Cleavage Politics in Israel

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Deegan-Krause in his encyclopedic article "New dimensions of political cleavage" in The Oxford Handbook of Political Science (2007) provides a fascinating invitation to conceptualize about the politicization of social cleavages. He builds upon the dimensions of institution, attitude, and structure (Bartolini and Mair 1990), and theorizes about their interactions. His illustration (Figure 1.1) is especially effective, portraying visually that which is hard to grasp abstractly: that the alignment of the slots in each of the "wheels" is necessary for the whole thing to fall into place, for the lock to release, for the tumblers to disengage.

We wish to add two insights and expand upon them with data from our research on Israeli elections. The first is the addition of dynamics to the Deegan-Krause model of cleavage by connecting the model to the concepts of dealignment and realignment. The second is to suggest that collective identity differences are most susceptible to becoming full cleavages. We suspect this was true in the past and is also true today, and not only in Israel.
II. Bringing Dynamics In: Cleavages, Realignment and Dealignment

Deegan-Krause's model presented in his Figure 1.1 must be conceptualized in dynamic terms to address change. We suggest considering all three slots to be in flux, at different paces. Full cleavage is the occasion of their coming together, with all three slots lining up (the middle representation in the Figure). From a dynamic perspective, the process bringing about a full cleavage is termed realignment in the American tradition of the study of party system change. That is when the movement of the wheels sounds like a great earthquake, and this is the clearest expression of effective cleavage articulation in the political system.

Realignment is a dynamic concept, with no precise or generally accepted definition, and even under forceful attack recently (Mayhew 2002; Carmines & Wagner 2006). The realignment literature speaks about shifts in the traditional balance of power among parties, reorganization of ideological and social coalitional bases of major parties, and shifting group alignments, which persist for several succeeding elections. A critical election or realigning set of elections are said to be characterized by great and highly involved voter participation, increased ideological polarization and issue-distances among parties, and the emergence of a new cleavage or substitution of one cleavage for another. After these critical elections, a new balance is in place and persists for several subsequent election campaigns (Burnham, 1970; Crotty, 2006; Key, 1955, 1959). However, this literature fails to specify the concept exactly and consistently. We think it useful to bring together the two traditions and define the process of bringing about a long-term full cleavage – realignment. Change in either of the three dimensions of cleavage could be involved in a party system realignment -- the social structural base, the value or issue characteristic, or the organizational expression. Defining realignment as the long-term lining up of the slots in Deegan-Krause's model into full cleavage thus provides a precise, dynamic and fruitful definition of realignment. Realignment is change to full cleavage, where all three dimensions line up, and which endures. Obviously then, not all three dimensions have to change in a realignment; the important characteristic is their long-term convergence.
It is also important to appreciate that the three dimensions of cleavage – structure, institution, and attitude – can move at different paces, in different periods and in different settings. This notion entails a multitude of theoretical and empirical questions, among them which dimension is more sturdy and which more volatile, which dimension changes more or earlier in response to real world developments, and the appropriateness of the American notion of the periodicity of realignments.

This perspective helps us connect to another important concept used in the analysis of party system dynamics: dealignment. Dealignment describes a general loosening of the ties between the society and the political parties in response to processes of social and political modernization (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000). It implies the weakening of the connections between voters and political parties, resulting in instability of the election results, and growing difficulty of accurately forecasting election results. As a recent historical phenomenon, these weakening ties concurred with voter turnout decline, decreased identification with the parties, and greater volatility. The tendency among voters to vote for a party other than the one with which they had identified in the past has increased, the number of independents has become larger, and the decision about which party to vote for has been postponed to a later stage of the election campaign. Doubts about parties as political institutions grew and confidence in them sank. As party identification weakened, there was a rise in issue and one-issue voting, and in voting according to the performance of the party candidates, resulting in a fragmentation of party systems, the disappearance of veteran parties, and the swift rise and fall of new parties in the political system (Crotty, 2006; Dalton, Flanagan & Beck, 1984; Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000; Webb, Farrell & Holliday et al., 2002).

Dealignment means that parties as institutions are less significant, with or without other institutions taking their place, and that party structures and loyalties are weaker and less stable. It means that the institution dimension or key in the cleavage model becomes much less stable, and therefore long-lasting full cleavages or realignments are impossible because we cannot expect the three slots to lock in place for a prolonged period of time.
Dealignment precludes full cleavage or realignment. Furthermore, when there is
dealignment, the other keys (structure, attitudes) will take precedence in defining party
system dynamics. And although new flash parties may bring up and attempt to prime and
frame issues, their goals can be expected to be primarily electoral and therefore they are
most likely to align themselves to their electorate’s structures and attitudes.

Building on this conceptual framework, we identify three phases in Israel’s electoral
and political development. The first was the dominant party period from 1948 to 1977,
coinciding with the period of nation building, during which the precursors of the Labor party
(Mapai, the Alignment, and others) were the largest political party and formed all
government coalitions. Cleavages were managed by the methods perfected by the
dominant party: cooptation, symbolic relief, denial, and neglect. The religious parties were
coopted into the governing circle. Appointed leaders from ethnic (Mizrachi – Jews of Asian
and African origin) and national (Arab) groups were propped up hoping they would be
viewed as authentic. The dominant leaders developed an ideology of nation-building that
allowed them to regulate public discourse and group pressures.

The 1977 election brought this first phase to an abrupt end and the right-wing Likud
came to power. Using a dynamic view of political cleavages, it is clear that the process of
realignment began earlier. There were signs of it in the 1973 election that took place
shortly after the traumatic Yom Kippur war (see Table 1). The turning point had been the
Six Day War of 1967 and the occupation of the territories of the West Bank, with rich,
controversial and highly charged religious and historical meaning for Jews. The
realignment process continued through the early 1980’s, consolidating the process into a
full cleavage structure that could be narrowly defined by the territorial issue and the Israeli-
Arab conflict, but more broadly reflected a struggle over collective identity. By then, more
than ever before, the party system could be ordered along a left-right dimension defined by
this cleavage (see Table 2; Shamir 1986). At stake were broad and deep questions that
touched upon basic collective identity dilemmas of territorial and social communal
boundaries. The peace process, the questions of territorial compromise, the Oslo
agreements, and the disengagement embody the policy implications of those collective identity dilemmas regarding geographical boundaries and Israel's relations with other nations, in particular its Arab neighbors and, even more specifically, the Palestinians. This is the external dimension of collective identity. Conceptually and empirically closely related to it is the internal aspect which concerns the meaning of Zionism, nationalism, citizenship, religion and state relations, and the strain between a Jewish and democratic state. The party system – political parties, political blocs and candidates - became aligned almost solely along this dimension. Attitudes on these issues were strongly tied to partisanship and to social groupings. Religious, Sephardi, less educated and lower status Jews voted for the right-wing and religious parties, whereas the Left (Labor, Meretz) had a disproportionate share of secular, upper-class Ashkenazi Jews (Shamir and Arian 1999). These collective identity dilemmas were not new for Israel; they were as old as Zionism itself, but they came to provide the main defining axis for the party system, and other issues either overlapped it considerably or were pushed aside, as we will discuss in the next section.

Tables 1 and 2 here

The realignment of 1977 and the domination of the external collective identity dimension cleavage, as well as the growing overlap between the external and internal dimensions of collective identity, was the direct result of the Six Day War. The concept of Greater Israel is strongly related to the legitimization of the Jewish state on the basis of tradition and the ties between the people, their history, and the land. Attitudes changed first, and they connected and reinforced group allegiance. In terms of structure, it was obviously the internal Jewish-Arab division that was directly connected. Among Jewish voters, it was first and foremost religious-secular differences that were prominent as well as the internal Jewish ethnic schism between Jews of European background versus those of Asian or African origin. According to detailed analysis of voters' switching patterns, the effect of the territorial issue was immediate and continuous and was in effect since the first election after the Six Day War in 1969. In 1977 ethnic background became important in
structuring the vote, and paved the way to the major role ethnic origin would play in the next elections without yet coming into the fore. In the 1977 turnover election that brought the Likud to power, Labor deserters of Ashkenazi origin tended to vote for the newly established Democratic Movement for Change party (which was dissolved by the next election), Sephardim for the Likud. The 1981 and 1984 elections consolidated the realignment, with both ethnic background and the security and territorial issues acting in interaction. By then group pressures and political cues were fueling the process (Shamir 1986). It would seem then that the realignment of the Israeli party system into full cleavage involved all three dimensions. Attitudes connected to structure and lead to the change in party power relations. From an agency perspective, the short-lived Democratic Movement for Change party played an important bridging role. Subsequently, following the electoral trends, party cues based on ethnic affiliation and nationalistic appeals invigorated the realignment processes further.

The competitive party system phase began after the victory of the right-wing Likud in 1977 and was characterized by two large parties of similar size forming the nucleus of two party blocs (see Table 2). These two blocs, commonly labeled left and right, crystallized around the major cleavage dimension delineated above, with the external aspect of security, peace and the future of the territories the more salient and influential one. While the system appeared highly competitive, in fact the Likud had a superior position during this 15 year period, because the parties of the right and the religious parties combined won the majority of Knesset seats and supported the Likud position regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. This was true even in the period between 1984 and 1990, during which Likud and Labor joined in a National Unity government that featured a rotation of the prime minister position between the two antagonists. Throughout this period, the Likud dominated politics, even if it never achieved a dominant party status similar to Labor in the first decades of statehood. The 1992 election broke this pattern with the left bloc winning a majority (61) of the seats for the first time since 1973. From that point on, power shifted
between the two largest parties, the Likud and Labor, and between the right and left camps they led.

The third phase began in 1996 and coincided with the introduction of the direct election of the prime minister. This institutional reform was legislated in 1992, and produced a double ballot electoral system where the prime minister was directly elected by popular majoritarian ballot, and the Knesset was elected as before under proportional representation with the whole country one constituency. This system was in effect in 1996, 1999, and 2001; in 2001, only a special election of the prime minister was held. Following the deleterious effects of this electoral reform on Israeli politics, and in particular on the fortunes of the larger parties, it was repealed shortly after the 2001 special election, and the previous parliamentary PR system was reinstated. This reform caught most of the attention of politicians and political scientists in their interpretation of Israeli politics, but it is also important to connect this third phase with the Oslo breakthrough that occurred under the Rabin government between 1992 and 1995. Suddenly the Palestinian issue was being negotiated and territories were being returned. Up until the electoral reform, the winning coalition of parties determined who would rule. With the direct election of the prime minister, it was no longer the parties but the popular vote that determined who would head government, and the two parts of the electoral results became more and more separate from one another. The combination of institutional reform and changing political realities reintroduced multidimensionality into the party system after some two decades in which the system was focused on the Israeli-Arab conflict issue dimension. The two large parties declined, and the small parties, in particular sectarian ones – Arab, Russian immigrants, haredi (ultra-Orthodox), and anti-haredi – flourished in the Knesset elections. Nevertheless, the debate over collective identity regarding both the external and internal dimensions continued to dominate the party system and political discourse. Tellingly, the additional cleavages coming to the fore were of an ethnic and religious nature and they were nested within the all-encompassing, superimposing collective identity debate.
The change from one ballot to two ballots confounded the measure of victory and defeat in elections. In the pre-reform period (through 1992), the winner was the largest party in the Knesset elections. Until 1977, that party was always Labor; it always formed the government, and this dominant-party-system was highly stable. For the next four elections (1981, 1984, 1988, 1992) Labor and Likud were very close to each other, and what determined the coalition government in this competitive decade was the bloc share. In the 1990s, and in all elections held under the provision of direct election of the prime minister, power shifted from man to man and from bloc to bloc: from Shamir to Rabin in 1992, from Peres to Netanyahu in 1996, from Netanyahu to Barak in 1999, from Barak to Sharon in 2001. None of these turnover elections however heralded a new realignment of the party system or a fundamental change in the collective identity debate.

The third phase was above all the phase of dealignment (see Figure 1). The parties continued to be competitive in the sense that turnover was frequent. It was also characterized by the weakening of the major "large" parties and the reemergence of smaller parties, as both Labor and Likud suffered declining political fortunes during this period, and dramatic variability in their strength from election to election. By 1999, Labor (or rather "One Israel", a list made up of Labor, Gesher and the moderate-Orthodox Meimad) won only 26 seats. The Likud fell to 19 seats; and in 2003 Labor won only 19 seats while the Likud bounced back to 38 (and shortly after the election the 2 MKS of Israel Ba'Aliya joined it and increased its size to 40). In 2006, with the success of the newly established Kadima party (29 seats), Likud was cut to 12, and Labor achieved 19 seats again.

The Israeli party system, its parties and its voters, have undergone tremendous change since independence in 1948. From a stable dominant party system through a competitive two-bloc system, it found itself since the mid 1990's in a third, most unstable, dealignment phase. Turnovers, unpredictability, volatility and instability are the rule with regard to the structural dimension.
Even though the party system has fallen into increasing disarray, the same cleavage has structured it since the 1977 realignment. The collective identity cleavage dominates the party system. The realignment era that began in 1977 generated a full cleavage with all keys interlocked. Since the mid 1990's and the dealignment phase, there has existed a collective identity position divide. The institutional key has been destabilized, and the full cleavage situation has reverted to a position divide, given the great flux and instability of the party structures. In 2003 and 2006, this flux also effected the previously sturdy bloc structure, and the traditional left-right bloc division has melded with the center acquiring adherents and institutional representation. Yet no new cleavage dimension was able to penetrate and replace the primacy of the collective identity dimension in structuring politics. We have more to say about this in the next section.

Conceptualizing the dynamics of the Israeli party system with the notions of cleavage and dealignment/realignment underscores the extremely dramatic nature of the 1977 turnover (Arian 1975, 1980; Shamir 1986). Those elections accelerated the realigning electoral era and brought about the downfall of Labor and the dominant party system that it had created. The 1977 turnover signaled a realignment of the party system, of the electorate, of the elites, and of public policy. Ethnic and religious group allegiances crystallized, and demography combined with the territorial issue cleavage to redefine the political system.

The 1992 election was clearly different (Arian and Shamir 1993). Even though the policy shift following this election -- the Oslo Accords -- was as significant and perhaps even more abrupt and dramatic than the change following the ascent of the Likud in 1977, in terms of electoral alignment, 1992 was not 1977. The electoral shift in 1992 was less complex and numerically smaller than the one in 1977, and was grounded more in issue positions than in social groupings. It did not result in a notable and enduring restructuring of the power distribution and above all, it did not alter the political cleavage structure. There was no realignment in 1992; nor were the two following Knesset elections of 1996 and 1999 and the 2001 special election of the Prime Minister elections of realignment. These
elections did not involve significant and enduring shifts in the strength of the left, the right, or the religious party blocs, nor were significant changes in the ideological and social group bases of party coalitions at the heart of these changes. The major characteristics of the elections in this decade were the increase in issue voting and in the role of performance evaluations of candidates; but the same cleavage structure kept its hold on the system.

The 1992 election was the last one held under the old one-constituency proportional representation system. Even though it took place after the electoral reform legislation had been passed, and Rabin conducted his campaign as though these were personal elections, the reform took force only in 1996. Netanyahu (1996), Barak (1999), and Sharon (2001) were the only leaders elected under Israel's direct election of the prime minister system. Flawed since the directly elected prime minister was still dependent on his parliamentary coalition, the system was soon abandoned. The 2003 elections, held after the direct election of the prime minister procedures were abandoned, continued the trends of the previous decades, further consolidating the decline of the left and the control of the right of the parliament, the policy agenda, and the priorities of the country. The strength of the two large parties, Labor and Likud, had declined significantly over the 1990s; in 2003, the right-wing Likud doubled its Knesset representation to 38 seats, while the left-wing Labor further decreased. After the 2003 election there was a single party (Likud) clearly at the top of the heap. Ariel Sharon in 2003, like Menachem Begin 25 years before him, was the victor over the left (with the help of a break-away party of the center), held uncontested power, and was positioned to make historical decisions regarding the future of the territories. Sharon took advantage of this opportunity and unilaterally withdrew from Gaza, But despite this dramatic policy innovation, it is important to see that the 2003 election again marked no change in the dominance of the collective identity cleavage, if anything it further buttressed it. It consolidated the right-wing realignment of 1977, while also continuing the dealignment process of the 1990s (Arian and Shamir 2005).

By 2006, Sharon had split from the Likud and formed Kadima by moving to the center of the political map, only to be felled by a stroke before the elections. Olmert headed
Kadima into the 2006 elections and while it did less well than predicted under Sharon, Kadima was still the largest vote getter (29 Knesset seats). Our analysis of the electoral base of Kadima ascertained that the party system is still defined primarily and powerfully by the collective identity cleavage imposed by the 1977 realignment. Changes in the attitudinal dimension of the cleavage, brought about by the failed second Camp David summit of 2000 and the ensuing second bloody Intifada were at the root of Kadima's success. Kadima embodied the new notion of center which combined the pragmatism of the left and the right-wing deep mistrust of the Palestinian partner. Indeed Kadima located itself at the median voter's position on the external dimension of the collective identity debate. The structural group bases of the vote did not change in this election however. The dramatic changes in the institutional dimension of this cleavage – the weakening of the veteran parties and the unprecedented success of a newly established center party, do not signal a realignment. Instead they are another manifestation of the dealignment the Israeli party system is undergoing. Despite the perplexing flux in the party system, the momentous events that have unsettled society and the polity and the unique changes in the demographic make up of the country, the 1977 realignment is still in place, with the collective identity position divide still structuring the politics of Israel.
III. The Cleavage of Collective Identity

The second argument we want to put on the table, also based on our long-term study of Israel, regards collective identity. Basically it is the idea that collective identity differences are more likely to become full cleavages than other differences, and therefore – whenever relevant – they are likely to dominate and endure (Lijphart 1979). Moreover, we will argue that collective identity is as relevant today as it was in the past in many countries and not only in Israel. Indeed religion, ethnicity and linguistic differences seem to have retained their role in party systems, whereas the role of class has been weakened. As Deegan-Krause suggests, support across ethnic lines is uncommon, and ethnic groups usually have parties to represent them, as do religious groups - Christian, Muslim, and Jewish. Collective identity boundaries easily produce full cleavages, from both top-down and bottom up perspectives. Identity signals meaningful distinctions between group members and outsiders, on the one hand, and communality within the group in terms of some consequential social category and the group's goals and orientations, on the others (Shamir and Arian 1999). It binds together symbolic politics (Sears 1993) and concerns of self-interest, making it an "easy issue" (Carmines & Stimson, 1980). Collective identity combines position and structure, and triggers voting on policy issues and social allegiance. And exactly for these reasons, collective identity is an easy and useful resource for political agents upon which to mobilize

Some sociologists portray Israel as a collection of competing tribes, and such a portrayal further contributes to the logic of identity cleavage politics (Kimmerling 1999). This attribution has each tribe care about its material and symbolic benefits in society, but also attempting to imprint its vision on the entire society. The Arab Israeli minority, with some 20 percent of the population, is uncomfortable to say the least with the Zionist vision of Israel as a Jewish state. For the religious (meaning the Orthodox Jewish religious at about 20 percent of the population), promulgating Jewish religious law in the state's law books is a highly cherished goal. Then there are immigrants from the former Soviet Union
and Ethiopia who make up another 15 percent of the population. We have already reached 55 percent, and we have yet to describe the Israeli mainstream or establishment groups.

For each of these "tribal" groups, politics is played with different rules. The Arabs are permanent outsiders in the game of politics, the religious constant insiders, and the immigrants out and wanting in. Arabs make up about ten percent of the parliament but rely on extra-parliamentary measures to achieve their very limited political successes. The religious do very well in negotiations since they are often the pivot of winning coalitions with the left or the right. The former Russians have been increasingly successful; more than a million of them came since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The shifts in their voting have determined the electoral results in a number of close contests, their parties have played a role in forming coalitions, and their politicians have become active and visible in a number of political parties.

Mainstream parties (especially Likud and Labor) face different dilemmas. Until 1977, Labor was the undisputed dominant party and coalesced with the religious parties to consolidate its rule. Since 1977, Likud and Labor have competed for supremacy, with Likud prime ministers in power more than Labor prime ministers. In 2006, for the first time, a centrist party (Kadima meaning forward; an initiative of Likud Prime Minister Ariel Sharon along with Labor leaders including Shimon Peres) won the most votes and established the ruling government. Mainstream parties have tried to navigate between broad appeals (they argue over whether the country should strive for peace and security -- Labor -- or security and peace -- Likud) while avoiding controversial elements of the internal collective identity dimension. In varying degrees both have changed welfare state policies to the point that poverty is at an all time high.

To complicate matters (or perhaps to clarify them) it is also important to report that the poor are made up mostly of Arabs and haredim (ultra-orthodox; not to be confused with the national religious who are fiercely nationalistic and account for most of the settlers in the territories held since 1967). The members of neither of these groups serve in the Israel Defense Forces, and these two groups notoriously disdain from celebrating Israeli
Independence Day. Within the mainstream consensus are some 70 percent of the population (subtracting the 20 percent Arabs and the 10 percent haredim who in turn are about half of the Jewish Orthodox religious) who exhibit patterns of identification with the country and its goals.

One type of action in Israeli politics occurs at the junction between these two non-establishment groups and the majority; another type has to do with the way cleavages are expressed and politicized within the dominant culture. A strict adherence to the cleavage model based on Deegan-Krause's concepts would only help partially in understanding the politicization of cleavages in Israel. The Arabs are a well-defined demographic group, they have established parties, most Arabs support their demands and most Jews are wary of them. The religious are a similarly well-defined group, with distinct institutions such as schools and assembly places (synagogues often built with public monies), often special dress, have established parties, and have public support beyond their numbers even though support for having public life reflect Jewish religious law is related to how influential the religious parties are. When the religious are farther from power, support rises; when they are ascendant, support falls.

Other issues are less easily classified, like the immigrant-veteran cleavage, The gap between rich and poor in Israel has changed over the past twenty years from being very small to now being one of the largest among Western industrialized societies. The tension between Ashkenazi Jews from Europe and America and the Mizrahim from countries of Asia and Africa is still important but it has been diminished by intermarriage and by the achievements of prominent individuals.

No community of shared identity has emerged for the entire community (see Smooha 1989), but for the majority of Israeli Jews the outlines of collective identity are clear. It is within this collective identity that the political action takes place so grasping the contours of the attitudinal landscape and the changes that occur within them becomes crucial. Our emphasis in this section will be on the mainstream politics of the dominant Jewish majority.
As we previously discussed, identity dilemmas intertwine issue and social-group based voting. From this perspective, there may be a simultaneous growth of social cleavages and an increase in issue voting. Franklin, Mackie, Valen et al. (1992) write of a developmental process whereby the importance of social cleavages in structuring electoral choice declines. At the same time they also suggest that the rate and timing of this process varies over systems, and acknowledge that there are exceptions to this general pattern (see also Crewe and Denver, 1985). Dalton and Wattenberg (1993, 200) reiterate the general theme of the decline of social cleavage voting, then mention as "perhaps the only exception to the rule of declining social cleavages...the case of race and ethnicity in which one can identify pockets of solid partisan support."

Issues differ in their potential to generate group allegiance. Some issues may be only weakly related to specific social groupings, as the postindustrial literature argues, but other issues can connect and reinforce existing cleavage structures by providing new reasons for the same people and groups to support the same parties (Franklin, Mackie, Valen et al., 1992, 402). Identity questions, not unknown in Western democracies, are of the latter type and they trigger group allegiance. Thus the extent to which the vote is related to group characteristics of voters depends at least in part on the nature of the issues on the agenda (Budge and Farlie, 1983; MacDonald, Listhaug, and Rabinowitz, 1991). When identity dilemmas capture the agenda, the generalizations about electoral behavior in advanced industrial societies may be misguided since these dilemmas often amalgamate issue and social-group based voting. We should still expect an increase in the importance of issues in voters’ considerations, but not necessarily a decline in the amount of the vote variance explained by social structure by itself and in conjunction with attitudinal variables.

In Israel, the simultaneous impact of social-group based voting and of issue voting is clear. In many Western countries issues involving postbourgeois versus materialist values, gender issues, public versus private consumption, and state employment have gained ascendancy. In Israel, these issues have energized only limited publics and have
not become as central, critical, and engulfing as the major issue dimension in Israeli politics: the territories and the Israeli-Arab conflict, as discussed in the previous section, where the questions involved pertain to basic collective identity dilemmas of territorial and social communal boundaries. The external dimension relates to the state’s borders and relations with the rest of the world; the internal aspect concerns the nature of the Jewish state and society

While the notion of Israel as a Jewish state provides a common denominator for most Israeli Jews and secular nationalism is ripe with religious symbolism, the meaning assigned to the Jewish state is dynamic and differs dramatically across groups. This dissensus provides the basis for a struggle between cultures, often defined in terms of religious vs. secular, primordial vs. civil, Jewishness vs. Israeliness, or Eretz Israel vs. the state of Israel (Kimmerling 1999). This dimension is closely related to the territorial, external identity dimension, as Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel) is strongly embedded in both Jewish nationalism and religion (Aronoff, 1989; Cohen, 1989; Liebman and Don-Yehiya, 1983).

Religion became closely intertwined with nationalism, especially since 1967, as religious authorities provided legitimization to keeping the territories taken in the war of that year, thus establishing the link between the people, their history, God, and the land. The settlement movement Gush Emunim and the National Religious party played key roles in the long-term process of linking religion and nationalism in public opinion and in coalition politics. Fueled by the growing strength of the ultra-Orthodox non-Zionist haredi camp, and especially the Shas party, the schism along the internal identity dimension sharpened. Two dimensions of collective identity are operative -- external and internal. The overlap between the internal identity dimension and the external identity dimension became clearer and stronger over the years. The term “hardal” (literally mustard), an acronym for haredi and “dati leumi” (national religious) captures this process within the religious sector, whereby national religious Jews grew closer to the haredim in their religious observance, and the non-Zionist ultra-orthodox community became more nationalistic regarding the Arab-Israeli
conflict. This amalgamation was severely challenged in 2005 when Prime Minister Ariel Sharon led the unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip, and the removal of settlements (many of them peopled by religious Jews) thus sundering the intimate connection between the two parts of the equation.

Centrifugal forces were also at work regarding the internal dimension. When Labor replaced the Likud-religious government in 1992, many seemed to yearn for a stronger expression of secular values in Israel. The pre-election 1992 survey generated an unprecedented low percentage of respondents who supported public life according to Jewish religious law (29% compared to 43-51% in other years). In 1996, this trend was reversed and support for public life according to Jewish religious law soared to a very high rate (53% support), and reverted to a more moderate 49 percent level in 2006. Self-reporting of religious observance remained remarkably stable between 1962 and 2006, with 25-30 percent of respondents categorizing themselves as observing all or most strictures of rabbinical Jewish law, although not all of them voted for religious parties.

The 1996 and 2006 pre-election surveys included several items intended to measure the collective identity dimensions. These items provided the basis for the two identity scales, the external identity scale and the internal identity scale; the wording of the questions are in Shamir and Arian (1999). The external identity scale was defined by orientation to the issues of the Israeli-Arab conflict: the territories issue, peace talks, a Palestinian state, the Oslo agreements (support for unilateral disengagement in Gaza in 2006), and the value priority of Greater Israel (α=.81 in 1996; .77 in 2006). The internal identity scale included the value priority of democracy, the primary identity as Jewish or Israeli, the state-religion issue, and the primacy of democracy or Jewish religious law (α=.68 in 1996, .72 in 2006). The two scales correlated strongly and similarly in both years (.60 in 1996 and .62 in 2006).

Both scales were constructed as continua from 1-100 and not as dichotomies, but for shorthand purposes we label their poles: for the external identity scale, the poles were
Doves and Hawks; for the internal identity scale, the poles were Israeli and Jewish. We cut each of them into three: 1-33, 34-66, and 67-100. Their intersection generated nine scale types and they are displayed in Table 3. Using this convention, the percentage of those identifying as Doves (scale types 1, 2, and 3) fell from 39 percent to 34 percent between 1996 and 2006 while the Hawks (scale types 7, 8, and 9) made up 23 percent of each sample. The middle group on the external scale jumped five percentage points from 38 to 43 percent. This change was either a result of Sharon's political magic or the shift that he identified and capitalized on, or both. In either case it was based on the despair from the Palestinians following the failed 2000 Camp David summit and the second Intifada. On the internal scale, respondents identifying as Israelis (scale types 1, 4, and 7), increased from 37 to 42 percent, and respondents identifying as Jews (scale types 3, 6, and 9) made up 27 percent of the respondents in 1996 and 28 percent in 2006. The “inconsistent” identifications of those identifying as Dove and Jewish identities, and those with Hawk and Israeli identities, were very small in both samples (categories 3 and 7).

Some of the change is attributable to the very large influx of immigrants from the former Soviet Union since the beginning of the 1990s. This group was underrepresented in the 1996 sample. Many of the immigrants were strong nationalists but not familiar with Jewish religious ritual. A very large voting bloc since more than a million of them came after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the shifts in their voting have determined the electoral results in a number of close contests and their parties and politicians have played an important role in sustaining certain coalitions. The presence of this group in the 2006 sample (they were interviewed in Russian) makes the stability of the numbers even more notable.

Table 3 here

There was both continuity and difference when the scale types were considered by attitudes and vote for the two periods (see Table 4). The "hawks" were much more likely to perceive the Arabs as wanting to destroy Israel and kill Jews. Support for socialist as opposed to capitalist policies was not related to the two dimensions in the two time periods.
studied. Studying the vote intentions for prime minister and for the Knesset in 1996 by scale type is very revealing. Among those identified as Hawks measured by the external identity scale (scale types 7, 8, and 9), the vast majority intended to vote for Netanyahu and Likud (rather than Peres and Labor) irrespective of their internal scale position. The numbers are astounding. The Likud vote in this category varied between 93 and 96 percent, and the vote for Netanyahu between 88 and 96 percent. The mirror image is obtained among the three Dove scale positions, with 92 to 97 percent voting for Peres. The external identity dimension drove these two extreme groups of respondents, and the internal identity dimension made virtually no difference.

Table 4 here

In 2006, Labor was especially successful only among the Dove-Israeli types (scale type 1); Likud appealed more generally among the Hawk-Jewish categories. But the story of 2006 was Kadima, the centrist party formed by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon weeks before the stroke that removed him from the political scene. That party appealed to six of the nine scale types at a rate between 20 to 40 percent. It was particularly successful among the Doves and the Israelis, but also among those holding more moderate views.

Since dilemmas of collective identity tie into social cleavages we would expect identity types to be related to social groupings. We examined the two scale types in terms of religious observance, the social characteristic with the greatest political significance (see Table 5). Religious observance matters and is associated with significant differences along the two dimensions, with the more striking ones being on the internal identity dimension. The range of the means recorded for the internal dimension was larger than for the external dimension, and the range for 2006 was larger than it was in 1996. Another way of looking at these results is that the religious became somewhat more hawkish and somewhat more Jewish between 1996 and 2006, while the secular became slightly more hawkish, but even more Israeli.

Table 5 here
If there is a lock on the cleavage structure by what we have called the dimensions of collective identity, it should show up regarding the social-economic issue. We would expect the social-economic issue to be rather impotent in structuring the vote. And that is precisely what we found. Table 6 presents logistic regression analyses of the right-left bloc vote since 1981 as the dependent variable. The analysis of the bloc vote could be reported only for election years following the clear emergence of the bipolar structure of the party system in 1981. In 1996 and 1999, with the introduction of the direct election of the prime minister, the reported choice for prime minister was used. In 2003, we reinstituted the use of the left-right bloc vote. In 2003, Shinui voters were not included since they did not easily fit into either category. We analyzed 2006 separately since the left and right blocs had decreased in size substantially with the emergence of Kadima, and 30 percent of the Knesset vote going to center parties. Analyses were performed only on respondents who disclosed their voting intention.

Religious observance is statistically significant in all years, and ethnicity in all but one of the regressions for right-bloc and left-bloc party supporters. Comparing the coefficients over time, we can identify a trend of growing impact of religious observance in distinguishing right-bloc party from left-bloc party voters, but also of greater volatility in it. Whereas before the 1977 realignment, religiosity barely distinguished between Labor and Likud voters, with the consolidation it became more and more important, becoming the leading social distinction in politics (Shamir & Arian 1999, Table 1) Labor and the left were increasingly seen as anticlerical, while the Likud played to the traditionalist Jewish sympathies of much of its voting base, even though the origins and ideology of the Likud as a political party were clearly secular. The social economic indicators are much less consistently related to the vote over the years.

Of the three issue domains, all measured on a similar range from 1 to 4, the territorial debate was clearly dominant throughout the period covered in Table 6. It grew in importance from the 1984 election onward; the 1984 election was the point in time in which the territory issue emerged as the overriding dimension ordering the party system. Since
then, the impact of the territories issue on the vote remained very high in distinguishing the left from the right. Over time, Labor identified itself as the territories-for-peace party, and its platforms became less ambiguous on this issue, the left became the "peace camp" and the right, the "national or nationalistic camp". Compared to the territorial issue, the socio-economic and religious-secular issues were much less important in structuring the vote, and their coefficients oscillate in their relative impact during this period. The internal collective identity debate over state-religion relations indeed seems to be of lesser political salience and potency than the external territorial issue, which superimposes itself over all collective identity dilemmas. The socio-economic issue was not able to permeate forcefully and was unable to replace the external collective identity issue throughout this period.

Table 6 here

The 2006 election exemplifies these dynamics most forcefully. These elections were characterized by a dramatic change in party balance, with Kadima, the few months old newly established center party winning the election and forming the government. Sharon formed Kadima following the disengagement and the political troubles he had within his Likud party. His leadership role in the disengagement and in the creation of Kadima cannot be overstated. His stroke took him out of Israeli politics amidst the election campaign, but voting data suggest the pivotal role of Sharon in propelling the defection to Kadima (Shamir et al. forthcoming). These data also show that the defection to Kadima and 2006 voting patterns more generally were largely based on voters' position on issues of peace and security. Also in 2006, the collective identity cleavage prevailed. The shifting vote patterns were not grounded in changing social coalitions or issue dimensions. They restated the existing ones. No significant new dimension emerged, nor was there any indication for a shake-up of the traditional social bases of the vote. The social economic agenda promoted by Amir Peretz, the head of Labor, which seemed to eclipse security concerns early in the election campaign, lost its lead as the campaign dragged on. Most significantly, despite its salience and acute inequalities in society, the social-economic cleavage did not emerge as a significant dimension in voters' considerations, except for
voters of the left parties. Neither did it materialize in a significant redrawing of the social basis of the vote. Amir Peretz as Minister of Defense, and the insignificance of Labor in the formulation of social and economic policy in Olmert's government, banished the thought that this cleavage would emerge as a dominant force in Israeli politics in the foreseeable future. In 2006, there was no emergence of a new cleavage or substitution of one cleavage for another. The collective identity cleavage continued to define the party system and the major issues of contention on which Kadima occupied a central position.
References


Table 1. Knesset Election Results, 120 Members, by Blocs, 1969-2006

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<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Center</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

[Right+ Religious 46 54 62 64 60 65 59 64 60 69 50]

---

*Left bloc includes One Israel, Labor, Alignment, Mapai, Ahdut Ha’avoda, Rafi, Mapam, Civil Rights Movement, Meretz, Communist, Ha’olam Ha’ze, Moked, Sheli, and Arab parties. Right includes Likud, Herut, Liberals, Free Center, Shlomzion, Tehiya, Tzomet, Moledet, Kach, Israel Ba’aliya, Israel Beiteinu, and Ihud Leumi. Religious bloc includes National Religious party (Mafdal), Agudat Israel, Po’alei Agudat Israel, Degel Hatora, Tami, Shas and National Unity-Mafdal. Center includes Independent Liberals, Democratic Movement for Change, Shinui, State list, Platto-Sharon, Telem, Yahad, Ometz, Third Way, Am Ehad, Center Party, Kadima and Pensioners Party.*
Table 2. Left-Right Self-Identification (in %), 1969-2006a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td>52</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>No interest in politics; no answer</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>% right of left+right identifiers</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

a The question was "With which political tendency do you identify?" The first responses were suggested to the respondent, the "religious" and "No interest in politics; no answer" responses were not. In 1962, "Left" and "Right" were not used; "Marxist left" and "Herut" were offered in their place.
Table 3. Scale Types, 1996 and 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Middle</th>
<th>Jewish</th>
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<td>(4) 9.8</td>
<td>(5) 16.9</td>
<td>(6) 11.5</td>
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<td>Hawk</td>
<td>(7) 2.3</td>
<td>(8) 8.3</td>
<td>(9) 12.3</td>
<td>22.9</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(N=1039)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Jewish</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dove</td>
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<td>7.9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>33.7</td>
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<td>Middle</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>16.0</td>
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<td>43.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hawk</td>
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<td>14.4</td>
<td>22.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=1412)</td>
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* Numbers in parentheses refer to scale types discussed in the text.
### Table 4. Scale Types by Attitudes and Vote, 1996 and 2006

**A. 1996**

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<tr>
<th>Scale Type</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
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<tr>
<td>% Arab aspirations to destroy Israel and kill Jews (27% of total)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>57</td>
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<tr>
<td>% socialist (48% of total)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>% Peres vote (v. Netanyahu; 52% of total)</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Third Way party vote</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Labor vote (37% of total)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Likud vote (35% of total)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>No decision for vote question (8% of total)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
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**B. 2006**

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<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<th>9</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Arab aspirations to destroy Israel and kill Jews (42% of total)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% socialist (56% of total)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Kadima vote (24% of total)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Labor vote (12% of total)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>% Likud vote (10% of total)</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undecided for vote (12% of total)</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>11</td>
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**Notes:** Scales 1 to 100; 1 = Doves, Israeli
Table 5. Means by Religious Observance, 1996 and 2006

<table>
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<th>External96</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total sample</td>
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<td>46.9</td>
<td>41.6</td>
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<td>74.3</td>
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<td>Traditional</td>
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<td>41.1</td>
<td>39.8</td>
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<td>Secular</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>25.9</td>
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<td>32.4</td>
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Notes: Scales 1 to 100; 1 = Doves, Israeli
1996 N=1,039; 2006 N = 1,484
Table 6. Logistic Regressions: Socio-Demographic and Issue Variables
Prime-Ministerial Candidate / Right-Left Bloc, 1981-2003a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1981 (N=1,249)</th>
<th>1984 (N=1,259)</th>
<th>1988 (N=873)</th>
<th>1992 (N=1,192)</th>
<th>1996 (N=1,168)</th>
<th>1999 (N=1,075)</th>
<th>2003 (N=1,083)</th>
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<tr>
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<td>B (s.e.)</td>
<td>b (s.e.)</td>
<td>b (s.e.)</td>
<td>b (s.e.)</td>
<td>b (s.e.)</td>
<td>b (s.e.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.05 (.04)</td>
<td>-.08 (.05)</td>
<td>-.09 (.06)</td>
<td>-.05 (.04)</td>
<td>-.03 (.04)</td>
<td>-.05 (.04)</td>
<td>-.12** (.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>.25 (.24)</td>
<td>-.27 (.21)</td>
<td>-.52** (.21)</td>
<td>-.27 (.21)</td>
<td>-.43 (.25)</td>
<td>-.05 (.29)</td>
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<td>Density of Dwelling</td>
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<td>.24 (.22)</td>
<td>.41* (.21)</td>
<td>.14 (.20)</td>
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<td>.14 (.20)</td>
<td>.05 (.29)</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>.03 (.13)</td>
<td>-.46* (.20)</td>
<td>-.30* (.15)</td>
<td>-.02 (.12)</td>
<td>-.30* (.15)</td>
<td>-.15 (.17)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-.07 (.12)</td>
<td>-.02 (.12)</td>
<td>-.22* (.10)</td>
<td>-.08 (.09)</td>
<td>-.22* (.10)</td>
<td>-.16 (.10)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Religious Observance</td>
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<td>-.60*** (.14)</td>
<td>-.67*** (.17)</td>
<td>-.31* (.15)</td>
<td>-.87*** (.15)</td>
<td>-.31* (.15)</td>
<td>-.83*** (.19)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.65*** (.26)</td>
<td>-.05 (.27)</td>
<td>-.67*** (.22)</td>
<td>-.56*** (.22)</td>
<td>-.67*** (.22)</td>
<td>-.86*** (.31)</td>
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<td>Territories</td>
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<td>-.13 (.13)</td>
<td>-.51*** (.13)</td>
<td>-.38*** (.10)</td>
<td>-.51*** (.13)</td>
<td>-.20 (.13)</td>
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N=682 70%* N=610 83% N=536 86% N=761 84% N=758 81% N=761 84% N=627 85%


* Total percentage of correct predictions.

b Not available.

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001.
Figure 1. Electoral Volatility (%) in Knesset Parties, Knesset Blocs and in Vote, 1969–2006