

Political Parties and Interest Groups in

Contemporary Israel

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December, 2007

The building blocks of Israeli democracy have been its political parties. Israel was described nearly fifty years ago as a *parteienstaat*, (“party-state”), and the role of political parties in the day-to-day operation of the polity has not diminished. In this session I want to discuss the structure and behavior of political parties and related interest groups, how political parties are organized in Israel, what their key issues are, and how they differ from each other. Then, my focus will shift to interest groups, another very important structure in the contemporary Israeli democratic arena.

The Setting

Israeli Parliamentary government. Model of Parliamentarism in Israel.

The underlying factor in contemporary Israel that explains a good deal of the turbulence in the political system is that of the political party. The Israeli political system has been referred

¹ This is substantially taken from Chapter 6, “Political Parties and Interest Groups,” in my recent book Politics and Government in Israel: The Maturation of a Modern State. Rowman and Littlefield, 2004.

to as a *parteienstaat* par excellence,¹ and the description is appropriate. Political parties played an important role in Israel's achieving statehood. One could even say that the State of Israel "was actually brought into existence by political parties, which were organized and developed entities . . . years before the coming of statehood."² Indeed, contemporary Israeli political parties are a direct link to the past in that virtually all have roots in some prestate political form.³

The Israeli political party system could almost be classified as overdeveloped. Indeed, thirty-one parties ran candidates in the Fifteenth Knesset elections in 1999, and fifteen of these parties won seats in the Knesset⁴ by winning at least 1.5 percent of the votes⁵; twenty-seven parties ran in the Sixteenth Knesset elections in 2003, and thirteen parties won seats in the Knesset.⁶ Many of these lists represented temporary electoral coalitions of up to five separate political party organizations. Many Israelis believe that the system would be better off with only a very small number of parties and see no real need for so many organizations. They suggest that Israel could operate with greater stability with only a left, a right, and a religious party, with perhaps an Arab party as a fourth party. They argue in support of this position that there is no need for four individual religious parties, although many argue that Israel's various religious parties are sufficiently different from each other that one party alone would not meet all social needs.⁷

There are, of course, several reasons why the independent party organizations continue to function—and even thrive—in spite of the fact that they may be losing their autonomy within the legislature. Perhaps the most important is that party organizations engage in considerably wider ranges of activity than merely drafting legislation. They do not, in other words, confine their behavior to only the obviously political. Israel's parties "have been more than electoral mechanisms and formulators of governmental policies."⁸ Parties "occupy in Israel a place more prominent and exercise an influence more pervasive than in any other state with the sole

exception of some one-party states,”⁹ and they work for their members in a variety of ways to maintain public support. One classic study of party activity, to a very large extent still quite accurate today, beautifully captures the party-member relationship:

A person who subscribes to the party’s daily newspaper, is given medical care in a party sponsored clinic, hospital, or convalescent home, spends his evenings in a party club, plays athletic games in the party’s sports league, gets his books from the party’s publishing house, lives in a village or in an urban development inhabited solely by other adherents of the party, and is accustomed to look to the party for the solution of many of his daily troubles—is naturally surrounded and enveloped by an all-pervasive partisan atmosphere.¹⁰

While this is less true today than it was at the time the article was written in 1955, political parties in Israel still perform a much broader range of services for their members than do parties in most other democracies; thus, they have stronger ties to their publics than is typical elsewhere. It therefore becomes clear that an understanding of political parties is absolutely essential for a clear understanding of the operation of the Israeli political system.

Ideology in Israel

“The style of Israeli politics is ideological.”¹¹ Ideology refers to a set of values and beliefs pertaining to political behavior and public policy, the political “oughts” or “shoulds.” In particular, Israel was born of both socialist and Zionist ideologies,¹² both of which have endured to this day. In addition to these fundamental philosophies, however, a number of other ideological and policy issues have developed over time that have become the focus of much debate. Israel’s political culture, in fact, “demonstrates a fascinating mix of ideology and pragmatism.”¹³ Many years ago a path-breaking study of political ideology in Israel was undertaken. At that time, five major issues were deemed crucial in determining party platforms:

1. Private enterprise (a) versus socialism (b)

2. Activist Arab policy (c) versus restraint (d)
3. Torah-oriented life (e) versus secularism (f)
4. Pro-Soviet Union (g) versus pro-West (h) foreign policy, and
5. Zionist (i) versus non-Zionist (j) approaches to the legitimacy of the state¹⁴

Based upon these five issues, thirty-two different political party platforms were mathematically created, of which nineteen were logically impossible or ideologically incompatible. (An example of an incompatible ideological mix would be a pro-Soviet, private enterprise, Torah-oriented, non-Zionist platform.) Ten of the remaining hypothesized platforms corresponded with platforms of political parties of the time, and three were logically possible, but had yet to be offered as political alternatives.

With the exception of the Soviet question (Issue number 4 from the list above), which is not a matter of contention in Israel today (even if we substitute “pro-Russian” for “pro-Soviet” versus pro-West the conflict is moot today), the other four issues remain active and the cause of further party fragmentation.¹⁵ In research done in the Knesset, members were asked to position the various political parties of the time along the remaining four scales, which they were able to do without trouble. It is clear from the responses that these members felt it was possible to position parties along a number of different ideological scales in a way that adequately represented their different issue positions and, thereby, gave them their distinctive identities. It is also clear from the legislators’ responses that although many of the center, left, and religious parties had similar views, they did diverge enough for the legislators to feel comfortable rating them separately.

While the total number of positions on four bipolar issues (“yes”/“no,” “for”/“against”) is only sixteen,¹⁶ some of which may be logically contradictory or incompatible, the various degrees of opinion and intensity of belief for each of the four issues leave open the possibility for more competing party organizations to form. At the same time, conversely, some political parties have become firmly identified with specific ideological positions. This concept

is represented in Table 6.1.

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| Table 6.1 Four Bipositional Issue Spectra and Possible Political Party Positions |
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It is clear how extraordinarily tenuous some of the coalition governments in Israel have been, how difficult it is for partners to be partners: they disagree, sometimes fundamentally, on many issues, including economic policy, how flexible Israel should be in negotiations with Arab powers, what Israel's policy should be in regard to settlements on the West Bank, what influence the Orthodox religious groups should have in politics, and so on.

Party ideology has been most important in times of elections. "Israeli voters tend to report that ideological considerations are important" in motivating their votes.¹⁷ To some extent, of course, this depends upon how one defines "ideology," because in one sense all of Israeli politics is ideological. If we define "ideology" in a more specific sense to include policy positions on a wide variety of individual issues, then it is possible to conclude that electoral campaigns have become less ideological over the years. Many argue that ideological differences between the parties have decreased to such an extent that general party image and the popularity of individual party leaders have taken the place of ideology as the reason why people vote as they do.¹⁸

Over the years, the predominant coalition of political ideologies in Israel has been deemed to have shifted to the right¹⁹ toward a more conservative and hawkish position. This was one of the reasons for Likud's victory and the Labor Alignment's loss in the 1977 election; the left's ideology had become stale and had fallen out of step with public opinion.²⁰ To some extent, the creation of preelectoral blocs between several different political parties has tended to force some of the parties to relax their ideological rhetoric. Parties seeking to hold political office must

operate in the real world, and this has sometimes necessitated their making political deals with parties that take opposing ideological positions, requiring some compromise and modification of pure ideological standards.²¹

The Functions of Parties

Quite apart from the fact that we may credit the various organizational ancestors of contemporary political parties for assisting in the formation of the State of Israel, contemporary political parties perform a significantly greater number of important functions in the political system. Although we do not mean to suggest that all Israeli parties perform all of these functions (or that they all perform them equally well), it can be suggested that most parties perform most of these functions most of the time.

First, parties act as **personnel agencies**, or mechanisms to assist in the recruitment of political leaders.²² It is very clear that in Israel one does not become active in politics at the national level without operating within a party framework. Independents are not elected to the Knesset, and the Knesset does not encourage the participation of independent, nonparty members. I'll come back to this point in just a minute. Individuals seeking political office in Israel must operate using the vehicle of a political party. This assertion is further substantiated by the fact that when individuals break away from established political parties; they do not compete in the political arena as independents. Rather, they establish their own political parties and continue to operate in the party-dominated environment. An overarching explanation for this is the country's electoral system. The Israeli formula of proportional representation makes it impossible – legally impossible -- to run for office without a party label. The nature of the electoral system likewise gives party leaders a great deal of leverage over individual members

even after elections.

The second function of political parties is to help **organize groups** and articulate political demands.²³ Parties seek the support of various constituencies when elections for the Knesset are at hand, and they work full time between elections to continue generating public support for their organizations. Translated into action, this means that parties publish newspapers, operate medical clinics, subsidize housing, run job-placement services, and provide a wide range of additional specialized services to their members.²⁴ Beyond this, when parties see new issues looming on the public agenda, they seek to stake out an advantageous position in relation to their own platforms and those of their rivals. Parties will act to mobilize groups around their issues and will speak out in an effort to attract even more popular and electoral support. This is especially true in relation to issues of social class structure.²⁵ The importance of Russian immigrants is very clear in this way, with the creation of *Yisrael Ba'Aliya*, a political party focused overwhelmingly on the problems of Russian immigrants.²⁶ In this respect, political parties in Israel can be seen to act as movements, in addition to being simply political parties in the conventional sense of the word. It is difficult for citizens of other democracies, in which political parties serve primarily elective functions, to appreciate the extent to which parties in Israel touch a wide range of aspects in an Israeli citizen's life.

A third function involves providing an ideological or **perceptual frame of reference** for voters. The world is a complicated place, and very often citizens (and voters) are not sure how to perceive events happening around them. Parties perform a useful function here by staking out positions on a wide range of issues, offering general and detailed explanations for why those opinions are the "correct" opinions to hold, and thereby making the political world a more understandable place for individuals who might not otherwise grasp many of the finer points of contemporary political discourse. In this sense parties perform a crucial role in the function of

political socialization, the process by which individuals develop beliefs, attitudes, and values related to the political world. Along with the family, schools, ethnic groups and group leaders, occupational colleagues, peers, the media, and community leaders, the political party plays a significant role in serving as a point of orientation as the individual develops his or her views about how and why the political world operates as it does.²⁷

Finally, parties serve as so-called **linkage mechanisms**, helping to tie the individual to the political system within which he or she resides. Although there are formal mechanisms in the Israeli political system that link members of the public to governmental structures, namely specifically elected representatives, there is a great deal of ambiguity about the role that the representative should play. Since Israelis vote for political parties, not individual candidates, and since there are no geographical districts in Israel as we noted earlier, individual Israelis are left without their own official – governmentally designated -- representatives. It is, instead, through the political party that Israelis relate to the political system as a whole. Israeli parties are what is termed *mass parties*—they are based upon mass membership and are truly run by the rank-and-file of the party—and it is the party that provides the opportunity for individuals to feel that they have a real say in the political process.

The Electoral System and Israeli Voting Behavior

The electoral system of any country is very important in terms of both its role in the selection of political leaders and its influence on the nature and style of political discussion and activity. This is clearly the case in Israel where the electoral system itself promotes such diverse and even contradictory phenomena as a splintering of established political parties, strict party discipline, and close overall control of individual legislators within the separate party organizations. Indeed, the very nature of the Israeli electoral system is often credited with being the

prime reason for so many political parties. There are few institutional incentives for factionalized parties to remain together, and many for groups with a moderate amount of popular support to break away from parent political organizations and run for office under their own banners.

Conversely, individuals who do not wish to break away are left in a very vulnerable position in relation to their party leaders, for party leaders can use the electoral system as a lever -- or a threat -- to remind the rank-and-file that they would do better to act in a manner consistent with party guidelines, or face the consequences. Not surprisingly, then, there have been numerous calls for reform of the Israeli electoral system over the years and, as we have already noted, a major reform of the electoral system (involving the direct election of the prime minister) was enacted by the Knesset in 1992 and came into effect in 1996, only to be repealed in 2001!

Proportional Representation and Elections

Maurice Duverger, a French political scientist, once wrote that there was a direct relationship between the electoral system of a nation and the number and nature of political parties which existed in it. More specifically, Duverger wrote that proportional representation elections lead to multiple political parties.^{xxviii} That is certainly the case in Israel.

Israeli elections must be held at least every four years. That is, although the maximum term of any single elected Knesset is four years, the Knesset may vote to dissolve itself prior to the normal time of expiration of its term and call for new elections. Unlike the situation in other parliamentary systems, only the Knesset, not the head of state, has the power to dissolve it prior to the expiration of its legislated term of office. On a number of occasions in Israeli history the term of a Knesset has been less than four years, including most recently the term following the 1996 election, when new elections were held in 1999; on two occasions (1949-51, and 1959-61)

it was less than three years.

The *Fundamental Law: the Knesset* says that the Knesset shall be elected in general, national, direct, equal, secret, and proportional elections.^{@xxix} This means, in practice, that all citizens eighteen years of age or older can vote. The actual electoral system employs a single-ballot, national constituency, proportional representation electoral framework.^{xxx} That is, the whole country is considered a single electoral district, and each voter casts his or her vote for the party whose platform and candidates he or she most prefers. The percentage of votes received by each party in the national election determines the percentage of seats it will accordingly receive in the Knesset.

Parties receiving at least 1.5 percent of the vote are entitled to representation. Parties receiving less than this threshold[@] receive no Knesset representation. Total votes in the election (minus the votes going to parties which receive less than the 1.5 percent threshold) are divided by 120, the total seats in the Knesset, thereby establishing a "key".

During the pre-election period, the amount and degree of partisan campaigning reaches intense proportions. Election periods vary in length; when the Knesset passes the Act dissolving itself and calling for new elections, it sets the period of the campaign. There is no legally mandated period, although campaigns generally tend to last for about eight to ten weeks. Election expenses of Israel's political parties through the 1960s had been among the world's highest.^{xxxi} Reform in 1969 led to limitations on overall campaign expenses and increased government oversight of party spending during the election period. Since 1973 Israeli parties have been forbidden from receiving corporate contributions.^{xxxii} Parties are given free time on television and radio for campaigning, and those which already control seats in the Knesset are given substantial allowances for the electoral campaign based upon the number of seats they control in the Knesset

at the time.^{xxxiii}

The role of the media has changed over time. The media have begun to be recognized in the scholarly literature as playing a significant role in Israeli campaigns.^{xxxiv} During the last month of the campaign each party list is allocated ten free minutes of television prime time each evening, six nights a week, and parties already represented in the Knesset receive an additional four free minutes per seat they controlled in the previous Knesset.

Opinion about the quality and level of argument presented in these advertisements varies, however, and varies to such an extent that one wonders if the editorial-writers were in the same country watching the same television!^{xxxv} Yeshayahu Ben-Porat wrote in an editorial in one major newspaper (Yediot Aharonot, October 9, 1988) that "Most, if not all of the party telecasts constitute an insult to the intelligence. They are based on the assumption that the average voter is an infantile imbecile, whose vote will be determined by some jingle or electronic or graphic stunt taken from the world of video pacman games. There is no doubt that the television campaign adds an extra dimension to the campaign. The question is, is the extra dimension a positive one or a negative one?"^{xxxvi}

During the campaign, walls are covered with party advertisements, while rallies and speeches abound. All registered voters are mailed an official government publication, prepared by the Central Elections Committee, which contains information provided by all political parties which have lists of candidates on file with the Election Bureau. This Central Elections Committee is made up of members of Knesset parties in proportion to their strength. The information provided to all voters includes the Hebrew letter or letters which the parties have chosen as their electoral symbols, their party platform, and a list of their candidates, in order.

Lists of candidates for Knesset elections may be submitted either by a party which is

already represented, or by a group of 2,500 qualified voters.^{xxxvii} In 1948 the requirement was for a group of 250 qualified voters. This was raised to 750 in 1951, and it has steadily increased ever since^{xxxviii} Individuals whose names are on party lists must write to the Central Elections Committee and accept their nominations. In order to submit lists of candidates to the voters, new parties must deposit a sum of money (about \$2,800 in 1984^{xxxix} with the Central Elections Committee; if it wins at least one seat its deposit is returned, if not, it forfeits a portion. This is designed to discourage truly Unrealistic parties from campaigning. But it is clear from the number of parties that compete in Knesset elections that this desire does not stop new parties from forming.

Many of the serious parties submit lists with 120 names on them, one for each possible seat in the Knesset, even though the parties know that none will win 100 percent of the vote. Smaller parties, and the Unrealistic parties, often submit smaller lists, with fewer names, realizing that there is no point in their putting forward 120 names. Sometimes even the smaller parties surprise themselves, though. Some parties today use primary elections and/or national conventions to determine the composition of their electoral lists.^{xl}

The official assignment of seats in the Knesset is determined purely by position on a party list. If a party wins 25 percent of the national vote and is allotted thirty seats in the Knesset on the basis of that result ($25\% \times 120 \text{ seats} = 30 \text{ seats}$), the seats are awarded to the first thirty names on the party list. If a member of Knesset dies during the term, or if a member resigns for some reason, the seat is passed along to the next name on the list. The importance of rank order for an individual candidate on the party electoral list immediately becomes clear. Since most parties will put a great number of names on their lists that have no realistic chance of being elected it is of crucial importance to a serious candidate that he or she be placed in as high as

possible a position on the party list.^{xli}

This positioning on electoral lists has a great deal of significance in the Israeli political recruitment process.^{xlii} It also has an equal importance in terms of intraparty and interfactional argument over which individual is placed in which position on the electoral list. In a pre-electoral coalition, in which one electoral list is submitted for a number of parties, such as some of the pre-electoral alliances discussed in the preceding chapter, one's position on the list is as decisive for the parties as for the individuals concerned. This position is determined in a conference of party leaders, the most important party in the alignment receiving the best positions, and so on.

As a general rule, there is no overall formula for the placement of party factions in order on the list. Each position is argued over individually among the parties involved until an agreement is reached. This type of argument can sometimes lead to near crisis for the pre-election party alignments: on one occasion the Likud alignment almost fell apart before an election because of fighting between the State List and the Free Center parties over which would receive the thirty-sixth position on the party list and which would receive the thirty-seventh place.^{xliii}

Some parties reach a compromise on list positions by determining that there shall be a rotation of office; this is especially frequent in the smaller parties which can only elect a few members. Occasionally in the middle of a parliamentary term a member of one small party bloc will resign because of a preelection compact within his party which required that he do so halfway through the Knesset's term of office so that a member of another party faction, who was next on the party list, could assume a seat in the Knesset.^{xliv}

A good position on the party list, which is important to the leaders of party factions who desire maximum representation in the Knesset, is likewise critical for serious candidates. On the Labor list, which won 49 seats in the Eleventh Knesset, positions 45 through 55 were in the "maximum risk" area. A higher position would have been considered "safe" since it was virtually assured before the election that the party would win that share of the vote, and a lower position was considered "unrealistic" since it was equally virtually assured that the party would not win *that* much of the vote. Today the Labour Party, and other big parties, have primary elections for positions on the party list, so the decisions about ranking candidates are not made in the "smoke-filled rooms" of the past.

Because their position on the party list is so critical for those who want to advance their political careers, individual Knesset members in parties that do not have primary elections are extremely vulnerable to the party leaders and list makers. The member who is elected from a "safe" position -- for example position number thirty on the Labor party list -- who is too much of a maverick during the Knesset term, who votes against the party or who speaks against the party, may find his or her position on the next electoral list lowered, perhaps by only one or two positions as a warning, or perhaps more. This ability to lower a member's position on the list puts a real lever in the hands of those who demand party discipline in the Knesset.⁴⁵

Since the assignment of a "safe" position on the party list, or even the assignment of a "marginal" position, may be entirely up to the discretion of the party leaders in a given party,⁴⁶ a safe position is usually awarded as a prize or a reward for a history of good work and loyalty. The work may involve living on a party kibbutz, working at the party's headquarters in one of the many possible full-time positions, or merely being active in campaign activities. Even being placed in an "unrealistic" or "symbolic" position can be seen as an honor for a political neophyte, for it implies that with continued good work and loyalty a higher list rank and possibly

a Knesset seat might eventually be forthcoming. The party list thus becomes a prime tool in the hands of the party leaders for recruiting new members. If leaders see an individual whom they would like to nurture and encourage to become active in the party, they can place him or her in the Amarginal@ zone, or slightly below that, with the implicit understanding that better things are to come.

In addition to recruiting individuals with the Knesset list, the party can also use the list strategically to attract groups.⁴⁷ The group may serve as the focal point in this process, where the party may offer groups Asafe@ or Amarginal@ positions on the party list in exchange for party endorsements and support.

All types of groups are "represented" on the party list, irrespective of how the group candidates are chosen. Local party organizations vie for "safe" places as well as union organizations, professional association, ethnic groups, and the like. In recent years the major parties have significantly "opened" their nomination procedures with primary elections affecting candidates and candidates= positions on the party list, but the basis of group representation has not changed.⁴⁸

Election Results and Coalition Governments

- The Complexity of the Coalition Formation Process
- Governments and Coalitions

Voting Behavior and Electoral Results

To begin with, overall voter turnout in Israel is high. It has ranged from a high of 86.8%

in 1949 for the first Knesset election, to a low of 75.1% in 1951, with an average of about 80%. Turnout in 1999 was 78.7 percent, and in 2003 turnout was 67.8 percent, one of the lowest turnouts in modern times.⁴⁹ Even the voting turnout of the Bedouin voters in Israel is slightly over 64 percent over time, lower than most other groups in Israel, but certainly much higher than a corresponding American figure. One interesting difference between Jewish and non-Jewish Israelis has appeared in recent research: they differ significantly in their motivations for non-participation: few Jewish Israelis fail to vote for ideological or political reasons, and their responses to interview questions indicated that when they failed to vote it tended to be because of technical factors such as illness, having failed to register to vote, or not having adequate identification when they intended to vote; non-Jewish Israeli citizens, on the other hand, expressed a conscious motive in their nonparticipation: 54.6 percent of the non-Jews gave purposeful absence as the reason for not voting, compared to 12.8 percent of the sample of Jewish voters.⁵⁰

Voting and Ideology

Why Israelis vote as they do has been the subject of much study over the years. Certainly one explanation has to do with ideology -- what Israeli voters believe and what policy alternatives the political parties offer the voters. According to Arian: Israeli voters tend to report that ideological considerations are important in motivating the vote. The Israeli political system is, and is perceived to be, ideological in nature; one is tempted to say that this is the ideology of the system.⁵¹ Survey research data tend to support this view: recent survey research has shown that in response to the question "Which is the most important factor in influencing a person to vote for a particular party?" 32 percent responded that their party identification was the most important factor, 10 percent responded that the party's candidate was most important, 53 percent

said that the party's platform or ideology was most important, and only four percent indicated that the party's being in government or opposition was most important, with two percent offering other responses.⁵²

One of the real problems with political ideology in Israel, and one dimension in which we can see its direct impact upon the electoral system and electoral behavior, has to do with the number of cross-pressures that individuals face. Cross pressures can be defined as conflicting claims on a voter's loyalties, with one loyalty or issue pushing in one direction, and another pulling him or her the opposite way.

In the United States, with its loose party discipline in the legislature, this would not be so great a problem. Although various Republicans in Congress may have different opinions on some crucial issues, they can all survive as Republicans because the national party platform is (deliberately) general and vague, and because they have a great deal of legislative autonomy (including actual voting) in Congress. In the Knesset, however, with highly disciplined political parties that try to deliver on policy promises they make, members of legislative parties cannot disagree on important policy issues. Instead, new political parties tend to be formed that represent new specific policy combinations.

In fact, some in Israel say that more parties are needed, not less, because of the great number of possible issue positions that can be taken. As we noted earlier, the various degrees of opinion and intensity of belief for each issue leave the possibility open for more competing party organizations to form. Given that most of the major issues in the Israeli political arena are not bipolar, there is a "left", a "right," and a "center," as well as a number of intermediate positions, there is room for a wide range of parties to functionally represent the spectrum of views in Israeli politics.

Ethnicity

Although scholarship on Israeli voting behavior has found a number of meaningful associations in recent years, the most important has increasingly been that pertaining to ethnicity. In brief, Likud was brought to and has stayed in power since 1977 (with a couple of brief periods of Labour government since 1977), with the support of the Sephardim -- Jews of Asian, African, or Middle Eastern background. Correspondingly, the Alignment is most strongly supported by European Jews (including American Jews), the Ashkenazim.⁵³

Interpretations of this phenomenon vary. Many suggest that for almost thirty years, while the Alignment was in control in Israeli politics, the Sephardic Jews were systematically shut out of top political positions in the Government, the bureaucracy, and the Knesset. This was reflected directly in the electoral lists for the Knesset, although in the early years the Alignment regularly won support from most groups in society.⁵⁴ Significant change in electoral behavior occurred during the 1970's. Research has shown that

in the late 1960s both parties were predominantly Ashkenazi; by 1981 the Alignment had stayed that way, and the Likud had become predominantly Sephardi. The turnabout seems to have occurred in 1977 when a majority of the Likud vote was Sephardi for the first time.⁵⁵

Other reasons can be advanced for the increased Sephardi vote as well. As the proportion of Sephardim in the population increased from a minority to a majority, and as awareness of their relatively lower income and education levels grew, the Sephardim became increasingly dissatisfied with the "in" party, Labor. At the same time Likud was seeking a new constituency, and the attraction of Likud to the Sephardim proved advantageous for both parties. In any event, for whatever reasons, ethnic politics has been more and more visible in Israel for the last three elections, and there is no indication that this will not continue to be the case even though the Alignment has undertaken a concerted effort to break the Likud's hold on the loyalties of the Sephardim.

Voting Trends

Although there have been a large number of short-term variations in the sixteen elections for the Knesset, most have been exhaustively chronicled and analyzed in specific monographs and essays.⁵⁶ Here we simply want to demonstrate a few general trends in recent elections.

First, observers of elections in Israel have seen a substantial decline -- and then partial resurgence -- in the strength of the Labor Alignment, as illustrated in Figure 7.2. This has been explained as a function of both short- and long-term factors. After the 1977 election the Labor leader indicated that "corruption in his party was the major cause of the Labor defeat in the election." In fact,

during the Seventh and Eighth Knessot there were scandals in the Finance Ministry, the Bank of Israel, and personal financial illegalities committed by the Labor Prime Minister (Rabin) and his wife... These events simply led to the public perception of the Labor party as a whole becoming corrupt, and a good share of the public was looking for new leadership.⁵⁷

In the longer term one could list ethnicity (already discussed in the preceding section), other demographic shifts, and changes in the general political setting as factors influencing voting behavior. Many analysts noted that the terrorist bombing of an innocent civilian's vehicle the day of the 1988 Knesset election was responsible for a last-minute swing of several percent of the vote to the Likud party during that election. In sum, although Mapai was originally the overwhelmingly dominant party on the political landscape in Israel, this was at least partly because it was the government party. As the role of the government has changed, the advantages to members of the public of supporting Mapai, and then the Alignment, have changed, and voters have proven to be much more willing to switch to other parties when given the choice in national elections.

In more recent years foreign policy issues, the question of settlements on the West Bank, and the general issue of national security have also come to be seen as distinguishing character-

istics of the two major political parties. Likud was the party of the strong response to the Arab challenge, while Mapai -- now Labor -- was perceived as the party supporting negotiation and moderation. This has been an image that Labor has tried hard to shed, but to a large extent it has not been successful.

This led to a gradual decline in the strength of Mapai, later the Alignment and then Labor, and an increase in the strength of Likud. When this general pattern is combined with the change in degrees of ethnic support, and short term issues such as corruption or the emergence of a new political party led by a charismatic leader -- such as the Democratic Movement for Change -- are added to the equation, some drastic changes in electoral outcomes can result.

One thing is quite clear: Although the Likud may have been seen in Israel's early years as a totally unrealistic alternative basis for a government -- thus leading some voters to support Mapai, or Labor, despite being ideologically predisposed not to do so -- that is no longer the case today. Likud has shown that it can govern, and that it does provide an ideological and programmatic alternative to the Labor bloc. This is a self-reinforcing phenomenon and means, minimally, that voters will continue to vote for non-Alignment parties now that they realize the Israeli political system can survive periods of alternative leadership.

Beyond this, as can be seen from the figure, we can observe that both of the major parties have lost strength in recent years in terms of the overall proportion of Knesset seats that they control. Figure 7.3 shows that the proportion of seats that Labor and Likud control in the Knesset has declined over time. As we noted above, much of the blame for this pattern was given to the (temporary) new electoral system for direct election of the prime minister, which permitted individuals to vote for their preference for prime minister between the major candidates, but then to vote for a smaller party for the Knesset. The pattern was not significantly reversed, however, when the system reverted to the old method of electing the Knesset.

The Election of 2006

- Pie chart of voting results
- List of parties and seats won
- List of individuals in the coalition

Significance of the Electoral Process for Israel

The current Israeli electoral system has been criticized for a number of reasons, including the fact that the electoral list system makes the member of Knesset too dependent upon party leaders, that this means that the member of Knesset has no reason to want to stay in contact with the voters, that power is too highly concentrated in the hands of a few party leaders, and that the current system leads to unstable government and weak coalitions because it encourages too many political parties to compete.⁵⁸ The Israeli electoral system, according to one scholar,

has been criticized on three main grounds: that in encouraging multipartism and coalition rule it impedes truly responsible government; that it facilitates undemocratic choice of candidates; and that it separates between electors and representatives.⁵⁹

A number of these points deserve additional comment here.

It is apparent that the electoral system presently constituted encourages many different political parties to operate in the Israeli political world. We have seen how some proposed -- but unadopted -- electoral changes would drastically alter the way that both the electoral and the party system would operate. The point to remember, however, is that the electoral system did not originally create the many political parties which exist currently in Israel. They themselves created an electoral system that has perpetuated their existence. As one author put it: "Israel's choice of an electoral system...rested on solid precedents from the prestate period."⁶⁰ Nor should

we forget that there is also a positive side to multipartism: It more accurately reflects the characteristics of the population.

We would no doubt see a quieter and calmer electoral system if Israel were divided into equal-representative districts. In that case, most likely two large parties would capture virtually all of the Knesset seats, leading to majority government. However, one of the very special B perhaps unpleasant, but special B characteristics of Israeli elections over the years has been the degree to which identifiable electoral minorities are able to succeed in attaining Knesset representation. There can be no question that this has forced coalition governments and given many smaller B usually religious B parties undue leverage in government policy. Still, for many this is the saving grace of the Israeli electoral framework.

This situation does, of course, have implications for responsible government and the ability of elected representatives to deliver on their promises. No party has ever received an absolute electoral majority, thus necessitating the formation (and instability) of coalitions. As well, small electoral groups have a disproportionate influence on government policy. Where a small group becomes necessary for the creation of a coalition, that party has an undeserved influence, which has been offered as an explanation for the continuation B and indeed expansion B of legislation supporting Orthodox Jewish public policy.

This issue is not likely to go away in future years in political debates in Israel. The proportional representation system, with electoral lists composed by national party organizations, clearly limits the ability of interested individuals to enter the political arena with any likelihood of winning at all unless they operate within the framework of an established political party. Some of the political parties have opened up their list construction procedures, and now stipulate that national conventions must approve positions on the party list.⁶¹ But in many cases the closed-door or "smoke-filled room" scenario is still apt. In the words of Sager: AHerut and the Liberals

have in recent elections both entrusted the choice of head of the list and the entire task of naming the candidates and arranging their order to their Central Committees numbering, respectively, 1,000 and 240 members.⁶² One thousand party members in a convention setting is not exactly a smoke filled room, but it is also not an entirely open process.

On the other hand, although the process may not be entirely open, it is not entirely closed. The major parties make a concerted effort to recruit candidates from a variety of social, economic, ethnic, geographic, and occupational backgrounds.⁶³ In doing so they force themselves to be relatively open. This process may have additional benefits, in that it may do a better job of representing some of these groups than an "open market" approach would. One study has found that women fare better being recruited to positions on the party list than they would in a district-based electoral system.⁶⁴

The Israeli representation system is not one in which open primary elections would be appropriate. Although it is possible for single individuals to offer themselves as "one man lists," this is not an established practice in Israeli politics. An actor who wants to have a realistic chance to be elected to the Knesset must operate from a high position on an established political party's electoral list. This does, in fact, make the system less democratic in terms of a choice of candidates, especially because individual voters must vote for lists, not individuals, and a voter who strongly wants candidate number fifty-three on the Labor list, must wait for the first fifty-two Laborites to be elected before his or her vote counts for his or her preferred candidate. This is precisely the reason for the Yaacobi proposal for a number of smaller electoral districts. Thus there is no doubt that the electoral system does have a significant impact upon politics in the Israeli political system.

Parties and Issues

Israeli political history has seen a substantial number of political parties.

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| Table indicates the major parties that have been active in Israeli elections between 1949 and 2003. |
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There are a lot of them, and their relationships are quite complex, because many have merged, broken apart, and recombined over the years. Political parties that have participated in Israeli coalition governments can be conventionally grouped into four categories: left, center, right, and religious. (Arab parties exist, too, but have not been formal members of Government coalitions or formally in positions of power in the Knesset.⁶⁵) This quadripartite classification has occasionally been upset by the existence of parties that do not fit into the system, such as the Democratic Movement for Change (DMC) in the late 1970s. Here we shall briefly describe the political parties that ran for office in the elections for the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Knessot and won seats in those elections⁶⁶ to describe not only the basic tenets of the parties today, but also the evolution of the parties and the political groups from which they have developed, if appropriate.

Left Parties⁶⁷

One Israel

One Israel is the current form of the Labor Party, which started in Israeli history as Mapai, an acronym for *Mifleget Poalei Israel* (“Israel Workers’ Party”) in 1930. Labor is a classical social-democratic political party, with a commitment to government activism to provide social and economic benefits for the public.⁶⁸ The Labor Party’s roots are based in Labor and Zionist ideology, and it was founded by the same two groups that founded the *Histadrut*, the national labor federation; these groups were the *Ahdut HaAvodah* (“Unity of Labor”) and *HaPoel HaTzair* (“Young Labor”).

Ahdut HaAvodah itself had a long history, tracing its roots back to 1919 when it was created from the *Poalei Tziyon* (“Workers of Zion”); *HaPoel HaTzair* was active in Palestine from 1905 to 1930 and was a leading force in building Jewish settlements in the area. Mapai was

the dominant partner in the Labor Party after its creation in 1968 from the merger of Mapai, *Ahdut HaAvodah*, and *Rafi*. *Rafi*, an acronym for the *Reshuma Poaeli Israel* (“Israel Labor List”) had been created in 1965 when David Ben-Gurion and some of his supporters left Mapai after a disagreement over a policy issue. In 1968 most of those who left (but not, it should be noted, Ben-Gurion) returned to Mapai and along with *Ahdut HaAvodah* created the Labor Party.

From 1968 to 1974 the Labor Party’s formal party positions were distributed on the basis of 57.3 percent for Mapai, and 21.3 percent each to *Ahdut HaAvodah* and *Rafi*; after 1974 (when Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, and Yigal Allon were leaders of the three factions and agreed to truly merge them), Labor absorbed the three formative groups entirely. Between 1969 and 1984 Labor and Mapam, an acronym for *Mifleget Poaeli Meuchedet* (“United Workers’ Party”) joined together to form the “Maarach,” or “Alignment.” Mapam had been created in 1948 from the merger of two kibbutz-related political parties, *HaShomer HaTzair* (“The Young Watchman,” founded in 1913) and *Ahdut HaAvodah* (some of which left in 1954 to become independent again). After 1984, in protest of the Alignment’s joining the Likud in a national unity government, Mapam left the Alignment and continued as an independent party.

Meretz

Meretz was founded in 1992 by a union of the Citizens’ Rights Movement (CRM), Mapam, and Shinui. The CRM was created in 1973 by Shulamit Aloni, an MK from the Labor Party. The CRM put great emphasis on civil rights and was willing to make more compromises on Palestinian-related issues than was the Labor Party at the time. The focus of Meretz’s ideology is on human rights, and thereby Meretz has been associated with the peace process because it has championed Arab rights as well as Jewish rights.⁶⁹

The Center Party has tried to stake out a position in the center of the ideological continuum in Israel. Candidates in the 1999 election advocated investing in education, improving the economy, and negotiating for peace with Syria and the Palestinians.

The Likud (“Union”) was created at the time of the 1973 election when the Free Center Party and the Gahal bloc merged. The Free Center had been a bloc of the Herut (“Freedom”) Party that had broken away in 1967, only to rejoin in a new form with its former partners in 1973. (The Free Center later left the Likud in 1977 and joined the reform party the DMC.) Gahal actually was another acronym, deriving from *Gush Herut Liberalim* or *Herut-Liberal Bloc*, that was created in 1965 by Herut and the Liberal Party to compete more effectively in the Mapai-dominated party system (see Figure 7.2).

The Liberal Party was formed in 1961 from a merger of the Progressive Party and the General Zionist Party, both of which dated from before the creation of the state. Herut was a right-wing party founded by those who had been active in the *Irgun* in the prestate years, with an ideology based upon Revisionist Zionism. Herut has become the dominant component in the Likud. Since 1977 the Herut/Likud bloc on the right has been the basis of most Israeli governments, committed to a diminution of government regulation in the economy, fewer concessions to the Palestinians, and strong security concerns. It is significantly reliant on a Sephardic constituency to stay in power.⁷¹

Yisrael Ba'Aliya (“Israel for Immigration”) was created in 1996 by one of Israel’s best-known immigrants, Natan Sharansky, a Russian-Israeli immigrant who struggled against significant odds to leave the former Soviet Union and emigrate to Israel. The party’s general ideology is close to that of the Likud, and it has a strong Zionist focus, supporting immigration and more state support for new immigrants. Its primary focus has been on the new Russian immigrants (of which Sharansky is one).

The National Unity Party (*HaIchud HaLeumi*) was created in 1999 and is itself a right-

wing coalition that includes former members of Herut, and other right-wing parties. The platform of the party emphasizes that “the land of Israel is the homeland of the Jewish People, from the authority of its Torah and heritage, home of the returnees to Zion.”⁷²

Israel Our Home (*Yisrael Beiteinu*) is a new party created before the 1999 elections with the specific goal of drawing support from new Russian-speaking immigrants. The founder of the party, Avigdor Liberman, was director general for former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and was a supporter of the Likud Party. His belief was that forming a new party would draw more support from the new Russian immigrants than would simply waiting for them to come to the Likud.

One Nation—For Israeli Workers and Pensioners (*Am Ehad*) was a party created by former members of the Labor Party interested in focusing upon workers and retirees.

The Religious Parties⁷³

The National Religious Party (NRP), also known as Mafdal, an acronym for *Mifletet Ha Datit Leumit* (“National Religious Party”), was created in 1956 by the merger of *HaPoel HaMizrahi* (“Eastern Workers,” established in 1922 as an Orthodox religious workers’ party) and *Mizrahi* (“Eastern,” established in 1902 as an Orthodox religious Zionist party). In 1949 *Mizrahi* joined with other religious parties to form the United Religious Front. Between 1948 and 1977, the NRP allied with Labor in coalition governments, in return for which it continually controlled the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Until 1981 the NRP fairly regularly drew about 10 percent of the vote and received about twelve seats in the Knesset; after that time there were other religious parties, and the NRP contingent in the Knesset was significantly smaller.

Shas, or Sephardic Torah Guardians, was created as a religious and theocratic party in 1984 by the former *Agudat Israel* (“Society of Israel”). Shas is really a Sephardic copy of *Agudat Israel* and was founded in Poland in 1912 and reestablished in Palestine in the 1920s with most

of *Agudat Israel*'s Ashkenazic supporters moving to the United Torah Judaism Party. In 1949 *Agudat Israel* joined with *Mizrahi* to be part of the United Religious Front, and between 1955 and 1959 it operated with *Poalei Agudat Israei* ("Workers' Society of Israel") as the Torah Religious Front. The Torah Religious Front broke up prior to the 1961 election. *Agudat Israel* was a non-Zionist party directed by a Council of Torah Sages whose primary function was religious, not political. Shas became a major party only in recent years when the primarily Ashkenazic-dominated *Agudat* bloc refocused its attention on Orthodox Sephardic Jews, whose support for Shas has turned it into the third largest party in Israel today. Shas today is considered a party for the ultra-Orthodox Sephardim; most Ashkenazic ultra-Orthodox have chosen to support the United Torah Judaism Party.

United Torah Judaism is a coalition of two ultra-Orthodox religious parties, *Agudat Israel* (see above discussion of Shas) and *Degel HaTorah* ("Flag of the Torah"). *Degel HaTorah* was formed in 1988 and is an Ashkenazic spin off of Shas.

Reform Parties⁷⁴

Shinui ("Change") was created in 1973 as a protest group in response to the 1973 War. In 1976 Shinui joined the DMC, led by Yigal Yadin, but three years later, when the DMC joined Menachem Begin's Likud-led coalition government, the Shinui faction broke away from the DMC to compete independently. It has survived, while the DMC has not. In 1992 Shinui joined Meretz, but competed independently again in 1999. Shinui's concerns are to the left of Labor and Meretz; it advocates a free-market economy based on liberal principles, and it supports the peace process between Israel and its neighbors.⁷⁵

Far Left, Communist, and Arab Parties⁷⁶

The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality has roots dating back to the creation of

Israel. In 1949 the Communist Party of Israel, or Maki, the acronym for *Mifleget Kommunistit Yisraeli* (“Israel Communist Party”) was created, and in 1965 it broke into two factions, Maki and Rakah. Maki continued to be primarily Jewish, while Rakah, an acronym for *Reshuma Kommunistit Hadash* (“New Communist List”) was mostly made up of Arab Communist supporters. In 1973 Maki and Rakah joined again as Moked (“Focus”). In 1977 Maki and several other groups created Shelli, an acronym for “Peace for Israel and Equality for Israel,” *Shalom l’Israel*, which dissolved in 1984. The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality arose from the gap created by the disappearance of Shelli.⁷⁷

The United Arab List (UAL) is a coalition of the Arab Democratic Party and other small Islamic organizations in Israel. The Arab Democratic Party was created in 1988 and has focused on equality for Arab-Israelis and Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. The primary focus of the UAL is the creation of a Palestinian state and the removal of all Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza areas.

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| Table 6.3 Parties Winning Seats in the Elections for the Sixteenth Knesset, 2003 |
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Balad, the National Democratic Alliance is one of Israel’s major Arab parties, advocating the return of Arab refugees from 1948 and 1967, Israel’s withdrawal to 1967 borders, and the creation of a Palestinian state. Balad was made up of a variety of factions, including the Arab Movement for Change, created in 1996.

What we see in this brief examination of the Israeli party system is an almost bewildering array of political opinions and options, as shown in the Table. The nature of the electoral system tends to permit—even encourage—a proliferation of what we can call maverick parties. It is relatively easy for a well-known political leader with a solid base of support to break away from his former party and to form a party of his own, with little that is ideologically new, just with himself or herself as the party head. This is precisely why it is difficult to pinpoint the

differences in substance between many of the parties, because often there are very few substantive differences. What we find is a series of personal followings that form individual parties that then establish coalition blocs on the basis of ideology and programmatic preference.

Interest Groups

Interest groups are commonly defined as collections of like-minded individuals. There are many different kinds of interest groups, some highly organized, others less so. Some are large, such as organizations for Russian Jewish immigrants; others are small, such as groups for pensioners' rights. Regardless of their size or level of organization, interest groups are important because of the manner in which they can influence the behavior of a Government.⁷⁸ Not only do interest groups communicate the views of the public, they also help to communicate the views of the Government back to different segments of the public. Thereby, interest groups serve as linkage mechanisms in the democratic machinery of government.⁷⁹ It should be noted, however, that interest groups in Israel do not have the level of activity or importance that they do in many other democratic polities, because many of the most important functions performed by interest groups elsewhere are performed by the political party organizations in Israel. In a sense, then, political parties have essentially usurped many of the roles traditionally played by interest groups.

Not all of the specialized parties have been as successful as others, however. To take only one example, the new party focused on pensioners was not successful in the election of 1999 because not enough of its target membership was willing to forsake other interests to cast their votes for the pensioners' party; they apparently preferred to vote based upon their other interests. A study of that election showed that if only 10 percent of those who ostensibly would have had an interest in the issues of that party—those aged sixty-five or older—had voted for the party, the party would have elected two MKs in the election of 1999. Instead, it received less than 1.5

percent of the total vote and received no representation in the Knesset.⁸⁰

The largest single interest group in Israel is **labor**, the largest organization of which is the ***Histadrut*** or General Federation of Workers, which was established in 1920.⁸¹ The *Histadrut* is often referred to as a national labor union, but it is much more than that. It owns, builds, rents, and sells property, runs housing projects, administers medical clinics, owns newspapers and publishing houses, supervises schools, and in general is responsible for a wide range of social services. Through the 1977 Knesset election – that is, as long as the Labor Party dominated Government coalitions -- the *Histadrut* had very strong and close ties with the Government. Primarily this was achieved through an explicit overlap (or interlocking directorate) of personnel in leadership positions of each. In the process, *Histadrut* actually inspired many important pieces of legislation dealing with labor and employment, such as the Hours of Work and Rest Law, the Youth Employment Law, and the Labor Exchange Law.⁸²

Another interest group that must be considered when examining Israeli politics is **the military**. The study of civil-military relations has demonstrated that the military does influence public policy in Israel.⁸³ Since an overwhelming percentage of Israel's adult population is either on active service or in the reserves, opinions of the military have a way of finding their way into politics. This is particularly noticeable when one examines the political recruitment process. There has been no shortage of examples—Dayan, Rabin, Weizmann, Sharon—of individuals who have achieved fame through their military exploits, then exchanged that fame for a position on a party's electoral list or have simply gone out and formed their own political party. On the whole, studies of Israeli army officers “have indicated that their political attitudes and orientations are as diverse as those of the population at large. They do not constitute a distinct or separate ideological bloc.”⁸⁴

International Jewry constitutes yet a third group that exercises an influence in Israeli politics. Diaspora Jewry has on many occasions expressed its policy preferences through a

variety of mechanisms, including formal organizations such as the Jewish Agency, the World Zionist Organization, and the American Jewish Committee, as well as through direct communication between them and Israeli politicians. It is clear that international Jewry was very important in terms of its response to the 1988 election in which its American component (at least) exerted great pressure on Yitzhak Shamir to deter him from forming a Likud-Orthodox coalition in a fashion that would force a ruling on the Who is a Jew? question. The eruption of this long-simmering controversy—with the Orthodox parties wanting Mr. Shamir to introduce legislation recognizing only Orthodox Jewish conversions and marriages, among other rituals—generated a tremendous amount of concern in Jewish communities outside of Israel, and is an excellent case study of how overseas Jewish communities can influence domestic Israeli politics.

The fact of the matter is that the Israeli government receives a great deal of money through these international interest groups, and thus is very sensitive about avoiding actions that might cause an erosion of this international support. For example, “Because of the prestige and wealth of its members, the American Jewish Committee has been especially cultivated by Israel’s leaders. It is the only private organization with which the Israeli government has reached a quasi-official agreement defining a ‘proper’ relationship with Diaspora Jewry.”⁸⁵

Finally, but not least, **specific ethnic groups** have begun to influence government policy in a direct way.⁸⁶ For many years, as we have already noted, the Ashkenazic group of the Israeli population dominated the political arena. Sephardic Jews were a substantial minority in Israel (even approaching majority status), but were systematically excluded from positions of leadership in the party organizations, governmental bureaucracy, and elected positions. In recent years the Sephardic groups in the Israeli population have begun to speak out, to organize, and to lobby in their own interest. Their common interests and platforms have to do with equal opportunity with the claim that they have not had the education and career opportunities of other segments of society, as well as all of the concomitant benefits that such opportunities include.

We have already seen how new political parties such as Shas have been created specifically to represent the interests of the Sephardim.

Shas, it must be noted, is a special kind of organization that is both an interest group and a political party. Shas is clear a Sephardic religious political party, but it has been far more successful than others of its type by seeking to be integrative rather than separatist in its approach to the political world. It has tried to establish itself as a vehicle for drawing the disenfranchised into the political world and has been quite successful in doing this.⁸⁷

A result of this activism by Sephardic groups is that the larger parties, especially Labor and Likud, have been compelled to increase their overtures to the Sephardim. Likud recognized prior to the 1977 election that the Sephardim were an untouched electoral resource, and it became identified as the party of Sephardic interests. Labor, in recent years, has tried to make inroads in this Likud constituency and some progress has been made. In brief, the Sephardim have been recognized as a significant interest group and are now receiving the kind of electoral attention that they felt in the past they deserved.

Another category of interest group that has increased in visibility and significance in Israeli politics in recent years involves **Arab political organizations**. For many years in Israeli politics, Arab interest groups were fundamentally invisible. In more recent times, for reasons that are both obvious and unfortunate, Arab visibility in Israeli society has become much more significant and contentious; until the recent breakdown in civil relations between Israeli Jews and many groups of Israeli Arabs, there were some indications that Arab interest groups were becoming more effective in pressing their causes. Increased violence has changed this, and some Israelis argue that peace is not possible until Arabs are fully integrated into Israeli society and politics, while others argue that Arabs will never be welcomed into Israeli society and politics and that peace will not be possible until Arabs are fully separated from Israeli society. These arguments, sadly, are very much the same types of arguments that history has seen in different

places at different times related to long-term violence and political instability, such as India with the Hindus and Moslems, South Africa with black and white South Africans, Ireland with Catholics and Protestants, and the like. Arab interest groups have become increasingly organized and vocal in recent years and will likely continue to be more visible and more included in the political process.⁸⁸

The Knesset has been a high-priority target for much lobbying in Israeli politics, and some have been concerned about the ethics and legality of much interest group behavior.⁸⁹ This has been increasingly discussed in the Israeli political arena, and the Government has paid particular attention to challenges caused by these concerns.⁹⁰

Concluding Comments: Political Parties and Interest Groups in Contemporary Israel

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1. Emanuel Gutmann, "Israel," *Journal of Politics* 25 (1963): 703.
 2. Scott Johnston, "Politics of the Right in Israel," *Social Science* 40 (1965): 104.
 3. For a description of the history of parties in Israel, see Benjamin Akzin, "The Role of Parties in Israeli Democracy," *Journal of Politics* 17 (1955): 507–545.
 4. The data can be found on the Knesset Web page. The list of parties running for office can be found at the Knesset's website: "Knesset Website Map" > "Elections and the State" > "Elections for the 15th Knesset, 1999" >

“Lists Running in the '99 Knesset Elections,” <http://www.knesset.gov.il/elections/eindex.html> Last access: October, 2003. The list of parties winning seats in the Knesset can be found : at the same Knesset website: ““Knesset Website Map” > “Elections and the State” > “Elections for the 15th Knesset, 1999” > “1999 Election Results” at <http://www.knesset.gov.il/elections/eindex.html>. Last access: October, 2003.

5. See Government of Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, Table 10.2 “Valid Votes in the Elections to the Knesset, by Main List,” *Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2001* (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001), pp. 10–19.

6. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs Web page, “The Knesset,” > “Elections in Israel January 2003,” at www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0n130.

7. See Ira Sharkansky, *The Politics of Religion and the Religion of Politics: Looking at Israel* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2000), especially chapter 7, “Representing Judaism in Israel: Religious Political Parties.” See also Gideon Doron, “Religion and the Politics of Inclusion: The Success of the Ultra-Orthodox Parties,” in Alan Arian and Michal Shamir, *The Elections in Israel, 1996* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1999), or Eliezer Don-Yehiya, “Religion, Ethnicity, and Electoral Reform: The Religious Parties and the 1996 Election,” in Daniel Elazar and Shmuel Sandler, *Israel at the Polls, 1996* (Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass, 1998).

8. C. Paul Bradley, *Parliamentary Elections in Israel: Three Case Studies* (Grantham, N.H.: Thompson and Rutter, 1985), p. 11.

9. Akzin, “Role of Parties,” p. 509.

10. Akzin, “Role of Parties,” p. 520.

11. Asher Arian, *Politics in Israel: The Second Generation* (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House Publishing, 1985), p. 8.

12. For discussion of some of these ideological bases of the Israeli system, see Daniel Elazar, “Israel’s Compound Polity,” in *Israel at the Polls: The Knesset Elections of 1977*, ed. Howard Penniman (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1979), pp. 1–38.

13. Arian, *Politics in Israel*, p. 8.

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14. Thomas Goodland, "A Mathematical Presentation of Israel's Political Parties," *British Journal of Sociology* 8 (1957): 263–266.
15. See, for example, Zeev Ben-Sira, "The Image of Political Parties and the Structure of a Political Map," *European Journal of Political Research* 6:3 (1978): 259–284.
16. And it must be recalled that these four issues are not really bipositional issues. That is, few people are really on the far, far left or far, far right end of the ideological spectrum on any of these issues. They are much more likely to distribute themselves widely from the far left to the far right, through varying degrees of moderation and middle-of-the-road positions.
17. Arian, *Politics in Israel*, p. 134.
18. Arian, *Politics in Israel*, pp. 253–254.
19. Arian, "The Electorate," p. 71, in *Politics in Israel*. See also Giora Goldberg, "The Electoral Fall of the Israeli Left," in Daniel Elazar and Shmuel Sandler, *Israel at the Polls, 1996* (Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass, 1998).
20. Myron J. Aronoff, "The Decline of the Labor Party: Causes and Significance," in *Israel at the Polls 1977*, pp. 120–121.
21. Asher Arian, "Conclusion," in *Israel at the Polls, 1977*, pp. 287–288.
22. One of the classic studies of this phenomenon outside of the Israeli context is Austin Ranney's *Pathways to Parliament: Candidate Selection in Britain* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965).
23. Amitai Etzioni, "Agrarianism in Israel's Party System," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 23:3 (1957): 363–375.
24. A good illustration of this can be found in Paul Burstein, "Political Patronage and Party Choice among Israeli Voters," *Journal of Politics* 38 (1976): 1024–1032.
25. See, for example, Paul Burstein, "Social Cleavages and Party Choice in Israel: A Log-Linear Analysis," *American Political Science Review* 72 (1978): 96–109, or M. Roshwald, "Political Parties and Social Classes in

Israel,” *Social Research* 23:2 (1956): 199–218.

26. See Etta Bick, “Sectarian Party Politics in Israel: The Case of Yisrael Ba’Aliya, the Russian Immigrant Party,” in Daniel Elazar and Shmuel Sandler, *Israel at the Polls, 1996* (Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass, 1998); Vladimir Khanin, “Israeli ‘Russian’ Parties and the New Immigrant Vote,” in Daniel Elazar and M. Benjamin Mollov, *Israel at the Polls, 1999* (Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass, 2001). See also Zvi Gitelman and Ken Goldstein, “The ‘Russian’ Revolution in Israeli Politics,” in Alan Arian and Michal Shamir, *The Elections in Israel, 1999* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2002).

27. For a more thorough discussion of the process of political socialization in Israel, see Gregory Mahler, *The Knesset: Parliament in the Israeli Political System* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981), pp. 113–130.

^{xxviii}. Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties* (New York: John Wiley, 1963), p. 239.

^{xxix}. *Fundamental Law: The Knesset*, Section 4.

^{xxx}. For a fuller explanation, see Asher Zidon, *The Knesset*, (New York: Herzl Press, 1967), pp. 23-29.

^{xxxi}. Samuel Sager, *The Parliamentary System of Israel* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 67. See his section on “Financing of Elections,” pp. 67-72.

^{xxxii}. Sager, *The Parliamentary System of Israel*, p. 69.

^{xxxiii}. Leon Boim, “The Financing of Elections,” in *Israel At the Polls, 1977*, ed. Howard Penniman, (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1979).

^{xxxiv}. See Akiba A. Cohen and Gadi Wolfsfeld, "Overcoming Adversity and Diversity: The Utility of Television Political Advertising in Israel," in Lynda Lee Kaid and Christina Holtz-Bacha, eds., Political Advertising in Western Democracies: Parties and Candidates on Television (Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Sage Publications, 1995); Dafna Lemish and Chava Tidhar, "Still Marginal: Women in Israel's 1996 Television Election Campaign," Sex Roles 41:5/6 (1999): 389-412; Dan Caspi, "American-Style Electioneering in Israel: Americanization versus Modernization," in David L. Swanson and Paolo Mancini, Politics, Media, and Modern Democracy: An International Study of Innovations in Electoral Campaigning and Their Consequences (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1996); Sam Lehman-Wilzig, "The Media Campaign: The Negative Effects of Positive Campaigning," in Daniel Elazar and Shmuel Sandler, Israel at the Polls, 1996 (Portland, Or.: Frank Cass, 1998); Erwin Frenkel, The Press and Politics in Israel: The Jerusalem Post from 1932 to the Present (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994); or the article by Judith Elizur "The Role of the Media in the 1981 Knesset Elections," in Howard R. Penniman and Daniel Elazar, Israel at the Polls, 1981 (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 186-212.

^{xxxv}. Editorial comments cited here come from "The Election Campaign on Television," edited by Gary Wolf, part of the series of news releases Israeli Press Highlights (New York: Institute of Human Relations, American Jewish Committee, October 10, 1988), pp. 1-2.

^{xxxvi}. An article by Joel Brinkley in the New York Times on October 8, 1988, p. 18, titled "Israeli TV Political Ads Lowering the Low Road" developed this theme, pointing out that the ads do help to raise issues, but that they also use character defamation, propaganda, misrepresentation, deceptive photography and alteration of pictures and quotations, and, generally, "a loose version of facts."

^{xxxvii}. Government of Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Facts About Israel > "The State" > "Elections." <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH00kd0>.

^{xxxviii}. Zidon, The Knesset, p. 23-24; Sager, The Parliamentary System of Israel, p. 46.

^{xxxix}. Arian, Politics in Israel, p. 121; Sager, The Parliamentary System of Israel, 46.

^{xl}. See Gideon Rahat and Neta Sher-Hadar, "The Party Primaries and their Political Consequences," in Alan Arian and Michal Shamir, The Elections in Israel, 1996 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).

^{xli}. Gregory Mahler, "The Effects of Electoral Systems Upon the Behavior of Members of a National legislature: The Israeli Knesset Case Study," Journal of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies 14:4 (1980): 305-18.

^{xlii}. Moshe Czudnowski, "Legislative Recruitment Under Proportional Representation in Israel: A Model and a Case Study," Midwest Journal of Political Science 14 (1970): 216-48.

^{xliii}. One specific event like this was covered in the Jerusalem Post, September 10, 1973, p. 1.

^{xliv}. Jerusalem Post: Overseas Edition, November 12, 1975, p. 3.

⁴⁵. Avraham Brichta, "Selection of Candidates to the Tenth Knesset: The Impact of Centralization," in Israel at the Polls: 1981, edited by Howard Penniman and Daniel Elazar (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1986), pp. 18-35.

⁴⁶. Steven Hoffman, "Candidate Selection in Israel's Parliament: The Realities of Change," Middle East Journal 34 (1980): 285-301.

⁴⁷. Moshe Czudnowski, "Sociocultural Variables and Legislative Recruitment," Comparative Politics 4 (1972): 561-587.

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- ⁴⁸. Myron Aronoff has written a fascinating analysis of reforms in the Labor Party. See his "Better Late Than Never: Democratization in the Labor Party," in Gregory Mahler, ed., Israel Since Begin (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).
- ⁴⁹. See the Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2001, Table 10.1, "Eligible Voters and Voters in Elections to the Knesset, 1949-1999," p. 10-8. http://www.cbs.gov.il/shnaton52/st10_01.pdf, and the Government of Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs web page "The Knesset," > "Elections in Israel January 2003," at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0n130>.
- ⁵⁰. Arian, Politics in Israel, p. 133.
- ⁵¹. Arian, Politics in Israel, p. 134.
- ⁵². Arian, Politics in Israel, p. 136.
- ⁵³. Arian, Politics in Israel, pp. 139-44.
- ⁵⁴. Arian, Politics in Israel, p. 140.
- ⁵⁵. Arian, Politics in Israel, p. 142.
- ⁵⁶. Among the many journal articles dealing with specific electoral outcomes in the last three decades -- a number of general books on Israeli elections have already been referred to -- might be included the following: Alan Arian, "Were the 1973 Elections in Israel Critical?" Comparative Politics 8 (1975): 152-165; Alan Arian and Shevah Weiss, "Split Ticket Voting in Israel," Western Political Quarterly 22 (1969): 375-389; Yael Azmon, "The 1981 Elections and the Changing Fortunes of the Israeli Labour Party," Government and Opposition 16:4 (1981): 432-

446; Marver Bernstein, "Israel's Ninth General Election," International Studies 17 (1978): 27-50; Don Peretz, "The War Election and Israel's Eighth Knesset," Middle East Journal 28 (1974): 111-125; Don Peretz, "Israel's 1969 Election Issues -- The Visible and the Invisible," Middle East Journal 24:1 (1970): 31-71; Don Peretz and Sammy Smooha, "Israel's Tenth Knesset Elections: Ethnic Upsurgence and Decline of Ideology," Middle East Journal 35 (1981): 506-526.

⁵⁷. Gregory Mahler, The Knesset, p. 214. Following the 1977 election loss to Menachem Begin, Shimon Peres indicated that the Alignment's electoral defeat was attributable to "a number of domestic and international trends," but also cited the "failure of demoralized party activists to push hard for victory," adding that "corruption hurt us the most." See the Jerusalem Post: International Edition, May 24, 1977, p. 6.

⁵⁸. Avraham Brichta, "1977 Elections and The Future of Electoral Reform in Israel," in Israel at the Polls: The Knesset Elections of 1977, Howard Penniman ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1979), p. 45-46.

⁵⁹. Sager, The Parliamentary System of Israel, p. 48.

⁶⁰. C. Paul Bradley, Parliamentary Elections in Israel (Grantham, N.H.: Tompson and Rutter, 1985), p. 20.

⁶¹. See Steven Hoffman, "Candidate Selection in Israel's Parliament: The Realities of Change," Middle East Journal 34 (1980): 285-301; and Aronoff, "Better Late Than Never," op cit.

⁶². Sager, The Parliamentary System of Israel, p. 51.

⁶³. Moshe Czudnowski, "Legislative Recruitment Under Proportional Representation in Israel: A Model and a Case Study," Midwest Journal of Political Science 14 (1970): 216-248; and Moshe Czudnowski, "Sociocultural Variables

and Legislative Recruitment," *Comparative Politics* 4 (1972): 561-587.

⁶⁴. Shevah Weiss, "Women in the Knesset: 1949-1969," *Parliamentary Affairs* 28:1 (1969/70), pp. 31-50.

65. See "Israel's Arabs Discover Their Identity: Election Boycott," *The Economist* 358 (February 10, 2001): 48 (no author named).

66. Unless otherwise indicated, the general background material on contemporary political parties in Israel comes from the following sources: Helen Chapin Metz, *Israel: A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1988), especially "Appendix B: Political Parties and Organizations," and the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise's "Jewish Virtual Library," > "The Library," > "Israel," > "Politics," > "Parties," at www.us-israel.org/jsource/Politics/partytoc.html.

67. For a more detailed description of both the prestate background and the more modern history of the alignment parties, see Arian, *Politics in Israel*, pp. 73–79. See also Myron Aronoff, *Power and Ritual in the Israeli Labor Party: A Study in Political Anthropology* (Assen, Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977).

68. The One Israel platform can be found at "The Knesset," > "Elections and the State" > "Elections for the Sixteenth Knesset – 2003" > "Lists and Candidates" at "<http://www.knesset.gov.il/elections16/eng/lists/menu.asp>.

69. The Meretz Party platform can be found at "The Knesset," > "Elections and the State" > "Elections for the Sixteenth Knesset – 2003" > "Lists and Candidates" > "Meretz," > "Party Platform,"

http://www.knesset.gov.il/elections16/eng/lists/plat_20-e.htm

70. For a good brief history of the Likud, see Ilan Greilsammer, "The Likud," in Howard Penniman and Daniel Elazar, eds., *Israel at the Polls, 1981* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1986), pp. 65–92; Arian, *Politics in Israel*, pp. 79–86; Benjamin Akzin, "The Likud," p. 93, in *Israel at the Polls: The Knesset Elections of 1977*; and David Nachmias, "The Right Wing Opposition in Israel," *Political Studies* 24 (1976): 268–280.

71. The Likud official Web site can be found at "The Knesset," > "Elections and the State" > "Elections for the

Sixteenth Knesset – 2003” > “Lists and Candidates <http://www.knesset.gov.il/elections16/eng/lists/menu.asp> .

72. The platform of the HaIchud HaLeumi Party can be found on the Knesset Web page “The Knesset,” >

“Elections and the State” > “Elections for the Sixteenth Knesset – 2003” > “Lists and Candidates

<http://www.knesset.gov.il/elections16/eng/lists/menu.asp>

73. A good general discussion of the religious parties is to be found in Shmuel Sandler, “The Religious Parties,” in *Israel at the Polls, 1981*, pp. 105–127. See also Gary Schiff, *Tradition and Politics, The Religious Parties of Israel* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1977); Stephen Oren, “Continuity and Change in Israel’s Religious Parties,” *Middle East Journal* 27 (1973): 36–54; David Schnall, “Native Anti-Zionism: Ideologies of Radical Dissent in Israel,” *Middle East Journal* 31 (1977): 157–74; Yael Yishai, “Factionalism in the National Religious Party: The Quiet Revolution,” in *The Elections in Israel—1977*, ed. A. Arian (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Academic Press, 1980), pp. 50–60; Shimshon Zelnicker and Michael Kahan, “Religion and Nascent Cleavages: The Case of Israel’s National Religious Party,” *Comparative Politics* 9 (1976): 21–48; Bradley, *Parliamentary Elections*, pp. 54–55; Rubinstein, “The Lesser Parties in the Israeli Elections of 1977,” p. 180; Eliezer Don-Yehiya, “Origins and Developments of the Agudah and Mafdal Parties,” *The Jerusalem Quarterly* (Summer 1981): 49–64; and Rael Isaac, *Party and Politics in Israel: Three Visions of a Jewish State* (New York: Longman, 1981).

74. Katz, *Government and Politics*, p. 35. For a fuller examination of the Democratic Movement for Change, see Efraim Torgovnik, “A Movement for Change in a Stable System,” in *Israel at the Polls: The Knesset Elections of 1977*, pp. 147–171.

75. Shinui’s party platform can be found at “The Knesset,” > “Elections and the State” > “Elections for the Sixteenth Knesset – 2003” > “Lists and Candidates” at <http://www.knesset.gov.il/elections16/eng/lists/menu.asp>

76. Alain Greilsammer, “Communism in Israel: 13 Years after the Split,” *Survey* 23 (1977–1978): 172–192, and Martin Slann, “Ideology and Ethnicity in Israel’s Two Communist Parties,” *Studies in Comparative Communism* 7:4 (1974): 359–374. For two very good studies, one current, the other more historical, of the communist party in Israel,

see Moshe Czudnowski and Jacob Landau, *The Israeli Communist Party and the Elections for the Fifth Knesset, 1961* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution, 1965), and Dunia Nahas, *The Israeli Communist Party* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976).

77. The DFPE Web site can be found at "The Knesset," > "Elections and the State" > "Elections for the Sixteenth Knesset – 2003" > "Lists and Candidates" at <http://www.knesset.gov.il/elections16/eng/lists/menu>.

78. See Yael Yishai, "Three Faces of Associational Politics: Interest Groups in Israel," *Political Studies* 40 (1992): 124–136.

79. See Clive S. Thomas, *Political Parties and Interest Groups: Shaping Democratic Governance* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2001).

80. See Esther Iecovich, "Pensioners' Political Parties in Israel," *Journal of Aging and Social Policy* 12:3 (2001): 87–107.

81. On the role of the labor movement in Israel, see inter alia the following: Zeev Sternhell, *The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998); Yitzhak Greenberg, "The Contribution of the Labor Economy to Immigrant Absorption and Population Dispersal During Israel's First Decade," in Ilan Troen and Noah Lucas, *Israel: The First Decade of Independence* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1995); Yitchak Haberfeld, "Why Do Workers Join Unions? The Case of Israel," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 48 (1995): 656–670; Giora Goldberg, "Trade Unions and Party Politics in Israel: A Decline of Party Identification," *The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies* 23:1 (1998): 53–73; and Shmuel Tzabag, "Cooperation in the Shadow of a Power Struggle: Israel, The Likud Governments and the *Histadrut*, 1977–1984," *Middle Eastern Studies* 31 (1995): 849–888.

82. Don Peretz, *The Government and Politics of Israel* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1979), p. 120.

83. Two classic works are Yoram Peri, *Between Battles and Ballots, Israeli Military in Politics* (Cambridge, U.K. : Cambridge University Press, 1983), and Amos Perlmutter, *Military and Politics in Israel* (New York, Praeger,

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84. Peretz, *Government and Politics*, p. 128.

85. Peretz, *Government and Politics*, p. 131.

⁸⁶86. See on this topic the following: Gabriel Bar-Haim, "Revista Mea: Keeping Alive the Romanian Community in Israel," in Stephen Riggins, ed., *Ethnic Minority Media: An International Perspective* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1992); Sammy Smooha, "Class, Ethnic, and National Cleavages and Democracy in Israel," in Ehud Sprinzak and Larry Diamond, eds., *Israeli Democracy under Stress* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993); Hannah Herzog, "Midway between Political and Cultural Ethnicity: An Analysis of the 'Ethnic Lists' in the 1984 Elections," in Daniel Elazar and Shmuel Sandler, *Israel's Odd Couple: The 1984 Knesset Elections and the National Unity Government* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1990); and As'ad Ghanem and Sarab Ozacky-Lazar, "Israel As an Ethnic State: The Arab Vote," in Alan Arian and Michal Shamir, *The Elections in Israel, 1999* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2002).

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88. See Adham Saouli, "Arab Political Organizations within the Israeli State," *The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies* 26:2 (2001): 443–460, or Dan Rabinowitz, "The Common Memory of Loss: Political Mobilization among Palestinian Citizens of Israel," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 50 (1994): 27–49.
89. See Yael Yishai, "Regulation of Interest Groups in Israel," *Parliamentary Affairs* 51:4 (1998): 568–578.
90. See Yael Yishai, "Civil Society in Transition: Interest Politics in Israel," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 555 (January 1998): 147–162.