties are thus one of the most fascinating as well as most modern institutions of political life. They are multiform and they are at the crossroads between the institutional and behavioural aspects of politics. (Blondel, 1969: 221)

The fact that modern democracy in the form of representative government has proved to be the only viable institutional framework for the exercise of popular will does not prove the existence of party systems all over Western Europe. Political parties may be regarded as organized collectivities capable of intentional action in order to promote their own interests. Democracy opens up the opportunities for political parties, but how the challenges of party government are confronted depends on the goals and capacities of the political parties themselves.

A major theme in the study of West European politics is the viability of political parties. It is argued more and more that parties operate under increasing stress. On the one hand, the traditional parties have more and more difficulties in maintaining their electoral support, particularly the large

can embark in few civil partnerships without risking a portion of their possessions; this is the case with all manufacturing and trading companies' (1990: II, 116). On the other hand:

They are less reluctant, however, to join political associations, which appear to them to be without danger because they risk no money in them. But they cannot belong to these associations for any length of time without finding out how order is maintained among a large number of men and by what contrivance they are made to advance, harmoniously, and methodically, to the same object. (1990: II, 116)

Thus, political parties as vehicles for citizen opinion have broad collective interests whereas interest groups pay attention to narrow collective interests. Government in a representative democracy involves voters' choice in elections between political party alternatives. It is a classical issue of research contention whether the parties set the agenda for the voter or the electorate decides between the parties or party ideologies expressed in the form of electoral manifestos and election day promises, to be kept when the party(parties) get a majority of the vote and to be implemented by means of government action (Schattschneider, 1960; Key, 1966).

The rational choice image of government in a representative liberal democracy as being responsive to voters has had to accept another model of democracy as elite competition where political parties or political entrepreneurs have the upper hand in framing electoral choice (Schumpeter, 1944). This Schumpeterian model of democracy has in turn been criticized by supporters of the normative model of democracy as participation that rejects the claims of party government (Pateman, 1970). Recent work has evaluated the models of party government, looking at the extent to which political parties perform their traditional functions according to democratic theory: interest articulation and aggregation, policy-making and system legitimation (Ware, 1996). Under test is the hypothesis that parties are in a state of crisis due to increased electoral volatility, the bureaucratization of party organization and the existence of corporatist patterns of policy-making and implementation (Daalder, 1987a).

Thus, the Downsian or rational choice model of democracy as well as the directional theory of issue voting, placing the emphasis upon the electorate though in different ways (Rabinowitz and Macdonald, 1989), has been challenged by elite theory, which argues that political parties determine the frame of reference of the voters. According to the directional theory voters choose on the basis of several dimensions or different types of issues and they take a stand in relation to a party that has a transparent policy or programmatic profile.

A number of strategies are available for political parties to stabilize their situation in the short or long term: the mobilization of an electoral niche, as with Rokkan, the turn to a Kirchheimer catch-all strategy, or the use of state power to create a symbiosis between party and public authority. Modern

party research inquires more into the conditions that destabilize political parties and their environment (Lawson and Merkl, 1988) than into the factors that enhance stability (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967b). To what extent are political parties continuous phenomena?

Asking why there are parties in the first place means searching for linkages between citizens and rulers in relation to which parties derive their functions. The failure of several established political parties has meant that alternative organizations have arisen to link citizens and the state: these are the new social movements (Kriesi et al., 1995; Koopmans, 1996). One may question the relevance of traditional cleavages as the basis for the alignment of voters behind political parties, as the emergent parties are classified most often on the basis of cultural notions: environmentalist (the Green parties in Germany and Sweden, the Italian Radicals, Swiss civic action groups), supplementary (SDP in the UK, Glistrup in Denmark), communitarian (ethnic groups in the UK) and anti-authoritarian. One may place political parties between the two linkage poles – citizens and the state, which reflect the changing environment of politics: *citizens* relate differently to parties now because the political culture emphasizes independence, discretion and disloyalty; the *state* in a period of overload government creates a new institutional setting for the parties where many groups scramble for power and influence, making party life ambiguous, complex and hazardous (Lawson and Merkl, 1988). Before we discuss the viability of parties today as intermediators we will identify them – how many parties are there, and of what kind? To what extent do political parties reflect the traditional cleavages described in Chapter 2?

Mapping the parties

The multi-party system format is the characteristic mode in Western Europe. Thus, in all countries we expect to find examples of almost all the different types of party identified below. Let us briefly survey the existing political parties in Western Europe and suggest a classification according to cleavage criteria, i.e. whether they belong to the structural or non-structural type of party. It should be pointed out that some of the political parties in Western Europe are difficult to classify unambiguously, for example the Irish parties (Gallagher, 1985; Mair, 1987) or the French and Greek political parties.

The political parties in Western Europe may be classified in various ways (Raschke, 1978; Smith, 1980; Wendt, 1981; McHale, 1983; Steed and Hearl, 1985; Humphreys and Steed, 1988; Seiler, 1992). We make a distinction between structural parties and non-structural parties allowing for borderline cases, following the cleavage approach in Chapter 2. The structural parties may be divided into ethnic, agrarian, religious and class-based parties like socialist and communist parties though some conservative parties could be regarded as class-based. Among the non-structural parties

we distinguish between centre, liberal, conservative, environmental, dis-content (populist) and ultra-right parties. How many parties are there according to these party-type categories in the West European political systems?

Structural parties

Political parties may be classified as religious parties on the basis of four criteria: name, programme, appeal and international relations. It is an open question whether or not some of the very large religious parties like CDU and ÖVP should really be put in this category. It may be argued that the German CDU and the ÖVP in Austria belong to the conservative party type. However, classifications are not true in an absolute sense but only more or less plausible. The parties we count as religious parties are shown in Table 3.1 (Fogarty, 1957; Brezzi, 1979; Irving, 1979; Hanley, 1994).

Typically, an ethnic party is formed for the purpose of protecting the interests of the group it represents. Often the orientation appears in the choice of party denomination, but perhaps the orientation is marked still more strongly by parties' programmes (Rudolph and Thompson, 1989; Newman, 1994; Seiler, 1994). It may be pointed out that one may discuss for instance whether the Flemish VB ought to be classified as an ethnic party or

TABLE 3.1 *Religious parties*

Austria	ÖVP	Österreichische Volkspartei
Belgium	PSC/CVP	Parti Social Chrétien/Christelijke Volkspartij
	PSC	Parti Social Chrétien
Denmark	CVP	Christelijke Volkspartij
	KRF	Kristeligt Folkparti
Finland	SKL	Suomen Kristillinen Liitto
France	MRP	Mouvement Républicain Populaire
	REF	Mouvement Réformateur
Germany	CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union
	CSU	Christlich Soziale Union
Ireland	FG	Fine Gael
Italy	DC	Democrazia Cristiana
	PPI	Partito Popolare Italiano
Luxembourg	CCD/CDU	Centro Cristiano Democratico/Cristiani Democratici Uniti
	PCS	Parti Chrétien Social
Netherlands	CDA	Christen Democratisch Appel
	ARP	Anti-Revolutionaire Partij
Norway	KVP	Katholieke Volkspartij
	CHU	Christelijk-Historische Unie
Portugal	SGP	Saakundig Gereformeerde Partij
	KiF	Kristeligt Folkparti
Sweden	CDS	Partido do Centro Democrático Social
	Kd	Kristdemokraterna
Switzerland	CVP	Christlichdemokratische Volkspartei
	EVP	Evangelische Volkspartei

TABLE 3.2 *Ethnic parties*

Belgium	VU	Volkswinnit
	VB	Vlaamse Blok
Finland	FDJ	Front Démocratique des Bruxellois Francophones
	RW	Rassemblement Wallon
Italy	SFP	Svenska Folkpartiet
	SVP	Südtiroler Volkspartei
Spain	Lega	Lega Nord
	PNV	Partido Nacionalista Vasco
Switzerland	CUJ	Convergencia y Unio
	HB	Herrn Basasuna
United Kingdom	Lega	Lega dei Ticinesi
	SNP	Scottish National Party
	PC	Plaid Cymru
	SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
	Union	Ulster Unionists and Loyalists

as an ultra-right or populist party (Breuning, 1997). We count the organizations shown in Table 3.2 as ethnic parties in present-day Europe.

Perhaps there are no rural or agrarian parties today in the sense that such parties pursue mainly agrarian interests or are supported predominantly by rural voters. Yet, there exist parties that may be considered as the heirs of agrarian or rural political traditions (Gollwitzer, 1977), although some of these parties could equally well be labelled liberal parties. As rural parties today we characterize those in Table 3.3.

TABLE 3.3 *Agrarian parties*

Denmark	V	Venstre
Finland	KESK	Suomen Keskuste
Iceland	PP	Progressive Party/Framsoknar flokkur
Norway	SP	Senterpartiet
Sweden	CP	Centerpartiet
	SVP	Schweizerische Volkspartei

Socialist parties may be identified on the basis of historical tradition, party programme and international cooperation (Paterson and Thomas, 1977, 1986; Pelinka, 1980; Lazar, 1996). Socialist parties are easily identified on the basis of membership in the Socialist International. Member parties are to be found in all the West European countries. The most recent social democratic party was the British SDP. Formed in 1981 it was dissolved in 1990 after major parts of the party had been amalgamated with the Liberal Party into the Social and Liberal Democrats. The SDP acted in the electoral arena for some time in an alliance with the Liberal Party and later on simply as the Liberal Democrats. The parties to be counted as socialist parties are shown in Table 3.4.

Communist parties could be identified on the basis of their names, programmes and historical traditions. All the parties had some form of the

TABLE 3.4 Socialist parties

Austria	SPO	Sozialistische Partei Österreichs
Belgium	BSP/PSB BSP PSB SD PS SPD	Belgische Socialistische Partij/Parti Socialiste Belge Parti Socialiste Belge Socialdemokratiet Socialdemokraattinen Puolue Parti Socialiste Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
Denmark	PS	
Finland	SDP	
France	PS	
Germany	SPD	
Greece	PASOK	Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement
Iceland	SDP	Social Democrats/Alþýðuflokkur
Ireland	SDF	Social Democratic Federation/Bandlag Jafnhamanna
Italy	LAB PSI PSDI	Irish Labour Party Partito Socialista Italiano Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano
Luxembourg	PDS	Partito Democratico della Sinistra
Netherlands	POS	Parti Ouvrier Socialist Luxembourgeois
Norway	PvdA	Partij van der Arbeid
Portugal	DNA	Det Norske Arbeiderpartiet
Spain	PSP	Partido Socialista Portugues
Sweden	PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español
Switzerland	SAP	Socialdemokratiske Arbeidspartiet
United Kingdom	LAB SDP	Labour Party Social Democratic Party

word 'communist' in the party label (Rubbi, 1979; Courtois, 1986; Timmermann, 1987; Waller and Fennema, 1988). The only exceptions in Western Europe were the Swiss and the Icelandic parties, but around 1990 some of the West European Communist parties did drop the label 'communist', for example, the Swedish Communist Party in 1990. By tradition all West European communist parties take their origin from the time of the formation of the Comintern in 1919, and sooner or later they became members of the Comintern, but the reorientation of the party ideology in the early 1990s involved a movement towards the image of a broadly based popular left-wing party. After the Second World War the parties regarded themselves as members of the communist world movement; attendance at the European communist meeting held in East Berlin in June 1976 may be considered a criterion if the party was to be counted as communist. Communist parties exist in all the West European countries. The party that was legalized last was the Spanish party in 1976. The disintegration of the socialist states in Eastern Europe had a rather dramatic impact upon the communist parties in Western Europe. To give one example, the Italian PCI has been transformed into the socialist PDS at the same time as the new RC has filled the communist space in Italy. The communist parties of today are shown in Table 3.5 (Bell, 1993; Bull, 1995; Moreau et al., 1998).

The set of left-wing socialist parties is not easily identified, but the employment of both organizational and ideological criteria helps considerably (Baumgarten, 1982). Typically, these parties originate from social

TABLE 3.5 Communist parties

Austria	KPO	Kommunistische Partei Österreichs
Belgium	KPB/PCB	Kommunistische Partij van België/Parti Communiste de Belgique
Denmark	DKP	Danmarks Kommunistiske Parti
Finland	SKDL DV	Suomen Kansan Demokraattinen Liitto Demokraattinen Vaihtoehto
France	VAS	Vasemmistoliitto
Germany	PCF DKP/KPD	Parti Communiste Français Deutsche Kommunistische Partei
Greece	PDS	Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus
	KKE	Communist Party of Greece
	EDA	United Democratic Left
	KKES	Communist Party of Greece -- Interior
Iceland	PA	People's Alliance/Alþýðubandalag
Ireland	CPI	Communist Party of Ireland
Italy	PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano
	RC	Rifondazione Comunista
Luxembourg	PCL	Parti Communiste Luxembourgeois
Netherlands	CPN	Communistische Partij Nederland
Norway	NKP	Norges Kommunistiske Parti
	RV	Røed Valgallianse
Portugal	PCP	Partido Comunista Portugues
Spain	PCE	Partido Comunista de España
Sweden	V	Vänsterpartiet
Switzerland	PUA	Partei der Arbeit der Schweiz
United Kingdom	CPGB	Communist Party

democratic or communist parties from which they have split. The difficulty in identifying such a party is that they are not easily separated from social democratic or communist parties, and they tend to be short-lived. Besides, the ideological criterion is not clear-cut as the emergence of an environmentalist ideology has attracted the attention of left-wing groupings, for example in Germany where 'Die Grüne' comprises groups that adhere to some kind of left-wing orientation. The set of left-socialist parties we include are listed in Table 3.6.

A number of political parties are not officially associated with a traditional cleavage. The parties without a cleavage basis are of different kinds, some referring to ideology whereas others tie up with political culture.

Non-structural parties

Examples of non-structural parties may be found on both the right and left as well as in the centre, ideologically speaking. Although these parties often declare that they wish to bridge the left-right division, some do take a very clear stand in relation to left-right issues.

We find liberal – or centre liberal – parties in practically all West European party systems as they are often easy to identify because of their name. Ideology may also be used for the identification of liberal parties. It is

TABLE 3.6 Left-socialist parties

Denmark	SF VS FK EL	Socialistisk Folkeparti Venstresocialisteme Fælles Kurs Enhedslisten
France	PSU	Parti Socialiste Unité
Greece	DIKKI	Democratic Social Movement
Iceland	SAP	Coalition of the Left and Progress
Ireland	NPP WP	National Preservation Party/Thjóðvamaflökkur The Workers Party
Italy	DL PdUP	Democratic Left Partito di Unità Proletaria per il Comunismo
Netherlands	PSP	Partij voor de Arbeid
Norway	SV	Socialistisk Venstreparti
Switzerland	POCH PSA	Progressive Organisation der Schweiz Partito Socialista Autonomo

true that the classical liberal ideology developed subsequently in different directions, but enough of this tradition may be found in parties characterized as liberal or centre liberal in contemporary politics (Kirchner, 1988). Most liberal parties today adhere to social liberalism, not Manchester liberalism. Take the FPÖ in Austria as an example. We consider the FPÖ as a liberal party up until the end of the 1980s, when it turned into a populist party (Baier-Galanda and Neugebauer, 1997). The present liberal party, LIF, is a breakaway from the FPÖ.

International cooperation constitutes another criterion for the identification of liberal parties. During the interwar years cooperation between the liberal parties developed further, especially within the European Community. Within the frame of the International, extended regional cooperation in Europe developed, resulting in the formation of the Federation of Liberal and Democratic Parties of the European Community in 1976. The federation was formed in view of the first elections to the European Parliament that took place in 1979; it also constitutes a group in this parliament, although the labels have changed at different times. Thus we arrive at the list of parties in Table 3.7.

The prototypes of the modern conservative party are to be found in Great Britain and in the Nordic countries. As they adhere to a tradition of conservative ideas they are placed to the right in the party systems of their countries, which typically appears from the names of the parties (Layton-Henry, 1982; Morgan and Silvestri, 1982). In France these parties use a designation like 'Independents' or similar appellations and the adherence to a tradition of conservative ideas is not self-evident in continental countries. How to classify a party like Les Giscardiens or Parti Republicain is anything but clear (Colliard, 1982; Fears, 1988). The international cooperation of the parties gives some guidance. In many cases it is difficult to distinguish conservative parties from Christian democratic parties like the CSU and the ÖVP. As conservative parties we count those in Table 3.8.

TABLE 3.7 Liberal parties

Austria	FPÖ LIF PVV/PLP	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs Liberales Forum Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang/ Parti de la Liberté et du Progrès
Belgium	PVV PRL RV	Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang Parti Réformateur Libéral Radikale Venstre
Denmark	RF CD	Reisforbundet Centrum-Demokrateme
Finland	LKP	Liberaalinen Kansanpuolue
France	RAD	Parti Républicain Radical et Radical Socialiste
Germany	FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei
Greece	KF	Liberal Party
Iceland	EDHIK KODISO UNION	Union of the Centre Party for Democratic Socialism Union of Liberals and Leftists/ Samtök Frjálslyndra og Vinsami Manna
Ireland	FF	Fianna Fáil
Italy	PD PRI PLI PANELLA DINI	Progressive Democrats Partito Repubblicano Italiano Partito Liberale Italiano Lista Pirella/Partito Radicale Rinnovamento Italiano Parti Démocratique
Luxembourg	PD	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie
Netherlands	VVD D66 V	Democraten '66 Venstre
Norway	PSD	Partido Social Democrata
Portugal	PRD	Partido Renovador Democrático
Spain	UCD	Union del Centro Democrático
Sweden	CDS	Centro Democrático y Social
Switzerland	FP LPS LdU	Folkpartiet Freisinnig-demokratische Partei Libérale Partei der Schweiz Landesring der Unabhängigen
United Kingdom	LIB LIBDEM	Liberal Party Liberal Democrats

The concept of a discontent or populist party is not a generally accepted notion. Yet the phenomena that we intend to cover using the concept are well known. Often these parties have been formed on the basis of some concrete issue, to channelling people's discontent. The element of populism in the programmes of these parties is also obvious. Another characteristic is that the discontent parties are headed by charismatic leaders (Taggart, 1995). We include the parties shown in Table 3.9 in this set.

Since the Second World War it has been difficult to point out parties that belong to the set of ultra-right parties. This set comprises above all parties that in one respect or another can be said to belong to the tradition laid down by the Fascist parties of the interwar period. Juan Linz points to certain features common to the majority of Fascist parties: the ideology, the style

TABLE 3.8 Conservative parties

Denmark	KF	Konservative Folkparti
Finland	KOK NUORS	Kansallinen Kokoomus Nuorsuomalainen Puolue
France	RPF UNR UDR RPR CNIP PR UDF LK ES ERE ND POLAN IP FI H PP/AP M CONS	Rassemblement du Peuple Français l'Union pour la Nouvelle République l'Union Démocratique du Travail Rassemblement pour la République Centre National des Indépendants et Paysans Parti Républicain Union pour la Démocratie Française Peoples Party Greek Rally National Radical Union New Democracy Political Spring Independence Party/Sjaisiaedisflokkur Forza Italia Höyre Partido Popular/Alianza Popular Moderata Samlingspartiet Conservative Party
Greece		
Iceland		
Italy		
Norway		
Spain		
Sweden		
United Kingdom		

and the organization (Linz, 1979a). The ideological dimension ties the ultra-right parties of today to the Fascist parties of the interwar years, because anti-democratism as well as nationalism survive, whereas attempts have been made to efface the elements of racism and anti-Semitism – at least on the surface (Beyne, 1988; Kitchelt, 1995; Ignazi, 1996, 1997; Jackman and Volpert, 1996). As the set of ultra-right parties in the West European party systems of today we list those shown in Table 3.10.

TABLE 3.9 Discontent parties

Austria	FPÖ	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs
Belgium	UDRT ROSSEM	Union Démocratique pour le Respect du Travail/ Respect voor Arbeid en Democratie Radikale Omvormers Strijders en Strubbelars voor een Eerlijke Maatschappij
Denmark	FRP	Fremskritspartiet
Finland	SMP	Suomen Maaseudun Puolue
Iceland	CP	Citizens' Party/Borgarflokkur
Luxembourg	ADR	Aktiönskommitee fir Demokratie an Rentengerechtigkeet
Netherlands	CD AOV	Centrumdemocraten Algemeen Ouderenverbond
Norway	FRP	Fremskritspartiet
Sweden	NyD	Ny Demokrati
Switzerland	SD/NA REP FPS/SAP	Schweizer Demokraten/National Aktion für Volk und Heimat Schweizerische Republikanische Bewegung Freiheitspartei der Schweiz/Schweizer Auto Partei

TABLE 3.10 Ultra-right parties

Belgium	FN	Front National
France	UDCA FN	Union pour la Défense des Commerçants et Artisans Front National
Germany	NPD REP	Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands Republikaner
Italy	MSI AN	Movimento Sociale Italiano – Destra Nazionale Alleanza Nazionale
Spain	FN	Fuerza Nueva
United Kingdom	NF BNP	National Front British National Party

In the 1970s rejuvenated ideologies were introduced into the political sphere in the form, for example, of a post-materialist ideology (Inglehart, 1977). There was a growing reaction against the costs of a highly industrialized society and an emergent awareness of values other than economic growth and material prosperity. The emphasis upon the environment of social systems and the ecological context of human behaviour was displayed conspicuously at conferences: the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 as well as the Club of Rome's presentation of *The Limits to Growth* (1972). Moreover, the 1970s witnessed a strong reaction against certain uses of nuclear power, uniting a large number of citizens in various countries against what were regarded as the excesses of a materialist ideology. The virtues of an urbane and affluent society were no longer taken for granted as considerable groups of citizens searched for rural or anti-system values. Although the post-materialist ideology was hardly a coherent one, its ideas and sentiments constituted the basis for attempts at political organization. In the late 1990s we find Green parties in all the West European countries studied here.

New parties – environmentalist or ecology parties as well as Green movements – were formed in some West European nations and they participated in elections at various levels of government (Pilat, 1980; Müller-Rommel, 1982, 1985, 1989; Vialate, 1996). The groups that emerged out of a concern about ecology and a reaction against materialist growth policies are different in various nations as far as organization and political access are concerned, but we identify (Table 3.11) a set of Green parties, using party labels as the identification criterion. In the 1990s we find Green parties all over Western Europe.

We have listed a total number of some 210 parties among which some 150 are active today, with little difficulty in identifying what is to count as a party. Several definitions of a political party have been suggested (Downs, 1957; Sjöblom, 1968; Sartori, 1976; Epstein, 1980). The problem of stating necessary or sufficient conditions for the identification of an organization as a party is more relevant in the analysis of party systems outside the West European context in the post-war period. Although it may sometimes be difficult to make a sharp separation between organizations that are parties

TABLE 3.11 Green parties

Austria	VGO	Vereinte Grünen Österreichs
	ALÖ	Alternative Liste Österreichs
Belgium	GRÜ	Die Grüne Alternative
	AGALEV	Flemish-speaking Greens
	ECOLO	Francophone Greens
Denmark	Groenle	De Groenle
Finland	VIHR	Vihreä Liitto
France	Verts	Les Verts
Germany	Grüne	Die Grünen
Greece	Green	Ecological Movement
Iceland	WA	Women's Alliance/Samitök um Kvemmalista
	PM	People's Movement/Þjóðvaki
Ireland	GP	Green Party
Italy	Verdi	Liste Verdi
Luxembourg	GLEI	Greng Lescht
Netherlands	FG	Federatieve Groenen
	GL	Groen Links
Norway	G	Miljøpartiet de Groenle
Portugal	PEV	Partido 'Os Verdes'
Spain	Verdes	Los Verdes
Sweden	MP	Miljöpartiet De Gröna
Switzerland	GPS	Grüne Partei der Schweiz
United Kingdom	GP	Green Party

and those that are not, political parties in Western Europe are those organizations that have been registered in election statistics (Sartori, 1976; Janda, 1980; Beyme, 1982). How do structural and non-structural parties relate to the left-right scale, which has been very dominant in the study of political parties in Western Europe?

Programmatic orientation and social profile

Can one really classify all the West European parties in terms of the standard approach to the programmatic orientation of political parties which is the left-right spectrum? The fact is that the politics of Western Europe has become less and less unidimensional, and the simple left-right model is too crude to capture all the nuances in either party ideologies or party practices. Yet, it is interesting to see how the parties relate to various rankings of the political parties on the basis of the left-right scale. One may use information about the subjective adherence of the voters (the self-location), or one may consult a ranking of the parties in experts' judgements. Table 3.12 presents data on the relevance of the left-right dimension, which besides various rankings also contain the Alford index of class voting.

Political parties do not look for support everywhere, as party action is focused on what is referred to as their 'key group of voters'. Some parties are highly orientated towards certain categories of citizen, and this is indicated in their programmatic orientation, if not in the party labels.

TABLE 3.12 The left-right dimension and working-class support

	LR1	LR2	LR3	LR4	LR5	LR6	LR7	ALF-index
Religious	6.8	7.0	6.9	6.8	6.0	6.5	6.8	-0.07
Ethnic	6.8	5.9	6.1	-	5.3	5.1	5.9	-0.04
Agrarian	6.4	6.4	6.2	6.2	5.7	5.9	6.2	-0.06
Socialist	4.3	4.2	4.3	4.0	4.1	3.3	4.2	0.15
Communist	2.4	2.2	2.6	2.4	2.5	1.4	2.3	0.10
Left-Socialist	-	2.8	2.9	-	3.5	1.0	2.7	0.01
Liberal	6.0	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.4	5.7	6.2	-0.06
Conservative	7.3	7.4	7.0	7.6	7.1	7.6	7.6	-0.14
Populist	-	6.1	6.5	6.4	7.0	8.3	8.7	0.02
Far-Right	8.3	8.7	9.0	7.9	8.1	9.6	9.5	-0.03
Green	-	-	-	3.3	4.1	3.6	3.3	-0.02

Sources: LR1 = Sani and Santon, 1983. LR2 = Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976. LR3 = Eurobarometer 5 and 6 from 1978. LR4 = Dalton, 1989; Daalder, 1983; Aardal and Valen, 1989; Bruneau and Maletod, 1986; Holmberg and Giljam, 1987; Inglehart and Sidjanski, 1975. LR5 = Reif and Marlier, 1995. LR6 = Castles and Mair, 1984. LR7 = Huber and Inglehart, 1995. For the ALF-index see: Plasser and Ulram, 1988; Frogner, 1975; Worre, 1989; Berglund, 1988; Colliard, 1982; Berger et al., 1986; Tsokou et al., 1986; Laver et al., 1987; Altem, 1979; Daalder, 1987b; Aardal and Valen, 1989; Bacalbau, 1988; Gunther et al., 1986; Holmberg and Giljam, 1987; Kerr, 1987; Heath et al., 1985

Correspondingly, political parties tend to receive more support from certain social groups than from others. Can one look at these connections between party and voter in terms of the classical left-right dimension?

The data in Table 3.12 on the left-right orientation of the political parties are of two kinds. On the one hand we have estimates of how the electorate themselves locate on the left-right scale, and on the other hand we have two sets of expert judgements on the location of the political parties (Castles and Mair, 1984; Huber and Inglehart, 1995).

These different measures on the left-right dimensions of the parties covary to a high degree. The weakest correlation we find between LR4 and LR7 ($r = 0.85$) while the strongest one is found for LR1 and LR3 ($r = 0.98$). As expected we may also note that the most left-oriented parties are the communist parties and the left-socialist parties, while the most right-wing parties are found among the far-right parties and the populist or the conservative parties. The liberal and the agrarian parties belong to the political centre, whereas the Green parties are inclined to go to the left.

In this context it is also interesting to note that the 11 party types we have identified seem to discriminate quite well according to this left-right dimension. A simple one-way analysis of variance supports such a conclusion. The highest eta-square value is found for the LR1 (Esq = 0.90; sig.:0.000) while the lowest refers to LR7 (Esq = 0.78; sig: 0.000), which difference may be interpreted as indicating that this dimension was more relevant in the 1970s than it is in the 1990s. However, identifying the party types like this seems to be a meaningful way to discriminate between all the

different political parties that operate in the West European political systems.

Now, the simple image of parties and social groups is that left-wing parties attract the vote of the working class and the farmers support agrarian parties whilst the non-socialist parties either turn to entrepreneurs or white-collar workers or mobilize their support from a religious or ethnic base. In reality the connection between a party and key groups is a complicated matter (Budge and Farlie, 1977). And any connection between party and social groups may change considerably over time, as a result of voter volatility (Pedersen, 1979; Borre, 1980; Dalton et al., 1984; Holmberg, 1984; Crewe and Denver, 1985). We use the Alford index on class voting in order to measure how tight is the connection between party and one social group, the blue-collar workers. This index shows the relative size of the support of the working class for a party, and it affords the possibility of comparing data cross-nationally. It is true that the indicator on the amount of working-class support only taps part of the relation between party support and the structure of social groups. But the negative finding in Table 3.12 that working-class support is neither distinctly for the left side nor manifestly against the right end of the spectrum implies that the naive image of a clear-cut connection between programmatic orientation and support from social groups must be rejected. The Alford index scores are surprisingly low in fact for all parties.

A distinctive feature of the electoral basis of the rural parties is their weak support within the working class. Summing up the profile of the electoral basis of the socialist parties it is evident that they have strong support within the working class, although a few parties deviate from this general pattern, like the French PS and PSDI as well as the German SPD. The communist parties were strongly orientated towards the working class and in general received their votes from the working class, though an increasingly large share of the small communist parties' votes was derived from intermediate strata. In their party programmes the left-socialist parties appeal to the working class, but no party can be said to have strong support within this class.

Generally speaking, religious parties do not have their social bases in the working class. The share of workers among the electorate of these parties is far lower than the relative size of the working class in the population; there are a few exceptions to this general rule (the KVP, CVP, DC, PSC/CVP). Conservative parties also have a weak backing in the working class. Ethnic parties have a few strongholds among broader social groupings in society, generally speaking. In some nations the ethnic party is supported by farmers in particular, but in others this may not be the case. It appears from the data for the ethnic parties in Belgium, Finland and the United Kingdom that the working class is under-represented in the electorate of these parties. Instead they are most strongly supported by independents.

It is not possible to point out any particular group where only liberal parties have support. These parties have their strongest support in the group

of independents, but this is not characteristic only of liberal parties. Correspondingly, support within the working class is weak; this is not true of Fianna Fáil which again illustrates that the Irish party system is somewhat special. Support for the discontent parties among voters from the working class seems on the whole to correspond to its share of the population; in fact for the Swiss NA a slightly positive score is discernible.

If it is at all possible to make any generalization it may be said that ultra-right parties get fairly even support from all social groupings. They are somewhat over-represented among independents, but only slightly under-represented among the working class (MSI) or there is even a very slight over-representation (NPD), illustrating the ambition of the party to fulfil its own image of a party for all the classes. Although it is often emphasized that class structure and class orientation means less and less for the electoral choice of the voters, class voting is still a relevant concept when understanding the differences in electoral support of various social groups for socialist parties and conservative parties. An analysis of the class-voting index data for the 11 party types suggests that these overall party categories also discriminate when it comes to class voting (Esq = 0.58; sig.: 0.000). What is the life-span of parties in Western Europe?

Formation of parties

The political parties that dominate in present-day party systems have a long history. Several political parties in Western Europe became a factor to be reckoned with shortly after their formation. Let us look briefly at data about the age of the present party or its predecessor. It is no coincidence that the birth of the predecessor to the present-day political party usually dates back to the period around 1900 when the traditional order was challenged by organizations calling for democratic principles of rule. This holds in particular with regard to the large parties along the right-left dimension: socialist parties, communist parties, liberal parties and conservative parties. There have been three innovations in the party landscape since 1945: the left-socialist parties, the discontent parties and the Green parties of the late 1970s and early 1980s. The overall image is one of continuity when the 1990s are compared with the late 1940s.

Thus, most of the political parties that operate today go back far in the history of this century, but in such a long time perspective there are also instability features. First, there is a clear difference between the present party and its predecessor, meaning that substantial organizational change has occurred. In no party type do we find parties that have not experienced internal dissent resulting in party splits and organizational transformation. Let us take a brief but closer look at each party type.

The oldest religious parties, Catholic as well as Protestant, were founded during the later part of the nineteenth century; eight out of the now active parties emerged during the period before the First World War. The party

identity of the old religious parties has been transformed, as several of the parties now active can be characterized as new parties in relation to their predecessors. Most of the ethnic parties originated at the time before the Second World War. The oldest parties, the Basque PNV and the Finland-Swedish SFP, were formed at the end of the nineteenth century, whereas the Walloon and the Italian parties were not founded until after the Second World War. About half the parties have been transformed since their first formation; yet, on the whole the ethnic parties prove to have changed little during the twentieth century.

The rural parties were formed during the decades immediately after the turn of the century, although the Danish Venstre was formed in 1870. This party in particular has suffered a number of splits from its parent party. The rural parties have gone through a process of reorientation since the Second World War, adapting to the social transformation involving a declining rural population.

Most of the socialist parties were formed during the decades before the turn of the century. Some were transformed after the Second World War (SPÖ, PSB/BWP, PvdA), but as recently as the end of the 1960s a transformation of the parties in Italy and France took place. Several socialist parties have thus undergone changes. Communist parties date their origin to the years immediately after the Russian revolution. Some parties broke with the reformist parent party somewhat earlier (the Netherlands and Sweden), whereas in most countries this split took place either directly after the Russian revolution (Finland, Germany) or in the early 1920s after years of internal conflict (Italy, France and Norway). As a consequence of state intervention party transformations became necessary in Finland, Germany and Switzerland; mutations have also come about as a result of internal party conflicts – ideological as well as personal ones. The 1990s have been a period of extensive reorientation among the communist parties.

Left-socialist parties can be said to be a phenomenon of the late 1950s and the early 1960s. It is true they had their counterparts during the interwar years, but not in the countries in which they later developed. These parties are to be found in the Nordic countries, Central Europe (the Netherlands) and Southern Europe (France, Italy). They resemble each other in that they constitute splits from existing parties, but they differ in that some of them come from socialist parties like the PSP and SV, whereas one party definitely can be said to have its origin in a communist party, the Danish SF; the French PSU is of mixed origin; the VS is a breakaway from the SF.

Most liberal parties date from the later part of the nineteenth century or the beginning of the twentieth century; the VVD has its origin as far back as 1846. The parties that were formed later on can either be characterized as splits like the D66 and the CD or were given legal permission to operate at a rather late date. However, about half the liberal parties have undergone profound changes since their first formation. The origin of the conservative parties dates back to the turn of the century and the immediately preceding decades. The parties in France constitute an exception, Gaullism clearly

belonging to the post-war period. It is obvious that conservative parties have undergone few changes during the twentieth century; however, the French parties again constitute an exception.

In relation to discontent parties we have deliberately restricted ourselves to parties active during the post-war years, because little continuity before the Second World War is to be found for any of these. Immediately after the war this party type appeared in Italy and West Germany, to be followed in France by the Poujade movement. It is not possible to speak of any particular period when these parties were formed, since those in Denmark and Norway were founded in the 1970s.

The basic change in political climate between the interwar period and the years after the Second World War appears in the sharp decline in support for Fascist parties. Actually, only five or six parties can be described as ultra-right in the 1990s. For these parties there were parties during the interwar years that can be regarded as their predecessors. Their successors after the war were formed only a short time after the activities of their predecessors had been prohibited. The ultra-right parties have had a high frequency of mutations.

Present-day political parties tend to have a long tradition as most have existed for a long time, with the major exception of the so-called Green parties. They were founded in the 1970s or 1980s. The average age of the party systems in the West European democracies is substantial as measured by the average longevity of their constituent parties. The organizations that once challenged the traditional undemocratic political order demanding party government as part of a democratic regime have grown into established institutions themselves. There is a national difference in the average age of the parties dominating the national political scene. Generally speaking, the older and established parties are to be found in the Scandinavian countries, in the United Kingdom and in Switzerland whereas young and recently established parties operate in the new democracies in Greece, Portugal and Spain.

Parliamentary experience and government participation

Political parties display their relevance by either being active in parliament or participating in governments. How relevant parties are in these two respects depends upon their capacity to attract electoral support, although there is no strictly proportional relation between relevance and electoral strength.

Generally speaking, one may identify three different time periods when the West European political parties became represented in Parliament. First, rural, liberal, conservative and socialist parties managed to achieve parliamentary representation before the First World War when the traditional order was challenged by the movement towards democracy. Secondly, a number of religious, ethnic, Fascist and communist parties entered the

legislative assembly during the interwar years. Thirdly, discontent parties and ecology parties emerged after the Second World War. For some types there is a close connection between representation in parliament and government participation whereas for others government positions could be reached only after several years of parliamentary work, for various reasons, including the question of ministerial socialism.

Concerning the old religious parties there is a close connection in time between the formation of the parties, their representation in parliament and cooperation in government, indicating the political relevance of the religious party. However, this is not the case in Italy, France and Germany (FRG) where the parties existing after the Second World War have a definitely stronger position than their predecessors had. The small religious parties have had some success, but have remained tiny in the electorate, not becoming a political factor, for example the Swiss EVP and the Dutch SGP.

With the exception of the parties in the United Kingdom the ethnic parties were represented in parliament fairly early. Rural parties gained representation in parliament at an early date, whereas their first participation in government came somewhat later. It was not until 1901 that Venstre held office, and the last of the rural parties – the Swedish Farmers' Union – joined the government in 1936. Operating between the left and the right the rural parties were able to play a role in government not long after they had been founded. The socialist parties gained representation in parliament at an early date, in most cases in the 1920s. Up to the First World War the question of participation in government was a matter of dispute, but during the war at least eight of the parties were represented in governments. Resistance to government participation persisted longest among the Norwegian DNA and the Dutch SDAP (later PvdA).

Most of the communist parties succeeded in getting returned to parliament a few years after their formation. Communist parties held office on some occasions for the first time in connection with the end of the Second World War; the exception is the PCE, which entered into the Spanish Popular Front government during the years 1936–39. The sharp rise in the attraction of communist parties immediately after the war dwindled just as rapidly, however. They had to give up government participation and most of them were unable to regain their astonishing level of political influence at the end of the war. All the left-socialist parties were represented in parliament shortly after their formation.

The political breakthrough of the liberal parties came very close in time to their formation. During the decades before and after the turn of the century they had a strong position in parliament as well as in government. For some parties like the Norwegian Venstre, the Finnish LKP and the British Liberal Party this period constituted the time of prosperity, when they reached a position in parliament as well as in government that they were not able to repeat later. The liberal parties that were founded early were most active in the process of introducing democratic rule in the early years of the century

which gained them their powerful position. For conservative parties we hold that the political breakthrough took place at the same time as the formation of the party; the practice was often that parliamentary groups united and formed a political party which resulted in a close connection between the dates of parliamentary representation and participation in government. One exception is the Gaullists in France, because the RPF never became a factor of power during the Fourth Republic.

Although discontent parties entered the political scene after the war it was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s that they scored considerable electoral success, with the exception of Poujadism which had its high season in the 1950s. Most of the discontent parties gained representation in parliament during the 1960s, but their electoral breakthrough occurred in the early 1970s. Since this party type has been looked upon with considerable suspicion by other parties, few have managed to participate in government. Of the small ultra-right parties in the post-war years the MSI in Italy and the predecessors of the German NPD appeared shortly after the war. Only the Italian Alleanza Nazionale (AN) among the successors to the Fascist movement of the interwar period has been able to participate in government. The recently founded environment parties or the Green parties have not been regarded as potential coalition partners when governments have been formed, with the exception of the Finnish VIHR, which has participated in government since 1995. Their main preoccupation is to receive or maintain enough support to be represented in parliament.

Political parties attempting to display their relevance could orientate themselves towards government and the exercise of political power. Political parties may differ substantially in their attitudes to government and their willingness to assume government responsibility. Some parties emphasize the objective of exercising power by means of government positions, taking a pragmatic approach to issues. Others take a sceptical or negative attitude to coalition formation and pay more attention to proclaiming their distinctiveness, taking a programmatic approach to issues. We must distinguish between attitude towards government and actual experience of governmental work. Some parties view government participation as their main goal. They may play down their ideology to become so-called 'catch-all parties', looking for maximization of their votes to form a majority government by themselves. Other parties that could not hope to reach such a dominating position by themselves search for coalition partners to attain government power.

The revitalization of ethnic loyalties in the late 1960s and early 1970s as well as the emergence of 'new politics' or the Green movements in the 1970s and 1980s means that we have to qualify the hypothesis about the coming of catch-all parties. However, Kirchheimer is no doubt correct in emphasizing the general orientation of the major West European parties towards a broad voter appeal. It is true that the most programmatically orientated parties are to be found on the extremes of the traditional left-right continuum. We must note too that discontent parties as well as ethnic parties

tend to be highly orientated towards specific political agendas. However, the large West European parties are with few exceptions not very programmatically orientated, as may be predicted from their goal of electoral success to reach government power.

There are parties that take a negative view of government participation. They emphasize their own party organization and their ideology. Some of these parties take a sceptical view of government, in principle rejecting the traditional society. If they come to power their promise is to change the basic principles of government, in one direction or the other. Another group of parties plays down government participation altogether, viewing the party as an expression of a vital citizen opinion. Data on government participation by type of political party are presented in Table 3.13. The extent of government participation is measured in terms of the length of time in months that a party has participated in government or held the post of premier. Not all parties manage to get to participate in government, and there are wide differences between the parties in their government experience. During the post-Second World War period socialist, agrarian and religious parties participated frequently in government. Liberal and conservative parties have also at times been accepted in government, but ethnic, communist, discontent, left-socialist and ultra-right parties have seldom managed to reach government power. All the rural parties were in office during the post-war era, the Finnish KESK for the longest period, which shows the strong position of the party in Finnish politics. On the whole the rural parties have a strong position in the Nordic countries. The Swiss SVP is a special case, but its participation in government indicates its position in the Swiss model of government. Again, we find that the position of the rural

parties in the middle of the political spectrum has been conducive to making them attractive as a coalition partner.

Considering the capacity of the socialist party type to attract a large number of voters in several West European nations it may be expected that the party participates frequently in the formation of governments. In fact, the socialist party has almost become the party of the state in some nations such as Austria, Norway and Sweden. With the exception of a few nations, socialist parties have been effective in being considered relevant in deliberations about government coalitions since 1945. The party that before the war was thought of as a dubious participant in governments – not least by itself as a result of the principle that socialists could not enter the government of a bourgeois society – appears very much responsible for the conduct of national affairs after the war.

Religious parties have no doubt been attractive in deliberations about government formation, as few of the parties have not held office during the post-Second World War period. There is a clear connection between the size of the religious party and its capacity to participate in government. Moreover, size also has implications for the length of the participation of religious parties in governments. The Italian DC and the Swiss CVP constitute the extremes, as they have been represented in almost every government since the end of the Second World War. Although the post-war era involved a decline for liberal parties this does not mean that they lost all political influence; few have not held offices during this period and of these it is only one, the British Liberal Party or the Liberal Democrats, that can be described as a medium-sized party.

During the post-war era every conservative party has held office for two years at least. The Nordic parties were in power for a much shorter time than the continental conservative parties, which indirectly reflects the position of the social democrats in these countries. Ethnic parties are much orientated towards the protection of minority interests; their potential to assist in the formation of national governments derives solely from their attractiveness as coalition partners. It may be established that few ethnic parties are considered when government coalitions are built up. The picture would be different if regional governments were considered. Few ethnic parties have participated in government during the post-war period, and only the SFP (Finland) has been able to participate for any considerable period of time. Most communist parties were regarded as politically viable only for a few years as coalition partners in the formation of governments. The only communist party that remained politically relevant after the beginning of the cold war period was the Finnish SKP/SKDL, although their participation in Finnish governments since 1966 had something to do with the special relation between the USSR and Finland. The Italian PCI was able to participate in governments between 1944 and 1948, but the hopes for real government responsibility for the PCI in some combination with other parties were frustrated. The French election in 1981 meant a radical shift for the communist party; again it participated for some years in government up

TABLE 3.13 Government participation 1945–97 (number of months and percentage of time; averages)

	Government participation				
	GOV1	GOV2	GOV3	GOV4	GOV5
Religious	220	40.7	122.3	21.1	35.2
Ethnic	39	6.6	0.3	0.1	0.1
Agrarian	327	55.3	129.5	21.8	40.7
Socialist	245	44.0	152.3	25.2	47.2
Communist	19	3.4	1.2	0.2	0.7
Left-Socialist	2	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Liberal	133	24.8	31.5	7.2	17.1
Conservative	156	26.4	141.8	17.6	50.4
Populist	8	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Far-Right	1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Green	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

GOV1 = government participation in months 1945–97; GOV2 = government participation in % of time of period 1945–97; GOV3 = party holds prime ministerial position in months 1945–97; GOV4 = party holds premier position in % of time; GOV5 = premier in % of time when in government ('government dominance').
Sources: see Table 7.8 (p. 219)

to 1984. In the 1990s both the French communists and the Italian communists have participated in governments.

The anti-governing parties used to be the two extremist parties, the communist parties and the ultra-right parties. To this category must be added the innovation among party types after the Second World War – the discontent or populist parties. Among this party type only the Finnish Rural Party (SMP) was able to enter a government. So far the ecology parties also belong to this set of highly programmatic parties with little or no experience of government participation. There is a clear connection between actual participation in governing a country and the degree to which a party is pragmatically orientated. Probably there is a mutual interaction between the two, a pragmatic orientation leading to being accepted in government, and vice versa. Ultimately, party relevance depends upon electoral fate. Let us look at the major electoral developments for each party type.

Electoral trends

Electoral support is the crucial determinant of party continuity. The electoral arena is the test of the viability of parties. If a party fails to maintain its attraction for voters, then it faces the need for change. Either it takes action to reverse a negative electoral trend or it may be crushed by the shifting allegiance of voters. Parties may handle small changes in electoral outcomes, but a long-term downward trend creates enormous pressure on the party. Let us look at the various types of parties in Table 3.14, where the average level of electoral support for a party type during a decade is presented.

Several religious parties have lost some of their attraction since the 1940s. After the Second World War electoral support for the religious parties hovered somewhat, going up immediately after the war to decline later on.

TABLE 3.14 *Party types: electoral strength 1940–90s in percentages (averages)*

	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
Religious	22.4	21.6	19.6	18.2	17.9	14.0
Ethnic	2.2	2.0	3.0	2.9	2.1	2.8
Agrarian	17.4	16.9	17.7	16.3	12.9	16.9
Socialist	28.4	29.1	29.0	26.3	25.7	25.9
Communist	11.7	9.0	9.1	9.0	7.1	5.7
Left-Socialist	–	3.0	3.8	3.1	3.1	3.3
Liberal	13.0	12.8	12.2	12.0	10.5	10.0
Conservative	23.0	25.3	26.4	20.9	27.5	22.2
Populist	–	–	1.1	5.0	4.8	5.4
Far-Right	2.0	5.9	4.0	2.8	4.4	5.9
Green	–	–	–	1.4	2.5	4.0

Sources: Mackie and Rose, 1991; Mackie, 1992; Koole and Mair, 1992–95; Koole and Katz, 1996–97

The Norwegian KrF, Finnish SKL, Dutch SGP and Swiss EVP had an upward trend in the 1940s and 1950s, whereas the big Italian DC and German CDU/CSU were smaller before the war than they were after it. The medium-sized French MRP had a short period of prosperity during the 1940s. In the 1980s and the 1990s the overall impression concerning the developmental trend for this party type is one of considerable decline. Although some religious parties such as the Irish Fine Gael and the German CDU and CSU have been able to maintain their electoral support in the 1980s and 1990s, it is a fact that several religious parties have not done equally well in decades characterized by intensive secularization. The religious parties in Austria, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Belgium have suffered a decline, whereas the DC was crushed in the 1994 Italian election.

The ethnic parties, which emerged during the post-war period, have remained small parties. There were some signs of declining attraction in the 1980s, but they have recovered in the 1990s, especially if one considers Lega Nord as an ethnic party in Italy. Trends over a long time period can be inferred for some of the parties: the majority display an upward tendency, with the Finland-Swedish SFP as the exception, as it has shown a downward trend until the 1990s. The years of advance vary somewhat but can be dated approximately to the late 1960s and the early 1970s; it is notable that most parties declined during the late 1970s and early 1980s. There was a kind of ethnic revival in the 1960s which was manifested in political support for ethnic parties in the early 1970s. Ethnic parties like the Belgian VU and FDF managed to mobilize the ethnic potential in the electorate at that time, but in the 1980s the electoral trend for the parties orientated towards ethnicity came to a standstill (Dewachter, 1987). In the 1990s regional or ethnic parties have been able to maintain but not increase their support in Belgium, Finland, Spain and the United Kingdom.

The rural parties are to be found in only a few of the West European countries. It seemed in the 1980s as if there was a growing problem for these parties to survive, but they have staged a comeback in the 1990s. Before the First World War Venstre was the largest party in Denmark, but it has not been able to maintain this position. The Finnish KESK, a small party before the First World War, later became one of the four large parties in Finland. In Iceland the PP has received about 20 per cent for a long time or even occasionally more. The other agrarian parties have been small parties throughout most of the twentieth century, but during the 1970s the Centre Party in Sweden developed into a strong party in point of voters. There is hardly a trend common to all the rural parties. A continuous downward trend is shown by Venstre except for the 1990s, whereas the Norwegian and Swedish Centre parties rose at times. Looking more closely at developments during the 1980s and 1990s we find that the KESK and the SVP display a slight upward trend, whereas the opposite is true of the Swedish CP. Thus, a simple environment hypothesis fails as one cannot connect the electoral

fortunes of the rural parties with the sharp and unambiguous decrease in all agricultural occupations.

The socialist parties have maintained themselves rather well over the years since 1945, as a majority have received over 20 per cent if we look at average values; roughly ten parties have received 30 per cent or more in almost all elections, which justifies the assertion that socialist parties have a strong electoral position in most West European countries. The 1940s saw a certain decline whereas their position was reinforced during the 1950s and the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, a decline to a lower level set in in some countries. But in France as well as in Greece and in Spain the socialist parties have been stronger in the 1980s and the 1990s than they were in the 1970s. Although the social democratic parties have by tradition received much electoral support in all West European societies, in some countries they have faced fierce competition from the Communist Party or the Left-Socialist Party. In some countries where the labour movement was split into two major groups the social democrats have not managed to achieve anything similar to the somewhat hegemonic position held in some countries where the left united more or less unanimously behind one labour party. However, in the 1980s and the 1990s some large and established social democratic parties have not been able to keep up their high level of support: those of Austria, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, Norway and Sweden. The spectacular successes in Spain, Portugal and Greece balance the downward development trend for the big socialist parties. In recent elections the large PASOK suffered a small decline and the PSOE lost power in the 1996 Spanish election, but these were offset by major recent election victories in the UK and France. Actually, the medium-sized socialist parties have done better than the large ones, relatively speaking, in Belgium, Finland and the Netherlands. In Italy the two traditional socialist parties were replaced by a new one in the 1994 election, the PDS, which went on to win the 1996 election, ousting Forza Italia from government and forming the Olive government.

At most, seven of the communist parties were able to rally any considerable support over a long period of time. The large parties were the PCI, PCF, SKDL, the PA and from the 1970s the PCP, the PCE and the KKEs whereas the other parties had electoral successes merely for short periods of time. The parties that were large in the 1940s can also be characterized as large in the 1970s and 1980s. From the time of the formation of the parties and onward we find some continuity, though the KPD as the largest party during the interwar years became the smallest during the post-war period, whereas the PCI – one of the minor parties during the interwar years – developed into the largest of the communist parties during the post-war era, and was transformed into the social democratic PDS in 1991.

During the 1980s and in the 1990s we have countries with large but declining communist movements: Italy, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Portugal, France and Spain. With the exception of the Swedish Communist Party (VP)

which moved in the other direction towards electoral support of about 6 per cent, the communist parties in the other countries have not been able to gain support of more than about 1 per cent: Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland. In Luxembourg there was a communist party that received as much as 10 per cent before suffering a sharp decline in the 1980s, which continued in the 1990s. The future for the West European communist parties appears bleak, at least at the moment.

The left-socialist party type is represented by a few small parties that have been able to attract increasing voter support during the post-war period. Only occasionally has any left-socialist party had support from more than 10 per cent of the electorate, such as the SF in 1966 and in the 1980s or the SV in 1973 and 1989. Only the SF in Denmark and the SV in Norway have been able to maintain considerable support during the post-war period although their electoral outcomes have fluctuated.

There has been much debate about a negative development trend for the liberal parties. Although some had a powerful position in the early decades of the century, liberal parties did not develop into large parties after the introduction of universal suffrage, generally speaking. Liberal parties have been strongest in Ireland (FF), in Greece (EDHIK), in Luxembourg (PD) and in Switzerland (FDP). If the FDP is excepted, these parties cannot be counted among the group of classical liberal parties. Liberal parties have had weak support in Italy, at least after the Second World War, and also in Finland, Austria and France. If different periods are compared it appears that the liberal parties were strongest before the First World War, weakened during the interwar period to become still smaller during the post-war period. There are exceptions to the general picture as the liberal parties in Belgium and the Netherlands were larger during the 1980s and 1990s than during the 1940s. If the 1940s involved a continuation of the decline, a change took place during the 1950s which resulted in an upward trend for a majority of the parties during the 1960s. This trend was again broken in the 1970s, but the 1980s and the 1990s have seen no further decline for liberal parties. In a few countries like the UK, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Belgium they have even managed to advance in the 1990s.

The overall trend for most of the conservative parties appears to be the opposite. The conservative parties have stayed at the same level from the interwar period onward, on the whole. The conservatives in the United Kingdom were larger in the 1950s than during the interwar years, just as the Danish KF was stronger in the 1960s than during the interwar period. It is more difficult to find a common trend for the post-war period. Most of the parties declined during the 1940s, but showed a slight upward trend during the 1960s. The data confirm the hypothesis of a conservative revival in the 1970s and 1980s. However, in the 1990s the conservatively orientated parties in Denmark, France, Norway and the UK have not been able to maintain their earlier successful momentum. Again, the picture is ambiguous as some conservative parties – in Greece, Iceland and Sweden – have

maintained their support, if not increased it. In Italy a new conservative party (FI) was introduced in 1994 in an attempt to replace the Christian Democratic Party. The Finnish conservative party has increased its voter support since the 1970s whereas the Icelandic Independence Party remains in a dominant position.

Discontent parties must be considered a phenomenon of the post-war period, especially after 1970. Discontent parties typically manage to gain support from a considerable portion of the electorate on isolated election occasions – so-called flash parties. The only party that succeeded in breaking this pattern was the Danish FRP (Gjistrup) in the 1970s, which however has declined considerably in the 1990s. The period when the parties show an advance is the late 1960s and early 1970s. Yet, in some countries a major development in the 1980s and 1990s has been a strengthening in the support for anti-system parties. These protest parties cannot be regarded as successors to the Fascist parties in Western Europe as their source of support is more a welfare state backlash or anti-system vote towards the welfare state elites than explicit authoritarianism like Poujadism in the 1950s in France. What is similar is the often hostile attitude towards immigrants. The largest discontent party in the 1990s is the Austrian FPÖ, scoring about 20 per cent support. In Norway and Luxembourg discontent parties receive about half that support.

Viewed over the whole post-war period the ultra-right parties have been very small in terms of voters. In West Germany ultra-right parties scored successes at the election in 1949, and at the election in 1969 the NPD was almost returned to parliament. The Italian MSI on the other hand had its greatest successes at the election in 1972 before its transformation to the AN in 1994 resulted in substantial electoral gains. In the 1970s both parties displayed a decline; during the same period the Spanish EN on the other hand shows an advance, even though the party is the smallest as regards size of the electorate. Surprisingly Le Pen's Front National scored an electoral success in the European election in summer 1984, reaching a high 11 per cent of the vote, roughly repeated in subsequent elections but increased to 15 per cent in 1997, meaning that the ultra-right movement has not lost its appeal, at least not in France (Plenel and Rollat, 1984; Charlot, 1986; Mayer and Perrineau, 1989; Marcus, 1995). In Italy the reformed ultra-right party AN has managed to get about 15 per cent in elections in the 1990s, meaning that the overall support for this party type stands at 5 per cent on average in the 1990s against a tiny 2 per cent in the late 1940s.

Most countries have witnessed the appearance on the political scene of Green parties in the form of politically organized environmental groups. And the ecologists have not been without success as they have scored more than 5 per cent in some elections. Yet, in the 1990s the average level of support for this party type has been only 4 per cent. Let us rank the various countries according to the strength of their environmental parties in the 1990s: France, Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, Austria, Finland, Belgium and Italy. In

several countries the Green parties have been strong enough to gain parliamentary representation, which has caused a difficulty for the traditional separation of political parties along the left-right spectrum, in some countries diminishing the support for the left side and in other countries causing problems for the right bloc.

In electoral development the Green parties are perhaps still in their infancy, and there is a risk that they may never develop into mature political parties. However, the number of Green parties is growing. It is true that one of the largest, the German ecology party, Die Grünen, with a 5 per cent average vote share in the 1980s and 1990s, failed to enter the new Bundestag in the all-Germany elections in 1990 but it was more successful in 1994. The Swedish Green Party (MP) has also walked in and out of parliament. The British Ecology Party used to be the weakest one, but the Green Party received 15 per cent of the vote in the 1989 Euro-election. The electoral success of the French Verts in 1997 was spectacular. In Luxembourg, Austria and Belgium there are Green parties with a not inconsiderable overall electoral support, but it is very difficult to predict what the future of Green parties will look like (Urwin, 1990; Collier and Golub, 1997). It is important to separate the electoral fate of Green parties, which is uncertain, and the growing relevance of ecological considerations in the policy positions of almost all parties.

It is typical of the ecology movement that its adherents do not easily reach unanimity with regard to broader social problems, some favouring socialist alternatives whereas others argue against a 'politicization' of the ecology movement. The fate of the Green parties hinges upon both how their special image is perceived in the eyes of the voters and how the significance of environmental issues develops in public opinion.

The fortunes of the parties in the electoral arena display considerable variation over time. It is true that the electoral outcomes of some parties have stayed within a rather narrow range of fluctuation, but others have experienced heavy fluctuations. Some parties have behaved like 'flash' parties (Pedersen, 1982) as they grow rapidly and then decline just as fast. There are, in addition, parties that have faced a long-term trend of advance or decline, reinforced at each election.

Declining party membership

Because political parties are vulnerable to the threat of a decline in voter support, they also seek to maintain or if possible increase other kinds of support. As intermediators between civil society and the state, parties seek an active membership basis for their activities. The membership structure is reflected in how they maintain their organization by emphasizing integration as well as how they have established contacts with outside but close organizations – segmentation (Katz and Mair, 1994).

The membership aspect of party organization is related to how the party itself defines the strategy of including members in the party. The orientation of parties towards the membership concept may differ. Some organize a higher proportion of their voters as party members than other parties do (membership ratio). And some parties are large parties (absolute membership number).

According to Duverger (1954) it is possible to distinguish two parts in the structure of party organization: form and element. The form of organization refers to the way members are affiliated to the party. The most common form of affiliation is direct membership; other forms are indirect membership or various mixed forms. Organization element refers above all to the character of the basic organization of the parties. Duverger distinguishes among caucus, branch, cell and militia. There are differences between these types in level of activity, geographical extension and the degree of autonomy of subordinate bodies. The militia were typically to be found in the armed groups of the Fascist parties and an equivalent in Western Europe could be Brigate Rossi in Italy and Rote Armeefraktion in West Germany, but they had no ties whatever with any political party.

For comparative purposes a simple typology of party structure may be proposed which identifies different kinds of element: primitive organization (approximately caucus) with little unity, little activity and a high degree of autonomy; weak branch, i.e. rather little unity, a certain amount of activity and a medium degree of autonomy; strong branch, i.e. greater unity, rather high activity and a small degree of autonomy; cell-like organization where the characteristic feature is the occurrence of organizations in working places (Ozbudun, 1970; Pride, 1970).

Looking at membership data one may use either a relative measure, i.e. the ratio between the number of party members and voters for a party, or an absolute membership figure. Since a high relative membership proportion may stand for both low and high absolute membership figures we concentrate on data about the latter measure. It is true though that the structural parties organize a higher proportion of the voters as party members than the non-structural parties do (membership ratio). Table 3.15 shows the development of party membership in absolute numbers from the 1950s to the 1990s.

Some of these structural parties are also large parties (absolute membership number). The socialist parties must be characterized as mass parties. Depending on how the size of the membership of the Irish Labour Party is calculated, practically all the parties have membership exceeding 100,000; the largest party, British Labour, has more than a million members. During the post-war period up until the 1980s certain parties increased their memberships strongly like the Austrian SPÖ, Swedish SAP, British Labour, Belgian PSB/BWF, whereas others display a decline, like the Danish SD and the Norwegian DNA. The development of membership in communist parties reflects the electoral development of the parties fairly well. In most parties

TABLE 3.15 *Party membership: absolute numbers (averages)*

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
Religious	368	266	228	197	304
Ethnic	48	27	43	35	76
Agrarian	154	136	153	134	131
Socialist	810	717	741	626	602
Communist	418	322	250	211	135
Left-Socialist	-	3	3	5	8
Liberal	57	72	58	51	44
Conservative	629	643	376	249	226
Protest	-	-	2	6	12
Far-Right	-	191	189	166	135
Green	-	-	-	10	7

Sources: Kutz and Mair, 1992, 1994; Vialatte, 1996

the membership is largest during the 1940s, and then declines strongly, particularly among the smaller ones.

The well-developed organization of the rural parties is reflected in their memberships, which are high in both absolute and relative figures. This is partly because the Finnish KESK as well as the Swedish CP also include their supporting organizations in the number of their members, yet rural parties can be said to have a high membership and a high membership ratio. With the exception of the Danish Venstre, the development of the membership shows an upward tendency; with the Swedish Centre Party this resulted in a diminishing membership ratio, since the number of votes for the party increased more than its membership in the 1970s.

As a rule, large religious parties provide information about the number of members whereas membership information is often lacking for the small ones. Allowing for the mixed quality of the data it seems that at least five of the religious parties have had more than 100,000 members; the Italian DC had over a million. These five parties are also the parties that must be characterized as electorally strong. The development trend of the parties' membership is not uniform, but the Austrian ÖVP as well as the German CDU/CSU and the DC have an upward tendency, whereas the Dutch KVP and ARP represents the most obvious example of a downward trend; from having had more than 400,000 members around 1945 the number of KVP was only some 50,000 in the mid-1970s. If we look at the whole post-war era we find that only a handful of the liberal parties, the Italian PLI, Swedish FP, German FDP and the British Liberal Party, have had more than 100,000 members during some period, which justifies the characterization of these parties as fairly small in point of members. The absolute membership figures of the conservative parties make it possible to classify some of them as mass parties; the French RPF had nearly a million members for some years in the early 1950s and the conservatives in Britain had over a million members up to the 1980s. Only two of the parties, the Spanish AP and the Finnish KOK,

have not had a membership exceeding 100,000 members at some time or other.

Small parties may have a high membership ratio. Although it is particularly difficult to get membership data for periods other than the 1980s, membership of ethnic parties shows an upward tendency up to the mid-1970s. The ethnic parties in Western Europe cannot be described as mass parties since none has more than 100,000 members. However, this type of party is apparently skilful in turning electoral support into active party membership, as the high membership ratios of these parties indicate a high level of mobilization and political consciousness. Green parties tend to recruit a small number of members. The largest party is the German Die Grünen, which is estimated to have some 40,000 members.

What distinguishes discontent parties from other parties is that they go to elections on specific issues appealing to particular groups. As regards membership and membership ratios these parties must be described as small. Among the ultra-right parties the German NPD has never become a party with a large membership, whereas the Italian MSI must be characterized as a large party in point of members in absolute as well as relative figures.

We may summarize the overall trend in the development of membership as a steady decline that set in around 1980. In many West European countries today there is direct political party support in terms of money from various levels of government, compensating the parties for a reduction in resources coming from members and interest organizations in civil society. As parties have become less dependent on strong organizations such as business firms or trade unions, they seem to slip more and more into dependence on the state.

Conclusion

The West European countries may without exception be described as *multi-party systems*, because a basic trait of the major democracies in Europe is the operation of more than two parties in each country under rules of competition and cooperation. It is difficult not to be impressed by the capacity of the political parties in Western Europe to maintain themselves in such an uncertain world as that of politics. We find that the major political parties of today date back to the beginning of the century, that their political relevance was established relatively soon after their formation and that their electoral record during the post-Second World War period has meant that they remain politically salient.

Tocqueville linked the role of the political parties in a democracy to the place in civil society of free associations:

Thus political life makes the love and practice of association more general; it imparts a desire of union and teaches the means of combination to numbers of men who otherwise would have lived apart. (Tocqueville, 1990: II, 115)

Political parties are different from other kinds of civil association in that they orientate towards broad group interests whereas most other civil associations focus on narrow group interests: 'Politics give birth not only to numerous associations, but to associations of great extent' (Tocqueville, 1990: II, 115-16).

It must, however, be recognized that there have been changes since the Second World War in the party landscape. Some types of party have declined generally speaking (religious, liberal and communist parties) whereas other types have advanced (socialist and conservative parties). A spectacular phenomenon has been the sudden instability caused by the rise in attraction of discontent parties. Another new phenomenon was the revitalization of ethnic parties. And the emergence of environmental or Green parties has been a highly important innovation in the party landscape in some countries.

Thus, the electoral trend data suggest that certainly not everything has remained the same in the party landscape in this century and that profound changes have taken place with regard to both the number and kinds of parties, including transformation of the established parties. New types of party have been introduced in the post-Second World War period and new parties have replaced old ones. The strength of anti-system parties has declined, although one ultra-right party has done well in the 1990s. The communist parties in particular have declined, and several have been transformed into left-wing socialist parties, but it must be admitted that discontent parties have attracted interest from time to time, particularly in the 1970s but also in the 1990s. Yet there is some truth to the claim that present-day political parties tend to have a long tradition as most have existed for a long time. Political parties seem to possess a large adaptive capacity but some fail, others are transformed and a few innovate (Rose and Mackie, 1988). We will examine the relationship between parties and voters more closely in the next chapter.

We are well aware of the fact that not all parties are easily classified into our party types. Appendix 3.1 lists a few parties where one could have considered an alternative classification.