How to Rate Political Position

The second factor we rate for bias is political position bias. This requires existing political knowledge, so if you don't know what constitutes the left and right of the particular position, there you may not be able to accurately rate this factor.

This is probably the most complicated factor to rate, and we could really go into depth about all this entails and get into political science and philosophy topics. The more sophisticated your political knowledge is, the more nuanced your ratings can be. But here, we just want to give you a basic framework for how to go about rating this factor.

There are generally three types of articles to consider in relation to the "political position" factor:
1) The article discusses one or more political positions
2) The article discusses one or more politicians
3) The article does not discuss a political position or a politician

For the last type—articles that do not discuss a political position on a politician—rate the article in the middle as "neutral"

1. **For Articles Discussing Political Positions:**

The most important thing to know about the left-right axis of this chart is that it represents:
   a. Contemporary (meaning current)
   b. United States (as opposed to other countries)
   c. Positions of elected officials (as opposed to the positions of citizens or journalists)

In other words, what anchors the left and right axis are the policy positions of our current elected officials. Generally, the line between Skews Left/Hyper-Partisan Left is defined by the platform of the Democratic National Committee and the line between Skews Right/Hyper-Partisan Right is defined by the platform of the Republican National Committee. We use these positions because they are documented and updated every four years, and you can look them up as a point of reference.

The line between "Hyper-partisan" and "Most extreme" is defined by the positions taken by the most extreme elected officials of each party. Articles should be ranked in the "most extreme" categories if the positions are even beyond what the most extreme elected officials advocate.

You should rate whether an article advocates for or against these political positions and rate them accordingly in those categories.

The middle column represents three possibilities with regard to political position. Those are:
1) Neutral (meaning it does not take a position)
2) Balanced (meaning it shows two sides of an issue)
3) Centrist (advocating for a compromise position in between two sides)

You can rate an article in the middle column if it exhibits any of those characteristics.

<u>Note on Topic Selection</u>

An additional consideration for this factor is the selection of the topic itself. If you notice that the topic itself tends to be of more interest to a left-leaning audience or a right leaning audience, you can start off by placing that article into a "skews left" or "skews right" position based on that. For example, an article about climate change or civil rights could be placed "skews left," or an article about taxes or national security could be placed "skews right" to begin with.

However, only a little bit of weight should be given to the selection of the topic; the political position rating should be determined more by the treatment of the topic by the article.

2. For Articles Discussing Politicians:

Under the "Language" factor we rated earlier, we accounted for terminology that characterizes politicians—specifically, the adjectives used to describe them.

Another thing we want to consider here, under the "political position" is positive or negative coverage of a politician.

Note that negative coverage of a politician is not necessarily biased coverage. For more on this, please read [my article discussing this concept in depth](.)[1] Sometimes, a high profile politician does something that is widely considered negative, and simply covering that factually doesn't indicate bias.

What we are looking for is coverage that is *unfairly* negative or positive in view of the underlying thing that the politician did.

One common example is highly negative treatment of an activity that most people would not consider to be a big deal, such as a stumbling over one's words.

Another consideration you can weigh to determine whether politician-related coverage is biased is to think about how powerful the politician is in relation to how important the story is. If it is a very powerful politician and very important story, its coverage in the news is usually not an indication of bias. If it is a very obscure politician and the story is not important but makes the politician's party look bad, its coverage may be an indication of bias.

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[1] https://www.adfontesmedia.com/when-negative-coverage-is-not-necessarily-biased-coverage/