

# LEFT-RIGHT PERCEPTIONS, PARTISAN PREFERENCES, ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION, AND PARTISAN CHOICE IN FRANCE

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An analysis based on survey data shows that electoral participation at the second ballot in France can be accounted for by partisan preferences but not by left-right perceptions of party locations. This finding runs counter to the work of Rosenthal and Sen (1973), who validated a spatial model of participation at the second ballot employing left-right perceptions and partisan preferences interchangeably. Because they use aggregate data, Rosenthal and Sen (1973) are restricted in two ways that, operating interactively, lead them to an unwarranted conclusion concerning the power of left-right perceptions. Later work by Rosenthal and Sen (1977) indicating that left-right perceptions can account for shifts in partisan choice between the two ballots by voters who have decided to participate is confirmed, but partisan preferences account even better for second-ballot choices. Left-right perceptions and partisan sympathies are related, but discrete partisan attitudes are a more powerful factor than left-right perceptions in French second-ballot electoral behavior.

The historical vitality of left-right terminology and the broad extent to which it permeates political discourse in more than a few political cultures have suggested that the left-right dimension may be a powerful tool for the analysis of political behavior. Since the publication of Downs' seminal work (1957), there has been a surge of scholarly interest in exploring the extent to which the left-right dimension underlies the electorate's orientations toward the surrounding political world (Deutsch, Lindon, and Weill, 1966; Laponce, 1970a, 1970b, 1972; Barnes, 1971; Klingemann, 1972; Rosenthal and Sen, 1973, 1977; Sani, 1974; Converse, 1975; Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976). Yet the behavioral impact of left-right perceptions compared with that of discrete partisan attachments has not been investigated. Inglehart and Klingemann (1976) have suggested that the left-right dimension

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may serve as a surrogate for party identification in countries such as France, which has an historically unstable multiparty system, where left-right vocabulary is prominent (Charlot, 1975), and where partisan attachments are typically weak (Converse and Dupeux, 1966), but they do not directly test the proposition.

This article will show that left-right perceptions are not as important a factor as partisan preferences in French political behavior. Our point of departure will be a critique of the work of Rosenthal and Sen (1973, 1977), which more than any other suggests that French electoral behavior is determined by left-right perceptions at least as much as it is by partisan preferences. In a pioneering article, Rosenthal and Sen (1973) tested several spatial and nonspatial models of electoral participation at the second ballot in France by analyzing, on the basis of aggregate data at the district level, variations in abstentions and spoiled ballots between the two ballots of the elections of 1958, 1962, 1967, and 1968.<sup>1</sup> The most successful model they tested was a nonspatial model that they call the heuristic model, and which is based on the number of candidates running in any given district at the second ballot and the tightness of the competition between the two front-runners at the first ballot.<sup>2</sup> Less successful, but still generally satisfactory, was a spatial model that Rosenthal and Sen refer to as the alienation model, as it derives from the Davis, Hinich, and Ordeshook (1970) notion of the relationship between alienation and electoral participation.

Rosenthal and Sen operationalize the alienation model with partisan preferences and locations along the left-right dimension interchangeably. Sometimes the model produces better results when distance is interpreted in preference terms, and sometimes when distance is measured in terms of left-right locations, but the differences in outcomes are not great. Both measures produce satisfactory results; neither is systematically superior to the other. However, whether spatial or nonspatial, the Rosenthal-Sen models tend only to account for spoiled ballots, as opposed to valid votes; they account less well for abstentions, which Rosenthal and Sen treat as a long-term problem.

In a later work, Rosenthal and Sen (1977) find that once French voters decide to cast a valid ballot at the second round of voting, their partisan choices can be accounted for by left-right perceptions. They do not, however, test to determine whether partisan preferences can also account for those choices as well as or better than left-right perceptions do.

By a different method than that employed by Rosenthal and Sen, we have also sought to account for French participation and choice at the second ballot in forced-choice situations. Contrary to Rosenthal and Sen (1973), we find that while partisan preferences account for electoral participation, left-right perceptions do not. We can also account for abstentions, as well as

for spoiled ballots. On the other hand, like Rosenthal and Sen in their later work (1977), we find that left-right perceptions can account for partisan choice (as opposed to electoral participation). However, we find that partisan preferences account for partisan choice even better than left-right perceptions do. Partisan preferences are a more powerful factor than left-right perceptions of party locations in French second-ballot electoral behavior.

### ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION AND LEFT-RIGHT PERCEPTIONS

The data for our analysis come from a survey of 2,046 respondents shortly after the French legislative elections of 1967. In the first stage of the design, a sample of 86 electoral districts was drawn, at rates proportional to population size, to represent the 467 districts of continental France. Within each of these sample districts, samples of voters were drawn randomly from the electoral registers.

Measures of left-right distances between the voters and the parties were obtained early in the interviews. The respondents were asked where they would locate the 10 main parties of the period on a 100-point scale that ranged from "extreme left" at 1 to "extreme right" at 100. Specifically, they were first asked (before the interviewer had mentioned the names of any parties) to list all the parties they could think of, and a left-right rating of each party mentioned by the respondent was elicited. Then, the interviewer handed the respondent a list containing the names of all 10 parties, and asked whether the respondent recognized any of the parties he or she had not already mentioned. For each additional party cited by the respondent, a left-right location was also obtained. Accordingly, left-right locations were obtained from each respondent for every party which the respondent either cited spontaneously or recalled when reminded of its existence. Lastly, the respondents were asked where they would place themselves on the same left-right scale. The distances on the left-right scale between the respondent's own self-location and the location that the respondent assigned to each of the parties that he or she recalled either spontaneously or after prompting were then computed.

First-ballot voters who cannot repeat their partisan choices at the second ballot divide three ways: some vote for another candidate, some spoil their ballots, and some abstain. For each of those three groups, we generated the mean left-right distance between the voters and their first-ballot partisan choices, the mean left-right distance between the voters and the closest parties that were available to them at the second ballot, and the mean distance between those two mean distances. The resulting pattern does not make each group's electoral behavior intelligible in left-right terms. Indeed, the third of the mean distances just referred to is smallest for the voters who

spoiled their ballots, the group for which one would expect it to be the greatest.

Why do Rosenthal and Sen (1973) get a contrary result? The reason is that their use of aggregate data imposes restrictions upon them that lead, in this instance, to an unwarranted conclusion. Rosenthal and Sen work with the actual electoral returns, for each district studied, at the first and second ballots. They cannot separate the people who could repeat their first-ballot vote at the second ballot from those who could not, and they cannot separate the people who abstained or spoiled their ballots at both the first and second ballots from those who did so only at the second ballot. Moreover, in assigning left-right locations to the voters and the parties, Rosenthal and Sen must assume that all the voters place all the candidates of the same party in the same location, and they must attribute to all the voters for a given party the same position that that party occupies. Thus they cannot capture the idiosyncratic features of the voters' left-right perceptions. Neither of these restrictions alone accounts for the divergence between the Rosenthal-Sen (1973) findings and our own, but *both* of the restrictions, taken together and in a highly interactive sense, do account for the difference in results.

This is shown in Table 1, which contains our negative findings concerning the power of left-right perceptions among first-ballot voters who cannot repeat their partisan choice (upper left),<sup>3</sup> as well as the results of the same form of analysis, first, for the same subset of voters but assuming that they all perceived the location of each party uniformly and placed themselves at the left-right location occupied by the party for which they voted at the first ballot (upper right); second, employing idiosyncratic left-right locations, for all persons who voted at the first ballot (lower left); and last, including all persons who voted at the first ballot *and* employing uniform left-right partisan locations (lower right). The right side contains only a single column, as opposed to the left side, which contains three columns, because the assumption that all voters occupy the same left right location that is occupied by the party they vote for means that there is always zero distance between those two locations.

Both the upper right and the lower left portions of Table 1 show a slight improvement over our original result, but in neither case is it sufficient to justify claiming that perceptions of left-right distances account for second-ballot participation. However, the lower right portion, which incorporates both of the ways in which the Rosenthal-Sen (1973) analysis differs from ours, produces good results. There is a sharp distinction between the voters and the spoilers, and the abstainers fall between the voters and the spoilers, which is what they should do.

Two different sets of forces are at work when we build the Rosenthal-Sen (1973) restrictions into our analysis. First, when one includes all the first-

ballot voters instead of working only with those unable to repeat their partisan choice, about 80 percent of the second ballot voters are comparatively satisfied voters who are merely repeating a vote for their preferred party, which one would normally expect to be closest to them. At the same time, the group of ballot-spoilers is no larger than it is when one works only with the subset of voters in forced-choice situations. Literally everyone in our 1967 sample who reported having spoiled his ballot at the second round of voting was a first-ballot voter who could not repeat his partisan choice at the second ballot. Thus the contrast between voters and spoilers is sharpened.

Second, when one assumes that the location of each voter on the left-right dimension is that of his first-ballot partisan choice, the distance between a voter and his preferred party is zero, the absolute minimum. When one assumes that the location of each party is perceived identically by all the voters, the distance between the voter (or his first-ballot choice) and each other party in the spectrum is optimized. This does not necessarily maximize the distance between a voter and the parties for which he does not vote; indeed cases are conceivable where it minimizes that distance. But it does assume that the dispersion of perceived locations around the mean for each party is symmetrical, and we know that that is not a general rule (Converse, 1975).

The joint effect of these forces operating simultaneously is to support the notion that left-right perceptions account for electoral participation at the second ballot. We get satisfactory results when we apply the same restrictions to our data that apply to Rosenthal and Sen (1973). Those restrictions, however, depart from the empirical reality, which our original test with individual-level data captures. That more realistic test indicates that left-right perceptions do not adequately explain electoral participation at the second ballot.

## ABSTENTIONS

The models that Rosenthal and Sen (1973) find satisfactory for explaining electoral participation account better for spoiled ballots than for abstentions, which they regard as a long-term problem. Up to a point, Rosenthal and Sen are correct; most abstentions are caused by long-term forces, notably—in our view—those contributing to low levels of political involvement. But some second-ballot abstainers are motivated by the same short-term situational forces that account for the behavior of the second-ballot spoilers. These are the deliberate abstainers, whom we estimate constitute about half of the abstainers among first-ballot voters in forced-choice situations at the second ballot. These people do not register in the Rosenthal-Sen models

TABLE 1. Mean Distance on the Left-Right Dimension Between Voters and Their First-Ballot Partisan Choice, and Between Voters and the Closest Party Available at the Second Ballot, by Second-Ballot Electoral Behavior (France, 1967).

	Individually Assigned Left-Right Locations			Uniform Mean Left-Right Locations		
	A	B	C	A	B	C
Second Ballot Electoral Behavior	Distance between Voter and 1st Ballot Partisan Choice	Distance between Voter and Closest Party Available at the 2nd Ballot	Distance between Closest Party Available at the 2nd Ballot and 1st Ballot Partisan Choice	Distance Between Voter and Closest Party Available at the 2nd Ballot		
Voted for a candidate	12.0 (154) <sup>a</sup> 17.2 <sup>b</sup>	18.8 (150) 13.1	7.7 (141) 23.6	15.9 (186) 6.5		
Cast a spoiled ballot	15.0 (21) 16.0	19.6 (25) 14.2	4.4 (19) 21.8	19.6 (23) 13.4		
Abstained	18.1 (20) 17.7	27.1 (18) 18.4	8.7 (17) 29.9	18.9 (25) 10.8		

TABLE 1 (Continued).

All persons who voted at the first ballot	Voted for a candidate	14.2 (782) <i>16.0</i>	13.0 (704) <i>12.6</i>	-1.0 (693) <i>13.9</i>	2.8 (1026) <i>6.6</i>
	Cast a spoiled ballot	15.0 (21) <i>16.0</i>	19.6 (25) <i>14.2</i>	4.4 (19) <i>21.8</i>	19.6 (23) <i>13.4</i>
	Abstained	19.9 (53) <i>20.3</i>	17.2 (48) <i>19.4</i>	-1.9 (47) <i>22.3</i>	6.4 (73) <i>10.9</i>

<sup>a</sup>Number of cases in parentheses (unweighted)

<sup>b</sup>Standard deviations in *italics*

because they cannot be isolated from the other abstainers that also populate an aggregate data base. They can, however, be isolated within a survey data base.

There are two other types of second-ballot abstainer in addition to the deliberate abstainer: the chronic abstainer and the random abstainer. Chronic abstainers are second-ballot abstainers who also abstained at the first ballot. According to our sample estimate, almost 45 percent of the second ballot abstainers had not voted at the first ballot either. These people cannot be excluded from aggregate data but they can be excluded from survey data.

Random abstainers are first-ballot voters who abstained at the second ballot for reasons other than those of the deliberate abstainers. They are a heterogeneous group, including people ranging from politically involved persons who intended to vote but were prevented from doing so by illness, accident, unexpected travel, or the like, to comparatively uninvolved voters whose participation at the first ballot was as random as their abstention at the second. According to our sample estimates, about 6 percent of the first-ballot voters who *could* repeat their partisan choice at the second ballot abstained, and we can reasonably expect the same proportion of first-ballot voters who *could not* repeat their first-ballot choice at the second ballot also to abstain. Inasmuch as our estimates indicate that somewhat more than 11 percent of the forced-choice electorate abstained at the second ballot, about half of the abstentions were random and the other half deliberate.

We sorted the deliberate abstainers from the random abstainers within the forced-choice subset of our 1967 sample on the basis of replies to an open-ended question asking abstainers why they did not vote. Table 2 reports the frequencies of the responses given both by first-ballot voters who could have repeated their first-ballot partisan choice at the second ballot and by first-ballot voters who could not have done so.

In separating the deliberate abstainers from the random abstainers, we counted as deliberate abstainers only those respondents who told us that they did not vote because no candidate suited them. We took all the other abstainers within the group to be random abstainers. There may be deliberate abstainers among the respondents who said they did not vote because the election was decided beforehand, but this response is not sufficiently unambiguous to warrant including it as an indicator. It implies a deliberate abstention, but not necessarily because of the limited choice of candidates at the second ballot.

This sorting of abstainers has the disadvantage of dividing them in a ratio of about one-third deliberate abstainers to two-thirds random abstainers, when the overall estimate of that ratio which we reported above is closer to 50:50. But the sorting keeps our group of deliberate abstainers as pure as



**TABLE 2. First-Ballot Voters' Professed Reasons for Abstaining at the Second Ballot, France, 1967 (%)**

	Voters Who Could Repeat Their First-Ballot Choice	Voters Who Could Not Repeat Their First-Ballot Choice
Prevented from going to the polls (Sickness, Injury, Absence, etc.)	51.8%	49.3%
Lack of interest	7.5	—
No suitable candidate	2.0	32.5
Election decided in advance	1.4	6.8
Claimed there was no second ballot	32.7	11.4
Other reasons	3.0	—
Don't know	1.6	—
	100.0 (N=49.5)	100.0 (N=28.0)

possible, and if we have included some deliberate abstainers in the group of random abstainers, little harm is done as long as the two test groups display attitudinal differences, for the presence of some deliberate abstainers among the random abstainers should contribute toward narrowing the differences between the two test groups.

The similarity between the attitudes of the spoilers and the deliberate abstainers, and the difference between the attitudes of the deliberate abstainers and the random abstainers, are apparent when we isolate those three groups in the test that indicates that partisan preferences account for participation at the second ballot (see Table 3).<sup>4</sup>

The relative partisan preferences of the respondents at our 1967 survey were determined on the basis of a sympathy scale, or what is sometimes called a "feelings thermometer." The respondents were shown a vertical scale with nine graduated markings ranging from 0 to 100; each mark was labeled with a term designating an appropriate degree of sympathy or hostility. The respondents were read a list of political objects, including the names of the main political parties, and they were asked to indicate what grade on the sympathy scale they would give to each object. In addition, they were told by the interviewers that a grade of 100 meant that they had a lot of sympathy for the group, that zero meant that they did not like it at all, and that a grade of 50 meant either that they were neither for nor against it or that they did not know much about it.<sup>5</sup>

The voters, spoilers and deliberate abstainers all had distinctly positive

TABLE 3. Mean Sympathy for First-Ballot Partisan Choice and Most Preferred Party Available at the Second Ballot, by Second-Ballot Electoral Behavior, Among Voters Who Could Not Repeat Their First-Ballot Partisan Choice at the Second Ballot (France, 1967).

	A	B	C
	Sympathy for First-Ballot Partisan Choice	Sympathy for the Most Preferred Party Available at the Second Ballot	Difference in Sympathy between First-Ballot Partisan Choice and Most Preferred Party Available at the Second Ballot
Voted for a candidate	70.4 (186) <sup>a</sup> <i>20.8<sup>b</sup></i>	59.9 (193) <i>18.4</i>	10.4 (185) <i>24.6</i>
Cast a spoiled ballot	69.4 (22)	39.4 (29)	28.5 (22)
Abstained deliberately	19.3	20.5	30.0
	63.7 (9)	31.2 <sup>c</sup> (9)	32.5 <sup>d</sup> (9)
	17.2	23.5	35.1
Abstained randomly	56.5 (16)	56.8 <sup>c</sup> (18)	0.8 <sup>d</sup> (16)
	25.9	22.4	37.1

<sup>a</sup>Number of cases in parentheses (unweighted)

<sup>b</sup>Standard deviations in *italics*

<sup>c</sup>Significant at between the .01 and .005 levels

<sup>d</sup>Significant at the .025 level

feelings toward their first-ballot partisan choices, but while the voters also had positive feelings toward the party available at the second ballot that they preferred the most, and therefore had an incentive to vote, that was not the case for the spoilers or the deliberate abstainers. In fact, for those two groups, the term “most-preferred” available party is a misnomer; “least-disliked” would be more appropriate, as in both cases the relevant sympathy scores are well below the midpoint of 50. The difference in sympathy between their first-ballot choice and the least disliked party available at the second ballot is even larger for the deliberate abstainers (32.5 points) than it is for the spoilers (28.5 points) and, in both cases, is some three times as large as it is for the people who chose to cast a valid ballot.<sup>6</sup> The deliberate abstainers resemble the spoilers; neither group had an incentive to vote at the second ballot.<sup>7</sup>

The behavior of the random abstainers is quite different from that of any other category. They abstained at the second ballot when they felt as much sympathy for at least one available party as they felt for the party they had voted for at the first ballot. The inescapable conclusion is that partisan preferences do not account for random abstentions. It is not our purpose here to examine electoral participation in terms of factors other than partisan preferences and left-right perceptions, but to the extent that random abstentions may be accounted for by any other single factor, that factor would appear to be political involvement.<sup>8</sup>

We have, therefore, accounted for deliberate abstentions as well as for spoiled ballots. Rosenthal and Sen cannot account for deliberate abstentions because of the limitations of aggregate data. Their second-ballot abstainers are heavily populated with chronic abstainers and random abstainers, and the deliberate abstainers are submerged within the larger group.

By the same logic one might ask why Rosenthal and Sen can account for spoiled ballots. After all, they cannot disaggregate the people who spoiled their ballot papers at the first ballot but not at the second, those who spoiled their ballot papers at both ballots, and those who spoiled them at the second ballot but not at the first. They cannot distinguish among these different groups of ballot spoilers any more than they can among the various groups of abstainers. Yet some of the models they test, including the spatial model, are sensitive to spoiled ballots even if they are not sensitive to abstentions.

The reason is almost certainly that the proportion of spoiled ballots typically increases sharply between the first and the second ballots, whereas the proportion of abstentions does not. On the basis of the official returns for the 76 districts in our sample where there were two ballots in 1967, 2.1 percent of the first-ballot voters spoiled their ballots, while 3.5 percent of the second-ballot voters did so. That is an increase of two-thirds, and inasmuch as most spoiled ballot papers at the first ballot are probably involuntary, and

one can reasonably expect the proportion of involuntarily spoiled ballots to be the same at the second ballot as at the first, the increase must come exclusively from people who have deliberately spoiled their ballot papers. The increase in the proportion of spoiled ballots shows up in the Rosenthal-Sen analysis both because of its magnitude and the fact that it reflects unadulterated alienation.

However, again on the basis of official returns, the proportion of abstentions at the first ballot in districts where two ballots were required was 20.2 percent at the first ballot and only 23.2 percent at the second ballot, for an increase of less than 15 percent. The number of abstainers just does not swell between the two ballots; the deliberate abstainers do not show up in aggregate data because they are heavily outnumbered by chronic and random abstainers.

Of course, the ballot-spoilers who appear in our survey data are all deliberate spoilers, while the spoilers who show up in the Rosenthal-Sen data include both deliberate spoilers and involuntary spoilers. But we have seen that the proportion of spoiled ballots increases sharply from the first to the second ballot, and we know from our survey that comparatively few people deliberately spoil their votes at the first ballot and that the overwhelming majority of people who deliberately spoil their votes at the second ballot are people who cannot repeat their first-ballot partisan vote.<sup>9</sup> The bulge in spoiled ballots that appears at the second ballot, therefore, comes almost exclusively from deliberate spoilers. This bulge registers directly in the Rosenthal-Sen analysis.

### UNFRIENDLY NEIGHBORS

Partisan preferences account for electoral participation at the second ballot in France; perceptions of left-right locations do not.<sup>10</sup> In one sense, this finding may appear "obvious." It is a well-known historical phenomenon that the elites of ideologically related parties can generate more hostility toward each other than toward opponents who are more distant from them ideologically. In France, this has been true particularly for Communist-Socialist relations, but the phenomenon is not limited either to France or to the left. Heretics of various sorts have often been treated more harshly than nonbelievers.

A similar phenomenon operates throughout the French mass electorate. French polling data regularly report that large proportions of first-ballot voters for noncommunist leftist parties refuse to vote for a Communist candidate at the second ballot, and that various proportions of non-Gaullist rightists, depending on the current political climate, refuse to vote for Gaullists. This common knowledge, however, does not seem to have played

a cautionary role in considerations of the potential importance of the left-right dimension for electoral behavior.

On the other hand, there is a counter-intuitive element to the finding. Even allowing for the existence of partisan hostilities among people with common left-right perceptions of themselves and the major parties, one could reasonably expect that across the electorate, partisan attitudes and left-right perceptions of party locations would correlate highly and that any phenomenon that could be accounted for by partisan sympathies would also be explicable in terms of left-right distances. In fact, the absolute differences that French voters perceive between their own self-assigned left-right locations and those they assign to the various parties uniformly correlate in the expected direction with the amount of sympathy they feel for the same parties, and sometimes at levels that are quite respectable in social science research ( $r = .58$  for the UNR;  $r = .56$  for the PCF).<sup>11</sup> Yet our analysis provides no support for the notion that left-right perceptions account for electoral participation at the second ballot in France.

There is simply too much variation in the attitudes of people toward particular parties—even though they perceive those parties to be close to one another in left-right terms—for left-right perceptions to count as much as partisan attitudes in decisions concerning electoral participation. There is a greater propensity for French voters to acknowledge that certain parties are ideologically related, through proximity on the left-right axis, than there is for the voters to have similar attitudes toward such neighboring parties. We can demonstrate this phenomenon by examining the intercorrelations between sympathy scores for the main leftist parties or leaders (PCF, SFIO, Mitterrand), between sympathy scores for the main rightist parties or leaders (UNR, Giscard d'Estaing, Lecanuet), between left-right distances between self and the main leftist parties (PCF, SFIO, Federation), and between left-right distances between self and the main rightist parties (UNR, Independent Republicans, Democratic Center). The relevant correlation coefficients are set out in Table 4.

The correlations for the left-right distance scores are uniformly stronger than the correlations for the sympathy scores for the equivalent matching pair of political objects. This tendency is somewhat more marked with regard to the leftwing parties than it is for the rightwing parties, but it occurs clearly for both types of party clusters.

These figures mean that the voters come closer to regarding the main leftist parties (or the main rightist parties) as interchangeable in left-right terms than they do in terms of partisan sympathy. Across the electorate as a whole, French voters see less difference between the main leftist parties when they consider them in spatial left-right terms than they do when they consider them in terms of their rankings on the “feelings thermometer,” and

**TABLE 4. Zero-Order Correlations ( $r$ ) Between Attitudes Toward Selected Pairs of Partisan Objects (France, 1967).**

Left-Right Distance between Self and Party		Partisan Sympathy	
Communists-Federation	.69	Communists-Mitterrand	.54
Federation-Socialists	.60	Mitterrand-Socialists	.45
Socialists-Communists	.58	Socialists-Communists	.30
UNR (Gaullists)- Democratic Center	.42	UNR-Lecanuet	.29
Democratic Center- Independent Republicans	.55	Lecanuet-Giscard d'Estaing	.38
Independent Republicans-UNR	.64	Giscard d'Estaing-UNR	.54

the same holds true for the main right-wing parties. The voters simply distinguish more clearly between the major parties along the sympathy-hostility dimension than they do along the left-right dimension. Their decisions concerning electoral participation, therefore, are more sensitive to partisan attitudes than they are to sense of left-right distances.

Even though our sample as a whole indicates that partisan feeling is a uniformly more powerful factor than sense of left-right distance in discriminating between the major parties, we are particularly interested in the behavior of the subsets of voters who are most likely not to be able to repeat their first-ballot choice at the second ballot. Accordingly, we isolated three groups of first-ballot voters: those who voted for the Communist Party, those who voted for the noncommunist left (the Federation or the PSU), and those who voted for the Democratic Center. We ignored the people who voted for the UNR or the Independent Republicans, as those voters were seldom faced with having to choose a different candidate at the second ballot, as well as the voters for the smaller parties or for unaffiliated candidates, as they are comparatively few in numbers.

For each of the three groups, we ran the same correlations that appear in Table 4. That operation produced 18 matching pairs of correlations relating to partisan feelings on the one hand and to left-right distances on the other. Of those 18 matching pairs of correlations, those relating to left-right distances were stronger than those relating to partisanship in 12 cases. In two cases the correlations were the same (after rounding to the second decimal). Only in four cases out of the 18 did the voters for one or the other of the three partisan groups involved distinguish more sharply between the main party clusters on the basis of left-right distances than by partisan sympathy.

The breakdown of the analysis by party groupings strengthens the argument that electoral participation at the second ballot depends more on partisanship than on sense of left-right distance, because French voters distinguish more sharply between parties on grounds of partisanship than on grounds of left-right distance. More first-ballot voters who could not repeat their partisan choice at the second ballot had voted for the noncommunist left than for any other partisan group (36 percent). Among Federation or PSU voters, the tendency to regard ideologically related parties as unfriendly neighbors is clearly displayed. All six correlations are stronger on the left-right distance side than on the partisan sympathy side for the noncommunist left. The historic rivalry between the two main branches of the marxist movement in France, the Socialist Party (SFIO) and the Communist Party (PCF), is reflected in the partisan attitudes of the noncommunist left electorate, and so is the "new left" challenge of the PSU to both of those larger leftist parties.

Centrists and Communists each supplied smaller proportions of forced-choice voters, but centrists displayed the unfriendly neighbors phenomenon almost as clearly as the noncommunist leftists did. Among Democratic Center voters, who furnished about a fourth of the voters who could not repeat their first-ballot choices at the second ballot, party sympathy discriminates more sharply among related parties than left-right distances do in five of the six matching pairs.

Only first-ballot Communist voters, who also supplied a fourth of the forced-choice voters, failed to distinguish among the main parties more often by partisanship than by left-right distance. They did so only in one case out of the six. But neither did they behave in a directly contrary fashion. In three other cases, the Communist voters saw more difference among parties in left-right terms than in terms of partisan sympathy, but in two cases there was no difference in the strength of the two factors as a criterion of party difference.

## PARTISAN CHOICE

In a work reporting the results of tests of various spatial models designed to account for French voters' partisan choices at the second ballot at all elections from 1958 to 1973 inclusively, once the voters decided to cast a valid vote, Rosenthal and Sen (1977, p. 1447) argue that "the second ballot can be reasonably accounted for by a single Left-Right dimension." They do not test any other dimension. As in their earlier work (1973), they employ aggregate data and apply the same conventions concerning uniform partisan left-right locations and the location of partisan voters at the left-right position of the party for which they voted.

**TABLE 5. Mean Partisan Sympathy and Mean Perceived Left-Right Distances for Party Chosen and Best Available Party Rejected in Forced-Choice Situations at the Second-Ballot (France, 1967).**

	Mean Sympathy Score	Mean Perceived Left-Right Distance of Party from Voter's Own Left-Right Location
Party chosen	56.1 (194) <sup>a</sup>	25.2 (162)
Best available party rejected	33.0 (193)	43.5 (154)

<sup>a</sup>Number of cases in parentheses (unweighted)

On the basis of our 1967 survey data, we have made an independent test of what accounts for the partisan choices of second-ballot voters in forced-choice situations, and our results confirm the Rosenthal-Sen (1977) finding that they can be explained by perceptions of left-right distances. However, we also find that partisan preferences provide a better explanation. Table 5 presents the raw figures illustrating the operative power of both dimensions. There is a mean difference of almost 20 points in the expected direction between the relevant left-right scores, but there is also a mean difference of almost 25 points in the expected direction between the corresponding party sympathy scores. It is not possible from Table 5 alone to determine which of the two dimensional effects is the stronger, but a multiple regression produces a partial correlation coefficient of  $r = .36$  for net advantage in partisan sympathy compared with a partial correlation coefficient of  $r = .29$  for net advantage in left-right distance.

We find, therefore, that for first-ballot voters in forced-choice situations at the second ballot, partisan preferences account for both participation and electoral choices. Among the same set of voters, perceptions of left-right distances do not account for participation, but once the voter has decided to cast a valid ballot, they account for his partisan choice, although not quite as well as partisan preferences do.

There is nothing contradictory in these findings with regard to left-right perceptions. Partisan preferences simply override left-right perceptions when the voter is deciding whether or not to cast a valid ballot. The voters who feel antagonistic toward the remaining choices, regardless of their left-right locations, spoil their ballots or deliberately abstain. Those with favorable attitudes toward at least one of the available choices remain in the active electorate. It is quite understandable that for those voters left-right



perceptions then come into play. They are the people whose left-right perceptions are not at odds with their partisan preferences. But even for the second-ballot voters, partisan sympathy outweighs left-right perceptions as a factor in partisan choice.

## DISCUSSION

We have found that partisanship is a more important determinant of French electoral behavior at the second ballot than sense of left-right distances. Partisan preferences eclipse perceived left-right party locations as a factor in the decision to vote, and while left-right perceptions affect the partisan choices of those people who do vote, those choices are affected more strongly by partisan preferences. Left-right perceptions are related to, but cannot be equated with, partisan preferences. Whatever forces are at work among leftists who refuse to vote for certain parties they perceive as leftist, or among rightists who refuse to vote for some parties they perceive as rightists, are independent of the left-right dimension.

One may argue that France is a special case because it alone among contemporary democracies employs a two-ballot electoral system, and that the relative weakness of the left-right dimension as a factor in French second-ballot electoral behavior is largely irrelevant for countries with single-ballot electoral systems, particularly where most of the parties run candidates in most of the districts most of the time, thereby enlarging opportunities for the electorate to vote for their preferred parties.

But far from being irrelevant for other systems, the French findings have direct implications for them, for those findings run counter to the notion that left-right perceptions underlie partisan attitudes. The keen interest in the left-right dimension did not develop simply because scholars thought that it might be one dimension among others that help the voters organize political information and orient their political behavior. It derived from the possibility that the left-right dimension might turn out to be the dimension that provided the foundation for the others, at least in certain countries, among which France appears to be archetypal.

It is exceedingly difficult, however, to establish causal priority among such variables as left-right perceptions and partisan attachments. We have reported them to be correlated comparatively highly with each other in one form, and Inglehart and Klingemann (1976, p. 256) show them generally to be highly intercorrelated in another form. We may, however, reasonably doubt that left-right perceptions generally underlie partisan attachments in a causal sense when we find that in France electoral participation depends on the latter but not on the former.

This is not to say that the left-right dimension is unimportant or unworthy

or our attention. On the contrary, the evidence concerning the relative effects of left-right perceptions and partisan attitudes is far from complete, to say nothing about the problems of how these two phenomena originate and interact with each other. Indeed, the evidence we have examined suggests that the relationship between those two factors may be quite complex. All we wish to claim here is that we see no reason to believe that left-right perceptions generally outweigh partisan attitudes as a determinant of electoral behavior.

## NOTES

1. Members of the French National Assembly are elected at the first ballot only if they win a majority of the valid ballots cast in their districts, and their total vote amounts to at least a fourth of the registered voters. Otherwise, there is a second ballot, at which a plurality suffices for election. Most seats are decided only at the second ballot.

In almost every district, there are fewer candidates at the second ballot than there were at the first. Candidates who do not receive a certain proportion of the first-ballot votes are automatically eliminated from the second. Other candidates who are eligible to run at the second ballot choose to withdraw from the race.

This system places different groups of voters in different situations. Voters where the election is decided at the first ballot vote only once. Voters where there is a second ballot may vote a second time, but their situations differ depending on whether or not the candidate for whom they voted at the first ballot also runs at the second. Voters whose first-ballot choices run at the second ballot may simply repeat their partisan vote. Voters whose preferred candidates drop out of the race, however, face a new situation and have three alternatives: they may vote for another candidate, abstain, or register a protest against the forced-choice situation by deliberately spoiling their ballots. These voters constitute a critical group for the study of electoral participation, as they permit us to compare the behavior of the same voters under different conditions.

Readers whose primary interest lies in U.S. elections may be surprised by the importance we attribute here to spoiled (invalid) ballots, as the United States is perhaps the only democratic country where invalid ballots are not customarily recorded in election statistics. Voters may spoil their ballots, either involuntarily or deliberately, and we will be concerned with deliberate ballot-spoiling. For the proportions of invalid ballots at national elections in various countries, see Mackie and Rose (1974); for a specialized discussion and general bibliography, see Stiefbold (1965).

2. This model is outside the frame of reference of this article and will be discussed elsewhere.
3. To determine whether the left-right distances test was contaminated by the inclusion of the *marais*, people who classify themselves at 50 on the left-right scale but who have so little interest in politics that there is virtually no political meaning associated with their self-classification, we reran the test excluding the *marais*, but the results were basically unchanged. On the *marais*, see Deutsch, Lindon, and Weill (1966).
4. Because the *N*'s are small for some of our test groups, we have reported the significance levels of the differences in means between the two smallest groups compared in Table 3.
5. A word is in order about the construction of Table 3. Direct party sympathy scores were applied for the PCF, PSU, and UNR. We had no party sympathy measures for the Independent Republicans and the Democratic Center, but we did have sympathy scores for Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and for Jean Lecanuet, the respective leaders of those two formations, so those scores were plugged in where applicable. We had no Federation or Convention sympathy scores, but we did have scores for the SFIO, the Radicals, and François Mitterrand. Accordingly, where the Federation candidate was SFIO, we searched for the SFIO sympathy score, but if there was none we applied the sympathy score for Mitterrand. Where the Federation candidate was a Radical, we searched for the Radical sympathy

score but if there was none, we used the score for Mitterrand. For straight Federation candidates and Federation candidates from the Convention, we used the sympathy score for Mitterrand. For Alliance Républicaine candidates, as well as all other rightwing candidates outside the major parties already mentioned, we plugged in the sympathy score for Jean Louis Tixier-Vignancour.

Naturally, we would prefer to have direct party sympathy measures in every case, but we do not believe the resort to "functional equivalents" is a serious source of error here. The sympathy scores, for which we employ mixed objects, give us positive results, while the left-right distances, for which we have direct measures, do not.

6. It would be more satisfying if the spoilers liked the best available parties even less than the deliberate abstainers did. After all, it takes more effort to spoil a ballot than to abstain, and it would be reasonable to expect the spoilers to be more hostile to the available choices than the abstainers are. On our measures, however, the opposite is the case.
7. When we make a similar sorting between deliberate and random abstainers and generate the relevant scores pertaining to left-right perceptions, as reported in the upper-left portion of Table 1, we find support for the notion that perceived left-right distances account for the behavior of the deliberate abstainers. We are down to an  $N$  of 7 in that subgroup, however, and we cannot generalize from this limited finding when the larger group of ballot-spoilers does not also appear to be acting on the basis of left-right perceptions.
8. On a five-item scale of political involvement, the random abstainers among the first-ballot voters who could not repeat their choice at the second ballot have a mean standardized score of .05, while the first-ballot voters who could repeat their first-ballot choice but who abstained at the second ballot have a mean standardized score of  $-.09$ . Both groups of abstainers are, therefore, relatively close to the sample mean. For first-ballot voters who could not repeat their choice and who spoiled their ballots, the corresponding mean score is .69; for voters in forced-choice situations who voted for another candidate, it is .54; and for the deliberate abstainers among those who could not repeat their partisan choice, the score is .53. Deliberate abstainers are not quite as strongly involved politically as spoilers, which may account for why they merely abstained rather than take the trouble to spoil their ballots. Chronic abstainers, the people who did not bother to vote at either the first or the second ballot, have a mean standardized involvement score of  $-1.38$ .
9. In the 76 districts of our sample where there was a second ballot, only one percent of the voters reported having spoiled their votes at the first ballot, compared with 3.4 percent who reported spoiling them at the second ballot.
10. There is some irony in the difference between our results and those of Rosenthal and Sen (1973) on this score, as the left-right locations that they assign to the French parties derive from the 1967 survey on which our work is based. The party preference data that they employ are based on estimates Philip E. Converse (1966) produced by a Coombsian unfolding analysis of 1958 French survey data. The left-right locations that they use are based on the mean locations of the French parties as perceived by the respondents in our 1967 survey, and reported in Barnes and Pierce (1971). Their findings and ours agree with respect to partisan preferences, although they use 1958 data derived in one fashion and we use 1967 data derived in another way, while their findings and ours differ concerning left-right perceptions, even though their work and ours ultimately rest on the same set of empirical data.
11. The correlations are literally negative, as the smaller the left-right distance between the voter and the party, the greater the voter's sympathy for the party.

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