

PS 140 Intro to Comparative Politics
Spatial Models of Coalition Formation

After a heated campaign period, Scratchistani general election results indicate that no single party has won a majority in the 100-seat parliament, the Gostilna. The PR electoral system used in Scratchistan produced the following vote totals, in percentages:

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|-------|
| Social Democrats of Scratchistan | 34% | (SDS) |
| Scratchistani Christian Democrats | 27% | (SCD) |
| Scratchistani National Front | 18% | (SNF) |
| United Socialists of Scratchistan | 15% | (USS) |
| Liberal Party | 6% | (LP) |

The National Front is a neo-Fascist group, modeled on the French FN, railing against the heavy concentrations of ethnic Ossian ‘guest workers’ in some regions of the country who get full citizenship benefits.

The Scratchistani president, elected several years ago by the outgoing Gostilna, is a rather non-partisan figure, a former athletics figure elected for prominence and respectability rather than politics, and has no real role in day to day politics and government. The president is now faced with a decision: to which party leader should the first chance to form a government be offered?

1. How many votes does a Government require for investiture? _____
2. What possible combinations of parties will yield this many votes or more? List them below, with the number of seats the coalition would command.

3. Next, rank the parties on the two salient dimensions from the election campaign: the extent of state ownership/management of the economy and continuing a generous, universal (and expensive) social welfare system. ‘Low’ means the party would prefer little or none of this; ‘high’ means the reverse.

State management/ownership: Low _____ High

Welfare state: Low _____ High

4. Construct a spatial model on the top of the next page using these two dimensions and the party preferences as you’ve established them. The welfare state generosity axis has been created for you; try placing this page below the next and tracing your preferences through onto the new axis, then rotating the page so the ‘Low’ ends match and trace again for state management. Establish each party’s ideal point in the two-dimensional space, and label it with the party abbreviation and seat share.

Low _____ High

Welfare State Generosity

5. Looking at your model, which of your theoretically possible coalitions look politically plausible? Which do not?

For plausible coalitions, describe the most likely potential coalition agreements and seat distributions in the 10-member Cabinet.

6. Let's assume for a minute that the Scratchistani constitution requires the president to offer the government formation opportunity to the head of the largest party. What is/are the most likely coalition(s) to emerge from this election?

7. The Scratchistani president, however, is not constitutionally bound to select the largest party's leader. In fact, while the Scratchistani president is politically neutral and belongs to no party, the president detests the largest party's leader for beating the president at Blatts, the Scratchistani national game, back in college. Instead, the president asks the leader of the *smallest* party to form a government on the argument that this party lies "at the center of the ideological spectrum."

Is the president's assertion about the placement of parties across the ideological spectrum correct in the Scratchistani case? YES NO CAN'T TELL FROM THE INFORMATION GIVEN

8. What is the most likely coalition to emerge now? Describe its likely coalition agreement and cabinet.