

**Improving the
Accountability and
Stability of Israel's
Political System:
A Detailed Proposal
for a Feasible
Electoral Reform**

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Tevet 5777 – January 2017
Policy Paper no. 30

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Printed in Israel, Tevet 5777 – January 2017

ISBN 978-965-7674-35-2



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Executive Summary

This paper is a detailed proposal for the reform of Israel's electoral system. The changes proposed here are the result of years of research, data analysis and comparative studies. We believe that the reforms outlined in this paper would be beneficial, that they would have a realistic chance of being implemented, and that they would strike a delicate balance between conflicting agendas.

The proposed reform is aimed at achieving the following overall goals:

- a. To make Members of Knesset (MKs) more accountable and answerable to their voters;
- b. To improve government stability.

When addressing electoral reform, equally laudable goals are often incompatible with one another. For example, reforms aimed at guaranteeing government stability may distort or even disregard the will of voters. Moreover, the purpose of electoral reform must not only look good on paper but must also be feasible to implement. Our proposal takes into account Israel's political reality – the interests and considerations of the parties and the likelihood of their supporting these reforms.

In order to achieve the above two goals and to gather the support of a majority of MKs, we recommend the following:

- a. Enabling voters to select candidates on the lists submitted by parties for Knesset elections.
- b. Establishing a mechanism for the formation of multi-party alliances (hereafter: “multi-party alliance/s” or “alliance/s”);

These two reforms should not be made mandatory, in order not to deter the current parties from supporting the reforms. Parties will be free to opt out. The parties will also have an incentive not to opt out, because many voters are more likely to vote for a party that enables “election-day primaries” (i.e. the selection of candidates by voters on the party list for which they vote).

This paper consists of three parts and nine appendixes. Part one details the main goals of electoral reform. Part two outlines the mechanism for achieving these goals. Part three explains in more detail the means by which these reforms will achieve their goals.

The appendixes provide facts, data and explanations concerning the proposed reform.

Appendix 1 explains the origins of Israel's electoral system and reviews previous reform attempts;

Appendix 2 presents a sample of a voting ballot for "election-day primaries";

Appendix 3 provides a comparative analysis of voting systems around the world;

Appendix 4 explains the pitfalls of regional elections;

Appendix 5 explains alternative mechanisms for the formation of a new government after elections;

Appendix 6 provides important insights into the alleged instability of Israeli governments;

Appendix 7 explains the connection between political stability, the number of parties and the electoral system;

Appendix 8 reviews and analyzes the results of legislative elections since 1949;

Appendix 9 presents the results of a public opinion poll on the reforms proposed in this paper.



Part 1: Purpose and Goals of Electoral Reform

In the decades since Israel's independence, there have been many proposals for the reform of the country's political system. Those reforms that were implemented generally proved counter-productive. "Solutions" to Israel's political ills have often produced the opposite of their intended results, not least because they were implemented without taking into account empirical evidence (See Appendix 1). Moreover, there are often contradictions between the different reform goals. This paper strikes a balance between the conflicts that inevitably emerge from various electoral reforms. Electoral reform in Israel should focus on accomplishing the following two primary goals:

- a. Members of Knesset (MKs) should represent their voters and be answerable to them;¹
- b. Governments should be stable and be able to govern, and their formation should be less cumbersome.

The following goals are attainable via the reforms proposed in this paper:

1. To grant voters the option of personally choosing their representatives, increase the accountability of elected officials towards their voters, and strengthen the link between voters and elected officials;²
2. To reduce the negative side-effects of the current selection process of the parties' candidates for the Knesset (such as the registration blitzes for new party members in the lead-up to primary elections);
3. To encourage the formation of large parties and/or electoral alliances;³
4. To encourage parties to declare before elections which coalition they will join after the elections;
5. To encourage the parties' commitment to the coalition they joined, and to limit their extortion capabilities;
6. To reduce the risk of distorted election results (such as a parliamentary majority produced by a minority of voters);
7. To reduce the risk of excluding minorities from parliamentary representation;
8. To determine who will be the Prime Minister immediately after the elections;⁴

9. To increase the government's stability, its ability to govern, and its longevity.⁵

Contradictions may arise between different goals, such as:

1. Increasing the strength of large parties may be important to improving government stability, but it may adversely affect the parliamentary representation of minorities;
2. Stabilizing the government and strengthening the Prime Minister is likely to weaken the commitment of elected officials to their party's platform;
3. Strengthening the personal political power of MKs may adversely affect party discipline.

We believe that our proposal is realistic and takes into account political feasibility, i.e. the likelihood that a majority of MKs would actually support it. There is no point in formulating electoral reforms, however desirable, that are political non-starters. Many past electoral reforms have failed, even though they might have improved representativeness and stability, because too many parties perceived the reforms as a threat to the parties' political power. No electoral reform can realistically take shape without the support of large and small parties, from both the right and the left.



Part 2: Mechanism of the Proposed Reforms

We recommend the following steps in order to reach the goals of the proposed reform:

1. Make it possible for voters to select their preferred candidates on the list of the party they vote for on election-day (hereafter: “election-day primaries”).
2. Make it possible for parties to form extended alliances (hereafter: “inter-party alliances” or “alliance/s”);

These measures should be optional. Parties should be entitled to opt out of holding election-day primaries and to refrain from joining an inter-party alliance.

Election-day Primaries

Before general elections, each party running for the Knesset will announce whether or not it agrees to let voters change the order of candidates on its list. Parties that decide to let voters influence the composition of their list shall do so in accordance with the following rules:

1. Each party shall first submit the names and order of candidates on its list - as it does today - before the elections;
2. The head of the list shall not be subject to the voters’ right to “re-order” the list;

3. Parties shall be entitled to determine that some candidates at the top of their list (in addition to the party’s leader) will not be subject to re-ordering by the voters;
4. The law may limit the number of candidates that will be “immune” from the voters’ power to re-arrange the list, in order to prevent parties from “pretending” to offer their voters election-day primaries.
5. Voters who vote for a party that allows election-day primaries shall be entitled, but not compelled, to change the order of candidates on the list by checking off the names of their preferred candidates.⁶
6. The law may choose to limit the maximum number of candidates that each voter can indicate.
7. There are several ways of striking a balance between the power of parties and the power of voters in determining the order of the candidates.⁷ Regardless of the method, we recommend letting the parties decide whether to let voters influence the order of the lists and to what extent.

Appendix 2 provides an example of a voting ballot for election-day primaries. This ballot is typical of countries that hold open list proportional representation elections.

Inter-party Alliances

Before elections, parties (also referred in this document as “lists of candidates”) shall be entitled to declare their allegiance to an inter-party alliance in accordance with the following rules:

1. The alliance will function as a surplus agreement, meaning that the votes for the parties that fail to pass the electoral threshold will automatically be transferred to the inter-party alliance.
2. A party that belongs to an alliance and passes the electoral threshold will obtain a number of seats in the Knesset, proportional to the number of votes it received. The votes obtained by parties that did not pass the electoral threshold will automatically be transferred to the alliance's largest party instead of going to waste.
3. The head of the alliance's largest party shall be the alliance's candidate for Prime Minister after the elections.
4. If an alliance (or a single party) gets at least 61 seats, then the head of the alliance's largest party shall present his government to the Knesset. In that case, the government does not need a vote of confidence to assume power (but it can be toppled by constructive non-confidence vote of at least 61 MKs).
5. If no alliance (or no party) obtains a majority of 61 seats, the president shall entrust the task of forming a government coalition to the head of the largest party within the alliance that obtained the largest number of seats, provided that the alliance obtained at least 40 seats, and provided that the largest party in the alliance obtained at least 25 seats. In the event that no alliance or party meets these thresholds, the president shall entrust the task of forming a governing coalition to the MK of his choice. If the 61-MK threshold is not met, the government will need a vote of confidence from the Knesset to assume power.
6. If no alliance (or party) obtains a majority of seats in the Knesset, then the time limit for forming a government shall be limited to 21 days (without an extension option).
7. The same rules shall apply to a party that is not part of an alliance. In other words, if a party obtains 61 seats it shall form the government (as described in Article 4 above). If a party obtains 40 seats and if this number of seats happens to be higher than that of any alliance or any other party, the aforesaid party shall form the governing coalition.
8. Other thresholds could be considered. For instance, the number of seats required from the largest party in order for it to form a coalition could be greater or less than 25. One should also take into account the scenario of a minority government that cannot be toppled by a constructive vote of no confidence. This scenario would arise if there were a defection from the ruling coalition that left the government short of the 61-seat majority, but there were not enough votes in the Knesset to approve an alternative ruling coalition.



Part 3: The Means for Achieving the Goals of Electoral Reform

1) Increasing Accountability via Personal Elections

On election day, voters will first select a party, and then they will have the chance to vote for specific candidates within that party. Election-day primaries will enable voters to personally choose their representatives, at least for the parties that allow personal elections. Empirical evidence from countries that use this voting system clearly shows that personal elections significantly improve the accountability and commitment of elected officials towards voters.⁸ (In Appendix 4, we discuss the misconception that single-candidate district elections create accountability and commitment toward voters.)

2) Reducing the Negative Side-Effects of Separate Primary Elections

As explained above, election-day primaries should be flexible and optional. In other words, parties would have the option to retain the way they currently select their candidates. Parties that adopt the election-day primaries model, however, will rid themselves of the phenomenon of massive election lead-up membership registrations, of the undue influence of special interest groups, and of the submissiveness of MKs to party machines. The public is very familiar with these problems and will likely favor parties that adopt the election-day primary system. (The public opinion poll – Appendix 9 – showed strong public support for reforming the way party primaries are conducted.) Voters will

likely prefer to vote for parties that enable them to influence the party list, but keeping this mechanism optional will make the reform proposal more politically feasible.

3) Encouraging the Formation of Large Parties and/or of Electoral Alliances

Encouraging the formation of alliances shall be achieved in multiple ways. First, the proposed reform will encourage smaller parties to join alliances that have a chance of obtaining a majority (or at least a large representation in the Knesset). Secondly, the (25-seat) threshold for the largest list in the winning alliance will encourage voters to support the largest party in the alliance, especially voters who hesitate between large and small parties. Thirdly, the largest party in the alliance will enjoy both electoral privileges (from the votes of the alliance's small parties that do not pass the electoral threshold) and political privileges (only the leader of the alliance's largest party is entitled to form a government). In Appendix 5 we explain the pitfalls of automatically granting the premiership to the head of the largest party without the mechanism of party alliances.

4) Encouraging Parties to Declare before the Elections which Coalition They Will Join after the Elections

Inter-party alliances function not only as a mechanism for the sharing of surplus votes, but also

as pre-determined coalitions. This will streamline the coalition-forming process and make it clear to voters before elections what the core composition of a winning alliance's coalition would be after elections. Once an alliance obtains a majority (61) of Knesset seats (or meets another criterion that may be agreed upon), then its leader automatically becomes Prime Minister. In this scenario, a vote of confidence would be unnecessary to form a government. Even if an alliance were not to meet the requirements for forming a government, there is no doubt that its very existence would increase the allied parties' commitment to one another, something that is not generated by the current system of surplus agreements between two parties.

5) Encouraging Parties' Commitment to the Winning Coalition after the Elections

All the proposed arrangements for the formation of a government, including the advantage granted to the largest alliance (an advantage that would be even more obvious if one requires 61 seats from the largest alliance to form a government) will increase parties' commitment to future coalitions. This being said, allowing for a constructive vote of no confidence will preserve one of the fundamental principles of parliamentary democracy. (See Appendix 1 for an explanation of the concept of "motion of no confidence").

6) Reducing the Risk of Distorted Elections Results

Widening the mechanism of surplus sharing to more than two parties (in order to prevent the wasting of votes for parties that did not pass the election threshold but are nevertheless part of an alliance) will significantly reduce the risk of distorted election results, in which the government represents a minority of voters. This happened in the 1992 elections. This mechanism will also reduce the risk of votes going to waste on parties that do not pass the threshold. In the 2015 elections, for instance, over 5% of the votes were wasted.

7) Reducing the Risk of Excluding Minorities from Parliamentary Representation

The proposed reform does not modify the current proportional and national way of calculating

election results, and it does not pre-determine what the electoral threshold should be. The reform might have the effect of encouraging the vote for small parties. Many voters hesitate to vote for parties that they might otherwise prefer but that are unlikely to pass the electoral threshold, fearing that their votes will go to waste. The proposed reform eliminates this hesitation for small parties that join an alliance, since votes for the small party will in any case benefit the alliance.

This benefit to small parties is counter-balanced by the redistribution of extra votes to the largest party in an alliance and by the political advantages given to this largest party.

8) Determining the Prime Minister's Identity Right after the Elections

The proposed reform will speed up the process of appointing the Prime Minister, whether or not the Prime Minister is appointed "automatically" (i.e. if his party and his alliance meet the abovementioned thresholds). Meeting the threshold will significantly reduce the time required to form a government, since this threshold will in fact determine the identity of the Prime Minister immediately after the elections. If an alliance does not meet the threshold, reducing the amount of time available to form a government will put pressure on small parties to settle on a coalition agreement. (Such was the case in 1977, when Menachem Begin announced that he would not ask for an extension for the formation of his government).

9) Improving Government Stability

Between 1949 and 2015, Israel had 33 governments and 19 Knesset elections. That makes the average lifespan of an Israeli government two years, and that of a legislature three and a half years.

The short average lifespan of Israeli governments, however, is due mainly to technical reasons and not to structural ones (as explained in Appendix 6). Since 1973, only once have Knesset elections been held on their legal date. All other elections have been snap elections (See Appendix 8). The most common reason for early elections is coalition infighting over the budget ahead of an election year.

Coalition partners generally prefer to dissolve the Knesset as an election year approaches, so as not to be perceived as abandoning their constituents during budget negotiations.

The idea of preventing early Knesset elections is worth considering, for example by making self-dissolution impossible. This would improve government stability. Self-dissolution is rare in Western democracies. Until recently, it was practiced only in Austria and in Israel. In the United Kingdom, self-dissolution was introduced in 2011. Some democracies do not allow dissolution and early elections (See Appendix 6).

Because governments sometimes fall subsequent to failed budget negotiations after their third year, the idea of a two-year budget was introduced in 2009 in order to increase the government's lifespan. This is an important issue to address in order to improve government stability, but is a complex topic that needs to be addressed separately from the issue of electoral reform.

As explained before, the very existence of inter-party alliances will contribute to government stability. Even so, it is worth mentioning the alternative method of "bonuses" granted to the largest party, as well as the idea of automatically granting the premiership to the leader of the largest party. These ideas are discussed in Appendix 5.

Summarizing the Balance of Options and Benefits Granted to the Various Stakeholders

The proposed reform strikes a balance between the advantages gained by the different parties and alliances, while improving government stability and making the government a more faithful reflection of the voters' will.

The optional adoption of election-day primaries will enable parties to opt out. Parties that do adopt this model, however, will rid themselves of the phenomenon of massive election lead-up membership registrations, of the influence of interests groups, and of the subservience of MKs to their party's apparatus.

Some parties – such as the Arab and ultra-Orthodox parties or radical fringe parties – may not be

attractive to any alliance. But voters know, for the most part, towards which political blocs these parties tilt, regardless of whether or not they join an alliance.

Parties that are not interested in committing to an alliance before the elections (such as center parties) shall be free to do so and to take advantage of their strategic position after the elections. The proposed reform enables voters to take this element into account on election day. Voters might prefer to vote for parties that announce their coalition commitment before the elections. For other voters, this may not be important.

All the stakeholders in the electoral system have something to gain from this proposal, and all of them have options for how they choose to participate in the proposed reforms. The main beneficiary of these reforms, however, is the voter. Allowing the voter to be involved in the composition of the party lists will enhance the connection between voters and their representatives; and having robust multi-party alliances will make the coalition-forming process smoother and more transparent to the voter. These reforms overall make the voter a more engaged and a more powerful participant in the electoral process.

The results of the public opinion poll presented in Appendix 9 clearly indicate that these reforms would enjoy wide public support.





Appendix

Appendix 1: History of Israel's Voting System and Electoral Reforms

The voting system for Israel's parliament, the Knesset, is one of pure proportional representation (with a 3.25% electoral threshold since 2014) in a single nationwide district and a closed list ballot. Elections in Israel are neither regional nor personal (see Appendix 3 for further explanations).

David Bar-Rav-Hai, the chairman of Israel's election committee, wrote in 1948: "The committee spent little time exploring theoretical alternatives, even while some members support in principle a regional system... almost all members concluded that in these elections and under the current circumstances of war and large-scale mobilization, this theoretical debate is not important. If we want to carry out an election quickly we have no choice but to opt for a national proportionate system. Any other system would demand much more complicated preparations and will be impossible to carry out within a short period of time."

Besides expediency, however, there were also political reasons for the adoption of pure proportional representation without electoral districts. This voting system was the one

used by the Jewish community (the Yishuv, in Hebrew) under British mandatory rule. Proportional representation under British rule enabled a proportional sharing of immigration certificates and other political assets between parties. This electoral system created an incentive to participate in elections (especially for small parties).

Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, wanted to adopt a first-past-the-post (FPTP) system in order to increase the size of his dominant Mapai party and in order to eliminate small parties from the Knesset. He was overruled by Yitzhak Greenbaum and Pinchas Rosen, two political leaders who represented small parties and wanted to preserve proportional representation in order to retain their power. In 1958, Ben-Gurion submitted a bill to the Knesset for the adoption of FPTP, but his proposed reform was rejected by a large majority (73 against, 42 in favor). Even after he resigned in 1963, Ben-Gurion did not abandon the idea of adopting FPTP. In 1964, he tried to establish a single-ticket party dedicated to electoral reform, only to learn that Prime Minister Levy Eshkol had promised the small parties that the electoral system would not be changed. One year later, in 1965, Ben-Gurion established a new party (Rafi) that put electoral reform at the center of its platform.

Adopting FPTP was supported by Ben-Gurion and opposed by small parties for the very same reason: FPTP would have increased the size of Mapai (Ben-Gurion's dominant party) and eliminated most small parties. There were other reform proposals, which would have combined proportional representation with plurality voting. In 1954, for example, the General Zionists submitted a reform proposal for the adoption of a mixed parallel system (See Appendix 3 for a description of "mixed parallel systems"). This proposal, however, did not garner the support of enough MKs.

In 1973, a minor reform was adopted for the allocation of extra votes between parties. Israel's political parties are entitled to sign "surplus vote agreements" before the elections. Such agreements make it possible for one party to benefit from the "wasted" votes of the other. For example, when a party obtains 20 seats in the Knesset (in proportion to the votes the party gathered nationally), those votes almost always include extra ballots that do not suffice to produce another seat (those extra ballots, therefore, go to waste). "Surplus agreements" in effect "donate" those extra votes to the party with which the agreement was signed before the elections. Sometimes, though not always, those extra votes enable the other party to get an extra seat. The 1973 reform changed the allocation formula by replacing the so-called Hare formula with the Hagenbach-Bischoff formula. The practical result of that change was a slight advantage to large parties.

Many bills were submitted over the years to reform Israel's electoral system, but were always vetoed by small parties. Only in 1984 did it seem, for the first time, that electoral reform would have a chance of happening. The results of the 1984 Knesset elections produced a draw: the Labor Party obtained 44 seats and Likud 41, but neither had the support of enough small parties in order to form a coalition. Eventually, it was decided to form a unity government between Labor and Likud, as well as with additional coalition partners.

The deadlock produced by the 1984 elections convinced Labor and Likud to promote electoral reform. A committee was established and drafted a bill that would have introduced partial regional elections. The comfortable 85-seat majority produced by the coalition between Labor and Likud made it possible for the government to survive the defection of the religious parties, which threatened to quit because of the proposed bill on electoral reform. The religious parties also threatened Likud never to support it again in future elections. Concerned that it might still need religious parties to form future coalitions, even after the adoption of electoral reform, Likud got cold feet and decided to drop the bill.

Over the past 25 years the Knesset has passed electoral reforms, but these were either minor or counter-productive (or both). The electoral threshold was raised from 1% to 1.5% in 1992, from 1.5% to 2% in 2003, and from 2% to 3.25% in 2014. The electoral threshold was raised in order to strengthen large parties, to make the formation of governments easier, and to improve government efficiency and stability. Even so, both political theory and empirical evidence show that high electoral thresholds do not ease the formation of governments and do not improve government stability and effectiveness (as further explained in Appendix 7).

In 1992, the electoral law and the Basic Law: The Knesset were amended to allow the election of the Prime Minister directly by voters (instead of being selected by the president and confirmed by a Knesset majority). This reform was adopted following a political machination that brought about the government's downfall in 1990. (This was the only time in Israel's political history that a government was toppled by a vote of no confidence.) However, since the new electoral law still required a vote of confidence for newly formed governments, forming a coalition remained as time-consuming and as problematic as before.

The 1992 reform proved counter-productive. Voters had to cast two separate ballots: one for the Prime Minister, and one for a political party. The result of the reform was the reduction in the size of the two large parties (Labor and Likud), because voters lost their incentive to vote Labor or Likud in order to improve the chances of their favorite candidate becoming Prime Minister (indeed, one small party campaigned in 1996 by telling voters there was no point voting Labor or Likud since doing so would not determine the identity of the future Prime Minister). While the identity of the Prime Minister was no longer subject to the political blackmail of small parties, the directly-elected Prime Minister now had to deal with even more unstable and blackmail-prone coalitions because of the decline in his party (either Likud or Labor) and because of the rise of small and medium-sized ones.

This counter-productive reform was cancelled in 2001. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the Prime Minister is no longer elected directly, the numerical decline of Likud and Labor that resulted from that reform has remained to this day.

While increasing the electoral threshold has reduced the number of parties, and while the size of the two largest parties has shrunk, the “effective number of parties” has remained fairly steady. (See Appendix 7 for an explanation of the concept of “effective number of parties”).

In 2014, the electoral threshold was raised from 2 to 3.25% and the principle of constructive vote of no confidence was introduced. (The opposition can topple the government only if it can form an alternative coalition.) Raising the electoral threshold to 3.25% turned out to be counter-productive. By eliminating micro-parties, the new threshold reduced the coalition options of prospective Prime Ministers while increasing the extortion power of medium-sized parties. (This was confirmed after the 2015 elections: in the absence of small parties, Prime

Minister Netanyahu had to give in to political extortion precisely because he did not have alternative coalition options.)

Typically, electoral reforms proposed by Israeli lawmakers do not take into account empirical evidence and do not fully assess the consequences of such reforms. For example, a bipartisan bill for electoral reform was submitted during the 17th Knesset (2006-2009). The reform would have adopted a mixed electoral system (see Appendix 3 for an explanation of this concept). Legislators would not have submitted this bill had they been aware of the results of a simulation published in 2009. This simulation shows that, had Israel adopted the proposal, Likud would have obtained 87 seats in the 2003 elections (as opposed to the 38 seats it actually obtained) but would not have gained a single seat in the 2006 elections.⁹

Not all reforms, however, are ill-conceived and counter-productive. The principle of constructive non-confidence, adopted in 2014, was inspired by the German constitution and requires the opposition to submit an alternative government with a credible majority before trying to topple the government. In other words, gathering a majority of 61 for a vote of no confidence does not suffice to topple the government. Rather, the opposition must come up with an alternative coalition that would immediately replace the current one. (The constructive vote of no confidence mechanism was also adopted by Spain and Hungary.)

Appendix 2: Example of Voting Ballot for Election-day Primaries

This election ballot will require electronic counting. Electronic counting, however, raises concerns of technical failure and even of fraud. Voting is fully electronic in only five countries (Bhutan, Brazil, India, the Philippines and Venezuela). The technical question of how to count these ballots will have to be addressed, and much can be learned from Holland in this regard.,

Vote for candidate						Voter for a party list		
Mark an X to the right of the candidate of your (You may mark up to ___ candidates)						You must mark an X in the column to the right of the party you support (You may mark only one list)		
91		61		31		Name of list	Letter symbolizing list	
92		62		32	2			
93		63		33	3	Labor	אמת	
94		64		34	4	NRP	ב	
95		65		35	5	United Torah Judaism	ג	
96		66		36	6	Balad	ד	
97		67		37	7	Hadash	ו	
98		68		38	8	Rage and Social Justice	ז	
99		69		39	9	Moreshet Avot	ח	
100		70		40	10	Ahavat Yisrael	ט	
101		71		41	11	Men's Rights	י	
102		72		42	12	Shinui	יא	
103		73		43	13	Israel B'Aliya	בן	
104		74		44	14	National Union	ל	
105		75		45	15	Am Ehad	ם	
106		76		46	16	Likud	מחל	
107		77		47	17	Meretz the Democratic Choice	מרצ	
108		78		48	18	Israel Aheret	נ	
109		79		49	19	Herut	נץ	
110		80		50	20	UAR United Arab List	עם	
111		81		51	21	Leader	פ	
112		82		52	22	The Center Headed by David Magen	פה	
113		83		53	23	Tsomet	צ	
114		84		54	24	HaBrit HaLeumit	צף	
115		85		55	25	Democratic Action Organization	ק	
116		86		56	26	Citizen and State	קך	
117		87		57	27	Green Leaf	קנ	
118		88		58	28	Lehava	קץ	
119		89		59	29	Green Party	רק	
120		90		60	30	Shas Sefaradim Shomrei Torah	שס	

Appendix 3: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems

In parliamentary elections, there are different ways of distributing seats among parties and candidates.¹⁰ There are three typical questions that need to be asked in order to define an electoral system: a. Are elections proportional? b. Are elections regional? c. Are elections personal?

Proportional elections are elections that distribute the number of seats in parliament proportionally to the amount of votes obtained by each party. A country does not need to be divided into districts in order to hold proportional elections, although proportional elections can be held in electoral districts. However, proportional elections held within districts do not translate votes into seats as accurately as proportional elections held without districts. In fact, the higher the number of electoral districts the greater the distortion between election results and the distribution of seats. Countries that have proportional elections often set an electoral threshold in order to bar tiny and clownish parties from parliament.

Regional elections are elections that are held in regional districts, with a certain number of seats allocated to each district. Some countries combine two ways of distributing parliamentary seats, with some seats determined by district elections and others by national elections. Most countries are divided into electoral districts. Israel is a rare case of a country that does not have electoral districts.

Designing electoral districts is itself a thorny (and political) issue. Designing electoral districts so as to influence or predetermine election results is known in political science as gerrymandering. The term points to a real problem. Electoral districts can always be designed to influence results and can always be accused of being designed in order to favor

certain candidates or parties. (Today, there are even computer programs that were written to “gerrymander” districts.) In US elections, each state has two senators regardless of its size. In the House of Representatives, on the other hand, states are granted a number of representatives that reflect the size of the state’s population, and each representative is elected in a single-member electoral district, whose boundaries are subject to this kind of manipulation.

By personal elections we mean the right of voters to personally select the candidates they prefer, without affecting the results of the party of their choice. In FPTP elections, voters do not actually select the candidate they vote for, since this candidate is selected by his party. Moreover, since most voters want their party to win the national election, they have no other choice but to vote for their party in their district, even if they dislike the candidate they are voting for (as explained in Appendix 4, only a small minority of voters in FPTP elections actually cross party lines to reward or penalize candidates). FPTP elections, therefore, are hardly personal.

In order to better understand the differences between different types of elections, below is a list and explanation of the existing voting systems around the world:

- 1. Party-list proportional representation system:** Parties submit a list of candidates (either nationally or for district elections) and the number of seats the parties obtain in parliament is similar (proportional) to the number of votes they received. List proportional representation can be open or closed. In open-list proportional representation, the voter can select candidates he wishes to promote upwards on the list submitted by the party. In closed-list proportional representation, voters cannot change the order of the list submitted by the party.

- 2. First past the post (FPTP)/plurality system:** The country is divided-up into single member constituencies, and in each constituency the candidate who obtains the highest number of votes (though not necessarily a majority of them) is elected to parliament.
- 3. Mixed systems:** Some parliament members are elected via list proportional representation, and some are elected via FPTP. Some mixed systems have a compensation mechanism to mitigate the distortion produced by FPTP. When such compensation mechanism exists, the voting system is called mixed member systems. When the system does not have this mechanism, the voting system is called parallel systems.
- 4. Other systems:** There are other voting systems. In some systems, candidates need to obtain a majority of the votes in their constituency in order to be declared the winner. In France, such majority is guaranteed thanks to a two-round system (only the two candidates that obtained the largest and second-largest number of votes respectively in the first round can run for the second round). In Australia, a majority of votes is obtained via alternative vote. In addition, some countries have multi-member constituencies, either with single transferable vote (such as in Ireland and in Malta) or with single non-transferable vote (as was the case in the past in Japan).

Comparing the Use of Different Voting Systems

The table below shows which voting systems are dominant among democracies, as well as among countries that hold elections but are not fully democratic. For the sake of defining democracies we used the definition of the

Political Data Yearbook of the European Journal of Political Research.

The figures, which relate only to the lower house for countries that have a bicameral parliament, are based on the Political Data Yearbook and on the websites www.aceproject.org and www.idea.int.

Types of voting systems in the world

Voting system	All countries	Democracies
Proportional representation	35% (85)	65% (24)
FPTP	25% (62)	8% (3)
Mixed	16% (40)	16% (6)
Other	24% (58)	11% (4)
Total	100% (245)	100% (37)

FPTP is the voting system of major democracies such as the US, the United Kingdom and Canada, as well as India (a country not included in the Political Data Yearbook). However, out of 37 democracies, 24 (65%) use proportional representation. Most of those 24 democracies (17) use open-list proportional representation, and only a minority of 7 (including Israel) use closed-list proportional representation.

Germany, Hungary, New Zealand and Romania have mixed member systems. Japan and Lithuania have parallel systems.

France has a two-round system, Australia an alternative vote system, Ireland and Malta a single transferable-vote system.

By maintaining proportional representation, Israel would actually be in line with most democracies. We do recommend, however, introducing open-list proportional representation in Israel while letting parties decide whether or not they wish to offer this option to their voters.

Appendix 4: Regional Elections

Historically, the world's first democracies used regional elections – mainly for technical reasons. In the nineteenth century, before mass communication, voters could not be familiar with candidates who did not live in their area or even their neighborhood. Moreover, the need to physically count the votes in large countries (such as the US) made it necessary to use districts in order to shorten the time it took to gather all the voting ballots.

French political scientist Maurice Duverger claimed back in the early 1950s that FPTP elections (which take place in electoral districts) tend to produce two-party political systems (a theory known as Duverger's law).¹¹ There are exceptions, however, to Duverger's law. In Britain, the Conservative and Labor parties are indeed the two dominant parties, but they share the House of Commons with the Liberal party, as well as a dozen small parties (such as UKIP and the Green Party, which each have one seat). Moreover, the two-party (or nearly two-party) system produced by FPTP does not

guarantee a majority to the winning party. In 1974, for example, British elections produced a hung parliament (i.e. no party obtained enough seats to form a government), and in 2010 the Conservative party was short of seats to form a government. (The Conservatives formed a coalition with the Liberals, something that was not possible in 1974.)

In other words, the fact that FPTP elections significantly reduce the number of parties is not a guarantee that this type of election will produce clear-cut majorities.

Conventional wisdom holds that proportional representation generates political instability. Empirical evidence suggests otherwise. In an academic article published in 2005 in the *International Political Science Review*, Abraham Diskin, Hanna Diskin and Reuven Hazan show that democracies that hold proportional elections (and therefore have a multi-party system) tend to be more stable than democracies that have other voting systems. The research covered 32 stable democracies and 30 democracies that collapsed in the 20th century (see the two tables below)

Relationship between stability and proportional elections

Type of country	Number of Countries	Proportional Elections	Non Proportional Elections	Total
Stable Democracies	32	66%	34%	100%
Democracies that Collapsed	30	47%	53%	100%

Relationship between stability and the number of parties

Type of country	Number of Countries	Proportional Elections	Non Proportional Elections	Total
Stable Democracies	32	66%	34%	100%
Democracies that Collapsed	30	57%	43%	100%

Many countries hold regional elections based on the first-past-the-post model. The country is divided into districts equal in number to the number of seats in parliament. In some of those countries, the candidate who obtains the highest number of votes gets elected even if he did not obtain a majority of the votes. In general, elected candidates represent large and established parties.

This voting system does not apply the principle of proportionality. If, for example, in all districts the candidates of party A obtain 34% of the vote, while the candidates of party B and party C each obtain 33% of the vote, only party A will be represented in parliament. This is admittedly a far-fetched scenario, but FPTP voting creates a strong distortion between the choice of voters and the composition of parliament.

FPTP voting is practiced in Britain (650 seats in the House of Commons) and in former British colonies such as Canada (308 parliament seats), the US (435 seats in the House of Representatives) and India (543 seats).

Ostensibly, regional/district elections hold legislators accountable to their constituents and not only to their party. Empirical evidence, however, indicates that most voters choose their district representatives based on party affiliation rather than on personality or record. Statistically, the same parties generally win in the same districts in successive elections regardless of their candidates – which is why in certain districts in the US, one or other of the Democratic or Republican parties sometimes do not even bother presenting a candidate. This phenomenon was described in detail back in 1960 in the book *The American Voter* (co-authored by Angus Campbell, Philip Converse, Warren Miller, and Donald Stokes). *The American Voter* shows that over 90% of American voters vote according to their party affiliation. This statistical consistency contradicts the claim that, in district elections, candidates are elected based on their personal record, merits, or

personality. They are, in fact, elected because of their party affiliation.

Germany provides the perfect case study to confirm that most voters do not cross party lines to reward or penalize their district representative. Half of Germany's lower house (the Bundestag) is elected in district elections, and the other half is elected in proportional elections (people cast two votes: one for a candidate of their choice in their district, and one for the party of their choice). This double voting constitutes the perfect incentive to cross party lines, since voters can choose a district candidate whose politics they do not share (but whose policy record they like and want to reward), while still voting for the party with which they are affiliated. Since 1949, however, only 10% of German voters have crossed party lines in district elections.

Polls conducted in countries that have FPTP elections show that many voters remember for which party they voted but not the name of their district representative. This confirms that voters in FPTP elections vote more according to party affiliation than based on an evaluation of the candidates.

District/FPTP elections, therefore, create an illusion regarding the accountability of elected officials toward their voters. Statistical and empirical evidence shows that fewer than 10% of voters in district/FPTP elections actually reward or penalize their representatives based on their performance or lack thereof.

In Israel, designing electoral districts would constitute a major challenge. Many of Israel's population groups are concentrated geographically (such as ultra-orthodox Jews in the cities of Bnei Brak and Jerusalem; Arabs in the Galilee; Bedouins in the Negev desert; national-religious Jews in Judea and Samaria). Any potential electoral district plan would likely be accused of gerrymandering and be challenged in court.

However, for the sake of extrapolating the outcome of district/FPTP elections in Israel, a simulation based on fictitious districts was conducted in 2009. The simulation used data from the 2003 and 2006 elections, a specially designed software program, and the combined input of leading mathematicians, geographers, and political scientists (the study was co-authored by Abraham Diskin, Yitzhak Benenson, Nir Atmor and Vlad Herbesh). According to this simulation, the parties that

would have benefited from district/FPTP elections in 2003 were Likud, Labor, United Torah Judaism and the Arab parties. For the 2006 elections, the parties that would have benefited from district/FPTP elections were Kadima, Labor, United Torah Judaism and Israel Beiteinu. Likud, which would have benefited dramatically in 2003, would have suffered dramatically in 2006. Arab parties would have been unaffected. The tables below show the results of this simulation.

FPTP Simulation for Israel's 2003 Elections

Party	Actual Number of Seats	Number of Seats with FPTP
Likud	38	78
Labor	19	22
United Torah Judaism	5	7
Three Arab Parties	8	10
Other Parties	50	3
Total	120	120

FPTP Simulation for Israel's 2006 Elections

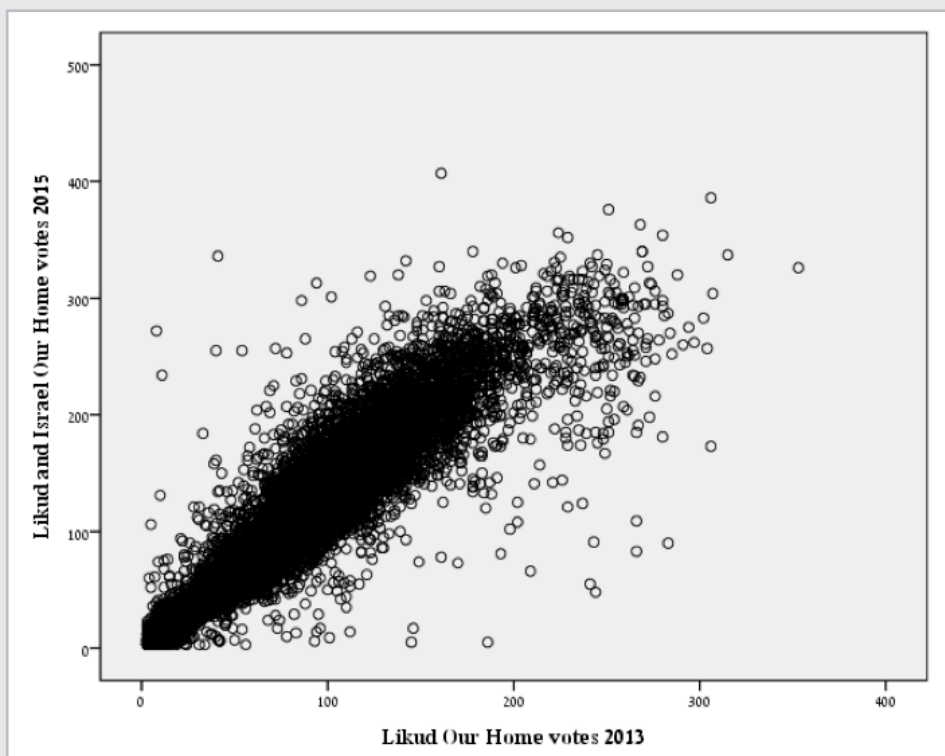
Party	Actual Number of Seats	Number of Seats with FPTP
Kadima	29	41
Labor	16	20
Likud	12	2
Israel Beiteinu	11	26
United Torah Judaism	6	8
Three Arab Parties	10	10
Other Parties	36	13
Total	120	120

Many of the countries that use proportional representation combine list representation with FPTP, or hold list proportional representation elections within districts. When list proportional representation elections are held in electoral districts, those districts have a certain number of elected representatives (in the FPTP voting system, by contrast, there is only one elected representative per district). The proportionality principle is better served by a high number of representatives (FPTP elections tend to distort the relationship between the popular vote and the distribution of parliament seats). Yet even when list proportional representation elections

are held in districts, elections cannot be considered personal without the option of open list proportional representation (see Appendix 3).

There are different ways of evaluating the consistency of party affiliation and voting patterns. The diagram below shows the results of 9,500 ballot boxes for the joint Likud/Israel Beitenu list in 2013 and for the separate Likud and Israel Beitenu lists in 2015. Each dot represents a ballot box. The fact that there is a dense “cloud” around the diagonal axis proves that there was a strong consistency in voting patterns in both elections.

Likud and Israel Beitenu Results for 2013 and 2015 Elections



This comparative analysis of the 2013 and 2015 election results clearly shows that there is a strong party affiliation and fidelity in Israel. This is corroborated by other comparative analyses conducted by Abraham Diskin and Reuven Hazan to be published in an upcoming issue of *Electoral Studies*.¹²

In Israel, moreover, voting patterns are influenced more by income and social status than by geographical location. After the 2015 elections, the results of 7,491 ballot boxes were reviewed and analyzed by Abraham Diskin

based on a 1 to 10 scale measuring income and social status (with 1 representing the lowest level of income and 10 the highest). The table below displays the extra number of votes obtained by the joint Labor-Hatnuah list (also known as “Zionist Union”) in the 2015 elections, compared with the number of votes obtained by the Labor party in 2013.

Those results provide clear evidence that voting patterns in Israel are influenced more by income and social status than by geographical location.

Breakdown of additional votes obtained by Labor in 2015, according to income

Category (level of income/social status)	Average number of extra votes obtained by Labor in 2015	Number of polling stations for each category	Standard deviation
1	2.3	155	8.6
2	3.0	498	14.9
3	4.4	595	21.8
4	12.1	1101	19.7
5	18.3	1961	24.0
6	23.1	582	25.6
7	40.5	1594	35.9
8	73.1	883	41.3
9	106.7	101	50.4
10	109.0	21	46.0
Total	27.9	7491	37.0

Precisely because political affiliations dominate voting patterns both in Israel and in other democracies, personal accountability between voters and elected officials can be created within parties. This can be achieved via “preferential voting,” i.e. a system whereby voters select the candidates of their choice on the list of the party they decide to vote for.

Appendix 5: Mechanisms for Appointing a Government

The idea of automatically appointing the head of the largest party as Prime Minister was first suggested by Abraham Diskin during a conference organized by the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) back in 1989.¹³ Panelists were debating the best way of strengthening the largest party (or the largest parties). One of the suggestions was to adopt the principle of “bonus” or “reinforced proportionality” (see below for further explanations). Another idea was to increase the electoral threshold (something that is actually likely to decrease the power of the largest party, as explained in Appendix 7).

The underlying logic of automatically granting the premiership to the head of the largest party was that doing so would encourage voters to vote for a large party. By giving voters an incentive to vote for a large party, the size of the two largest parties would increase and governments would be more stable. Thus ostensibly, the idea makes sense. But as Diskin himself realized after pondering his own idea in depth, such reform might actually make governments less stable.

Imagine a parliament composed of 100 seats, in which party A has 33 seats, party B has 33 seats, and party C has 34 seats. Let's assume that there are ideological and social similarities between party A and party B. Parties A and B are willing to form a coalition together, but a huge ideological gap separates them from party C. The head of party C is now Prime Minister by law, but he can't form a coalition, or can only form a dysfunctional one.

One of the fundamental principles of parliamentary democracy is that governments must be supported by a majority in parliament. The principle of parliamentary majority cannot be bypassed. However, automatically granting

the premiership to the head of the largest party might do just that, because there is no guarantee that the largest party will be able to form a coalition after the elections. There must be a reason why no parliamentary democracy, to the best of our knowledge, has made it legally binding for the head of the largest party to form a government. The largest party is generally the one forming a coalition anyway, but making that mandatory might just create problems that need not be created.¹⁴

Israel's 2009 elections confirmed how counterproductive such a reform could be. The Kadima party (led by Tzipi Livni) obtained 28 seats, while the Likud party (led by Benjamin Netanyahu) obtained 27 seats. Yet Benjamin Netanyahu had the support of more MKs to form a government than Livni did.

We are aware of the fact that a similar situation might emerge despite the reforms proposed by this paper. For this reason, in order to limit the risks of inextricable situations, we set certain thresholds that must be met by alliances and/or by parties. We also recommend shortening the time period for forming a governing coalition in case the alliance (or the party) fails to gather an absolute majority in parliament. Our proposal encourages the formation of blocs/alliances, but also forces parties to form a coalition within a relatively short period of time. We also recommend keeping the principle of constructive non-confidence vote, while making a confidence vote mandatory only when an electoral alliance (formed before the elections) fails to gather a majority in the Knesset.

There have been suggestions that the head of the largest party should be the one forming a government regardless of the size of his party, and without needing a confidence vote. We completely reject this idea, which we consider both undemocratic and impractical.

It makes more sense to ensure a majority to the biggest party by giving a “bonus” to the largest

alliance of parties, even though this idea can also reasonably be charged of being undemocratic, since the very idea of “bonus” distorts the will of voters. It should come as no surprise that the idea of electoral bonus was first suggested in the 1920s in Italy by Mussolini’s supporters. The idea of electoral bonuses (also known as reinforced proportionality) was first suggested in Italy by Baron Giacomo Acerbo in 1923. He proposed that any party winning at least 25% of the vote be granted two-thirds of the seats in parliament. His intention was to guarantee the political future of Mussolini’s fascist party. (In the 1924 elections, the fascist party won two thirds of the votes without Acerbo’s proposed law.)

The alliance-of-parties model is similar to the reform that was adopted in Italy in 2005. The Italian reform of 2005 also included the granting of extra seats to the winning alliance. This reform did stabilize the chronically instable Italian political system - by granting a 54% majority of seats to the largest alliance of parties. The downside of this model is that it may, in certain cases, artificially grant a majority to a party or an alliance that did not even obtain a quarter of the votes. But at least Italy no longer suffers from its post-war political instability. (Italy had 61 governments between 1946 and 1994, which means that the average lifespan of a government was of nine months.)

In 2015, Italy implemented an additional reform by adopting “reinforced proportionality” (Greece and South Korea have also adopted this system). In Italy, reinforced proportionality automatically grants 54% of the seats to the largest party (as opposed to the largest alliance, which had been the case since 2005). There is still no guarantee that such an artificial majority will provide stability because of the infighting within the “inflated” party. In any event, reinforced proportionality distorts the popular vote and is inconsistent with the basic principle of representative democracy.

Appendix 6: Duration of Israeli Governments

Between 1949 and 2015 (a period of 66 years), Israel had 33 governments, which means that the average lifespan of an Israeli government is two years. On the face of it, Israel suffers from significant government instability. Yet a closer look at the true causes of this short lifespan reveals that it is not structural (not caused by a structural sensitivity to parliamentary blackmail). Rather, in most cases, governments have fallen due to technical reasons and unexpected events (as explained below).

In parliamentary systems, political stability is measured not only by the lifespan of governments but also by the frequency of elections. Between 1949 and 2015 there were 19 legislatures, making the average lifespan of the Knesset three-and-a-half years (by law, Knesset elections are to be held every four years). Only on five occasions did the Knesset last its full four years (the legislatures of 1955, 1959, 1965, 1969 and 1988). In one instance (in 1973), elections were postponed for two months because of the Yom Kippur War.

Early elections in Israel generally take place when a Prime Minister is not in control of his own party. Three legislatures were significantly shorter than the average (the first, fourth, and 19th Knessets). Coalition infighting generally causes early elections during the third or fourth year of the legislature. Indeed, early elections have occurred 11 times (in 1951, 1961, 1977, 1981, 1984, 1992, 1996, 2006, 2009, 2013 and 2015).

Early elections, however, are not unusual in parliamentary democracies. In Britain, the House of Commons was often dissolved (by the Queen, upon the Prime Minister's request) until the practice was abolished in 2011. (The Prime Minister can no longer call an early election before the House's five year term, but the House can now dissolve itself). Some parliamentary

democracies (such as Sweden and Norway) do not have early elections and their legislatures last their full term (four years in both countries). Self-dissolution is rare in parliamentary democracies: it only exists in Israel, in Austria, and now (since 2011) in Britain. There is no doubt that repealing self-dissolution while leaving the prerogative to the Prime Minister would increase discipline within the Prime Minister's party and within the government.

Only once (in 1990) was an Israeli government toppled by a vote of no confidence (and even then, the toppled Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir, was able to form a new government). On five occasions, the government fell because the Prime Minister decided to resign in order to impose his will (in 1950, 1952, 1955, 1958 and 1964). On four occasions, the government fell because the Prime Minister resigned due to personal reasons (in 1954, 1963, 1974 and 1983). On two occasions, the government fell due to the Prime Minister's death (Levi Eshkol died of a heart attack in 1969, and Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated in 1995). Once (in 1986), one Prime Minister was replaced by another because of a rotation agreement signed in 1984; and once (in 2001), a government was replaced after a Prime Minister called for an early election for the premiership (at the time, the Prime Minister was elected in direct elections).

The table below summarizes the causes of the early downfall of Israel's governments since 1949.

Israeli governments, 1949-2015

Knesset #	Government #	Prime Minister	Date of government's swearing-in	Parties in coalition	Immediate cause of government's downfall	Underlying cause of government's downfall
1	1	David Ben-Gurion	8.3.49	Mapai/ Religious Front/ Progressives/ Mizrahi parties / Minorities	PM's resignation	Powerful PM
	2	David Ben-Gurion	30.10.50	Mapai/ Religious Front/ Progressives/ Mizrahi parties/ Minorities	PM's resignation and early elections	Early elections
2	3	David Ben-Gurion	7.10.51	Mapai/ Hapoel Hamizrahi/ Hamizrahi/ Agudat Israel/ Poalei Agudat Israel/ Minorities	PM's resignation	Powerful PM
	4	David Ben-Gurion	23.12.52	Mapai/ General Zionists/ Hapoel Hamizrahi/ Hamizrahi/ Progressives/ Minorities	PM's resignation	Personal reasons
	5	Moshe Sharet	26.1.54	Mapai/ General Zionists/ Hapoel Hamizrahi/ Hamizrahi/ Progressives/ Minorities	PM's resignation	Powerful PM

Knesset #	Government #	Prime Minister	Date of government's swearing-in	Parties in coalition	Immediate cause of government's downfall	Underlying cause of government's downfall
	6	Moshe Sharet	29.6.55	Mapai/ Hapoel Hamizrahi/ Hamizrahi/ Progressives/ Minorities	Elections	Elections according to calendar
3	7	David Ben-Gurion	3.11.55	Mapai/ NRP/ Ahdut Haavoda/ Mapam/ Progressives/ Minorities	PM's resignation	Powerful PM
	8	David Ben-Gurion	7.1.58	Mapai/ NRP/ Ahdut Haavoda/ Mapam/ Progressives/ Minorities	Elections	Elections according to calendar
4	9	David Ben-Gurion	16.12.59	Mapai/ NRP/ Ahdut Haavoda/ Mapam/ Progressives/ Minorities	PM's resignation and early elections	Early elections
5	10	David Ben-Gurion	2.11.61	Mapai/ NRP/ Ahdut Haavoda/ Poalei Agudat Israel/ Minorities	PM's resignation	Personal reasons
	11	Levi Eshkol	24.6.63	Mapai/ NRP/ Ahdut Haavoda/ Poalei Agudat Israel/ Minorities	PM's resignation	Powerful PM

Knesset #	Government #	Prime Minister	Date of government's swearing-in	Parties in coalition	Immediate cause of government's downfall	Underlying cause of government's downfall
	12	Levi Eshkol	22.12.64	Mapai/ NRP/ Ahdut Haavoda/ Poalei Agudat Israel/ Minorities	Elections	Elections according to calendar
6	13	Levi Eshkol	12.1.66	Alignment/ NRP/Mapam/ Independent Liberals/ Poalei Agudat Israel/ Minorities	Death of PM	Death of PM
	14	Golda Meir	17.3.69	Labor/ Mapam/ Gahal/NRP/ Independent Liberals/ Poalei Agudat Israel/ Minorities	Elections	Elections according to calendar
7	15	Golda Meir	15.12.69	Alignment/ NRP/ Independent Liberals/ Minorities	Late elections	War
8	16	Golda Meir	10.3.74	Alignment/ NRP/ Independent Liberals/ Minorities	PM's resignation	Personal reasons
	17	Yitzhak Rabin	3.6.74	Alignment/ Independent Liberals/ Ratz/ Minorities	PM's resignation and early elections	Personal reasons

Knesset #	Government #	Prime Minister	Date of government's swearing-in	Parties in coalition	Immediate cause of government's downfall	Underlying cause of government's downfall
9	18	Menachem Begin	20.6.77	Likud/NRP/Agudat Israel/Dash	Early elections	Early elections
10	19	Menachem Begin	5.8.81	Likud/NRP/Agudat Israel/Tami	PM's resignation	Personal reasons
	20	Yitzhak Shamir	10.10.83	Likud/NRP/Agudat Israel/Tami/Tehia	Early elections	Early elections
11	21	Shimon Peres	13.9.84	Labor/Likud/NRP/Yahad/Shas/Morasha/Agudat Israel/Shinui/Ometz	PM's resignation	Rotation agreement
	22	Yitzhak Shamir	21.10.86	Labor/Likud/NRP/Yahad/Shas/Morasha/Agudat Israel	Elections	Elections according to calendar
12	23	Yitzhak Shamir	22.12.88	Likud/Labor/Shas/NRP/Agudat Israel	Non-confidence vote	Non-confidence vote
	24	Yitzhak Shamir	11.6.90	Likud/NRP/Shas/Tehia/Tzomet/Moledet/Zionist Idea/Agudat Israel	Early elections	Early elections
13	25	Yitzhak Rabin	12.7.92	Labor/Meretz/Shas	PM's death	Assassination
	26	Shimon Peres	22.11.95	Labor/Meretz/Yeud	Early elections	Early elections

Knesset #	Government #	Prime Minister	Date of government's swearing-in	Parties in coalition	Immediate cause of government's downfall	Underlying cause of government's downfall
14	27	Benjamin Netanyahu	17.6.96	Likud/Gesher/ Tz omet/Shas/ NRP/ Israel B'Aliya/ The Third Way	Early elections	Early elections
15	28	Ehud Barak	6.7.99	One Israel/ Meretz/ Israel B'Aliya/ Center Party/ Shas/ NRP/ United Torah Judaism	PM's resignation and early elections for PM	PM's resignation and early elections for PM
	29	Ariel Sharon	7.3.01	Likud/Labor/ Shas/ Israel B'Aliya/ Israel Beitenu	Early elections	Early elections
16	30	Ehud Olmert	28.2.03	Likud/Labor/ Shinui/NRP/ Israel Beitenu/ National Union	Early elections	Early elections
17	31	Benjamin Netanyahu	4.5.06	Kadima/ Labor/ Shas/ Retirees	Early elections	Early elections
18	32	Benjamin Netanyahu	31.3.09	Likud/Labor/ Israel Beitenu/ Shas/Jewish Home/ United Torah Judaism	Early elections	Early elections
19	33	Benjamin Netanyahu	18.3.13	Likud Beitenu/ Yesh Atid/ Jewish Home/ Hatnuah	Early elections	Early elections
20	34	Benjamin Netanyahu	14.5.15	Likud/Kulanu/ Jewish Home/ Shas/ United Torah Judaism	Early elections	Early elections

Appendix 7: Correlation of the Number of Parties and Political Stability

In 1989, the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) hosted a conference dedicated to electoral reform in Israel. The high number of small political parties in Israel's Knesset was considered by many as a problem that must be addressed. The widespread idea that small parties contribute to political instability is not substantiated, however. In fact, the proliferation of small parties sometimes contributes to political stability.

Political stability must be understood not only as the stability of government but also of democracies themselves. In the 20th century, many democracies collapsed and were replaced by authoritarian regimes. As argued by political scientist Arend Lijphart, the British-style two-party democracy is hardly suited to heterogeneous and divided societies.¹⁵ In heterogeneous societies (such as Israel's), democracy is likely to be more stable when based on the consensual politics produced by multi-party parliaments and coalition governments.

Lijphart's claim is confirmed by empirical research. As explained in Appendix 4, Abraham Diskin and Reuven Hazan reviewed 32 stable democracies and 30 democracies that collapsed in the 20th century in their article "Why Democracies Collapse" (*International Political Science Review*, 2005).¹⁶ Statistically, democracies with proportional elections and a large number of parties are more stable than democracies with non-proportional elections and a small number of parties (see the tables in Appendix 4).

Proportional elections are elections in which the popular vote is translated proportionally and accurately in parliament. There are different ways of measuring the accuracy of proportionality, but the criterion used for the above research is the one developed by Abraham Diskin and Moshe Koppel in their article "Measuring Disproportionality, Volatility and Malapportionment: Axiomatization and Solutions" (*Social Choice and Welfare*, 2009).¹⁷

Of course, Anglo-Saxon democracies with their two-party system are stable, and France ceased to be unstable after de Gaulle replaced the multi-party system of the Fourth Republic with the semi-presidential system (and two-round plurality voting for parliament) of the Fifth Republic. Even so, statistically, the stability of democracies is better served by proportional elections and multi-party parliaments.

One useful concept for understanding the relative fragmentation of an electorate is the "effective number of parties." In an article published in 1979 in *Comparative Political Studies*, political scientists Rein Taagepera and Markku Laakso proposed a formula to calculate this figure.¹⁸ An example using two parliaments, each composed of four parties can be used to demonstrate this formula. In the first parliament, each party controls exactly a quarter of the seats. In the second parliament, one party controls 97% of the seats, and each of the other three parties controls 1% of the seats respectively. Everyone understands intuitively that the first parliament is de facto a four-party parliament, while the second parliament is de facto a one-party parliament. The effective-number-of-parties formula reflects this intuitive understanding and quantifies it using a mathematical formula. For the first parliament, the effective number of parties would be calculated thus: $1/[4 \times (0.252)] = 4$. For the second parliament, the effective number of parties would be calculated thus: $1/[0.972 + 3 \times (0.012)] = 1.0625$.

Applying this formula to Israel's Knesset produces interesting results. According to the regular counting of parties, there were 12 parties in the first Knesset and 10 parties in the 20th Knesset. But the Taagepera/Laakso formula shows that the effective number of parties was 5 in the first and second Knessets, while in the last four legislatures the effective number of parties was 7. This increase is due to the decline of the two large parties. For the sake of comparison, the effective number of parties is between 4 and 8 in many European countries (such as Austria, Iceland, Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Norway, and Sweden).

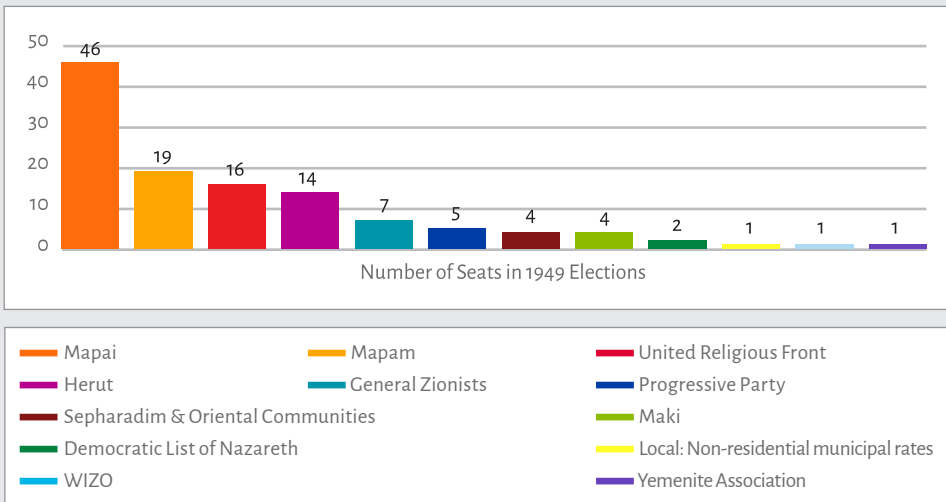
The "extortion power" of small parties is related to the voting power of other parties represented in parliament. Imagine, for example, a parliament composed of 100 seats, in which party A has 49 seats, party B 41 has seats, and party C has 10 seats. In that case, the voting power of each party is identical, because any combination of two parties can form a coalition regardless of the parties' respective sizes. If parties A and B are not willing to collaborate because of policy differences, but each of them is willing to collaborate with party C, then the smallest party will in effect have the strongest voting power. Obviously, in this example, party A (which has half of the parliament's seats minus one) would rather deal with a large number of small parties than with a small number of large parties (such as 29 parties each controlling two seats and one party controlling three seats). That is because it would have many more options for forming alternative coalitions. Therefore, party A's voting power would be higher. For this reason a high electoral threshold generally makes the job of the leader of the largest party harder by reducing the coalition options.

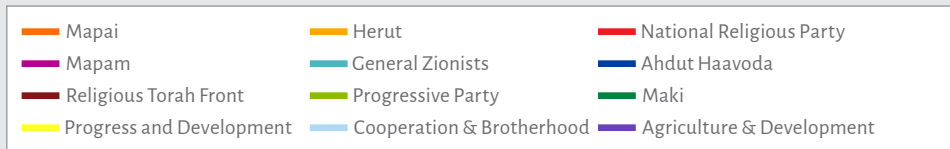
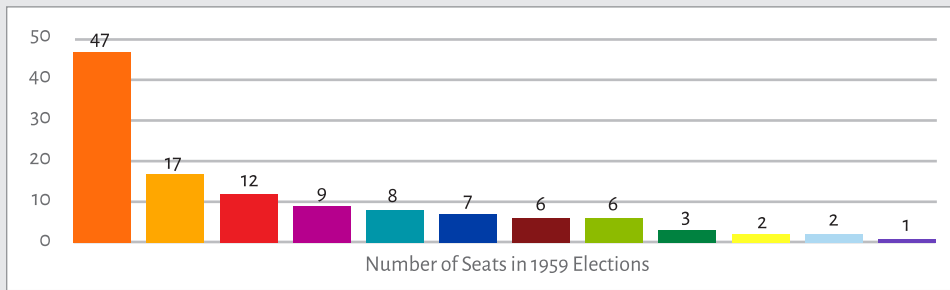
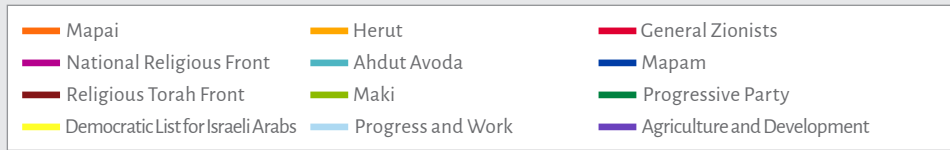
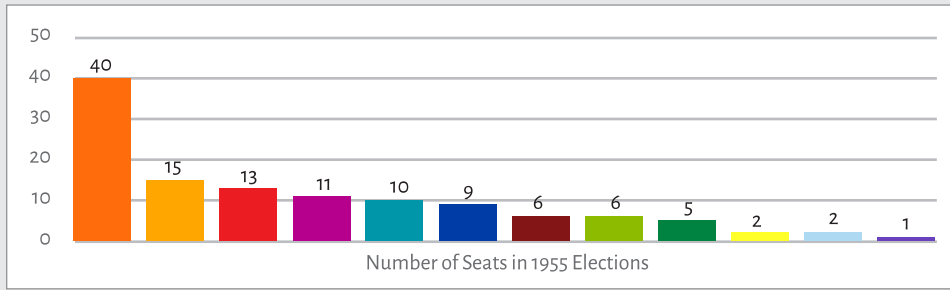
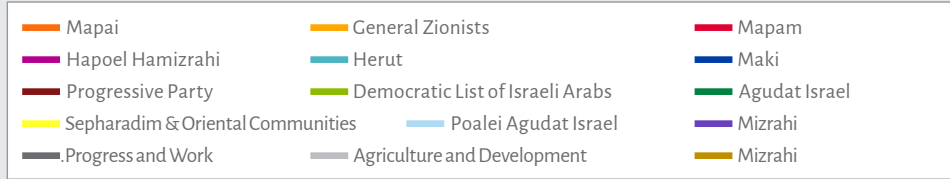
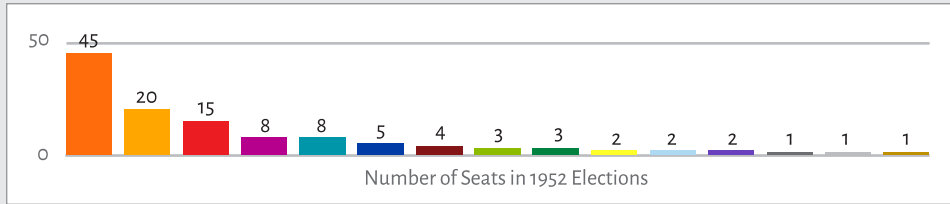
The counter-productive effect of high electoral thresholds was confirmed by Germany's 2013 federal elections. There is a 5% electoral threshold for the Bundestag elections. Because of the relatively high threshold, the Liberal Party (which obtained 4.8% of the vote) did not make it into the Bundestag in 2013 (for the first time since 1949). The ruling party of Chancellor Angela Merkel, the CDU/CSU, was therefore left without its natural coalition partner and had to form an unnatural coalition with the Social Democratic party.

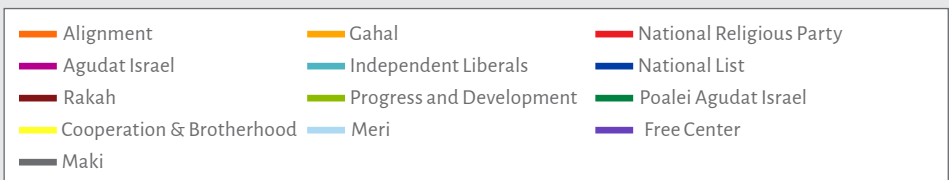
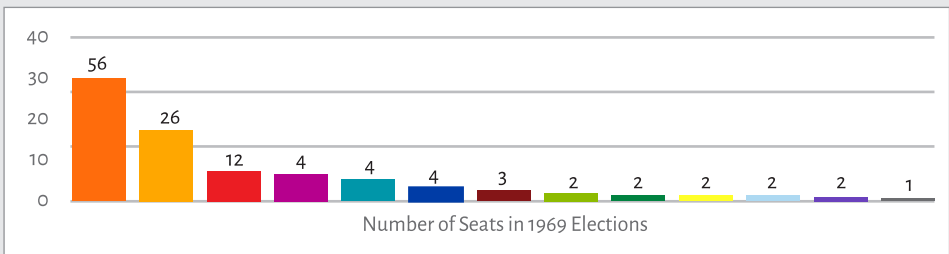
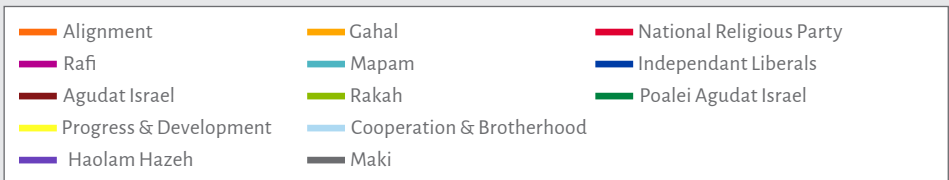
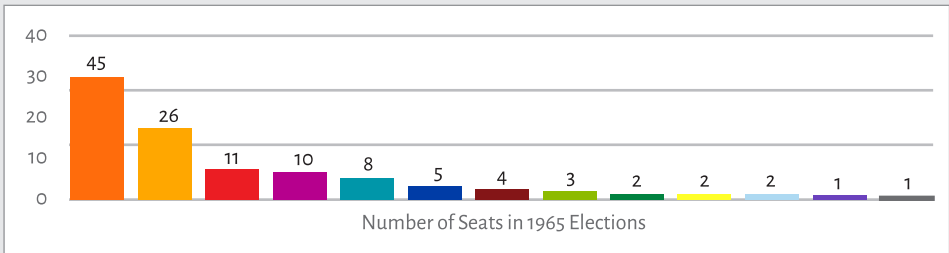
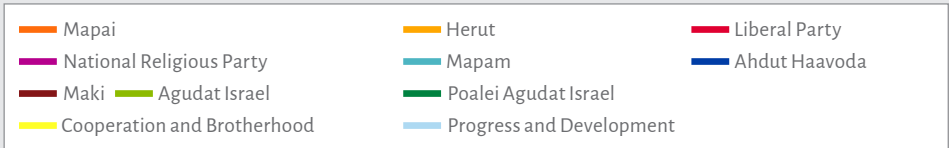
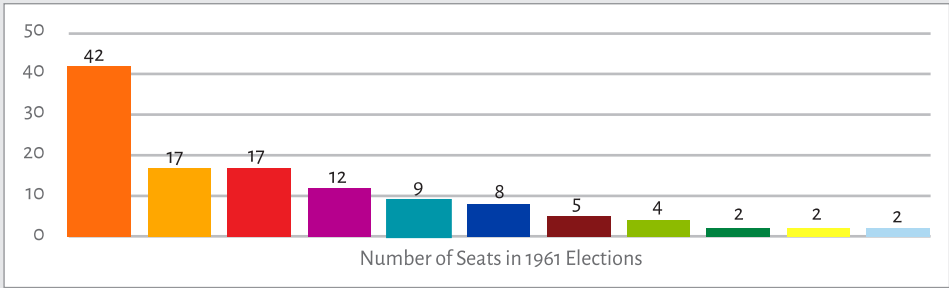
Appendix 8: Results of Knesset Elections, 1949-2015

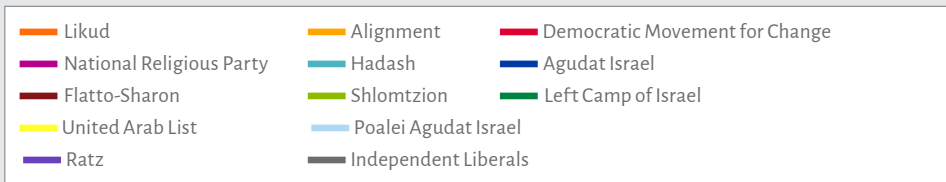
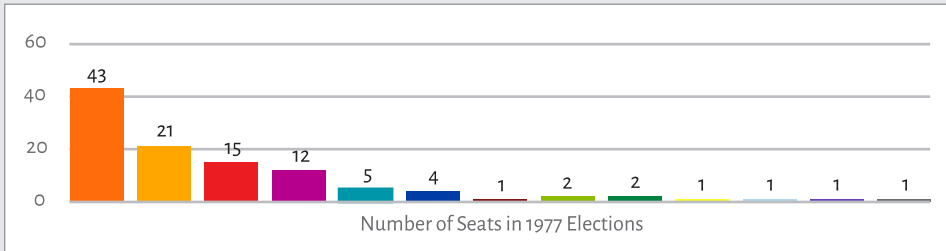
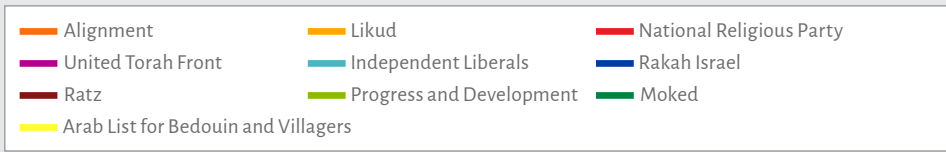
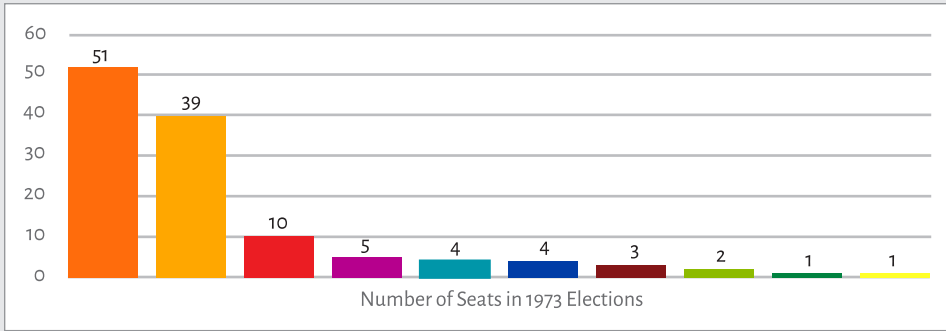
Knesset elections results since 1949 highlight significant changes in Israel's political landscape. From 1949 to 1973, the Labor Party (known during that period as Mapai and later as Alignment) was dominant and unchallenged, and it enjoyed many coalition options thanks to a large number of small parties. After the 1977 elections (dubbed “the upheaval elections”), Labor lost its pivotal position and did not join the Likud-led government. From 1981 to 1992, Labor and Likud were consistently the two largest parties, and the size gap between them

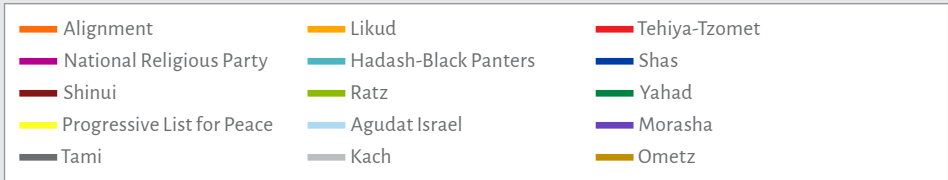
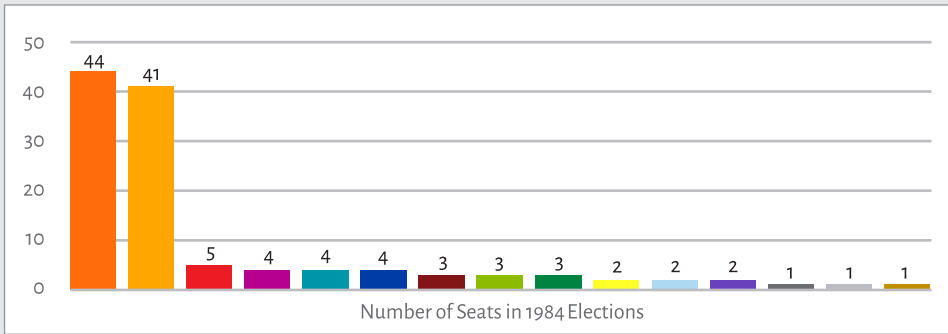
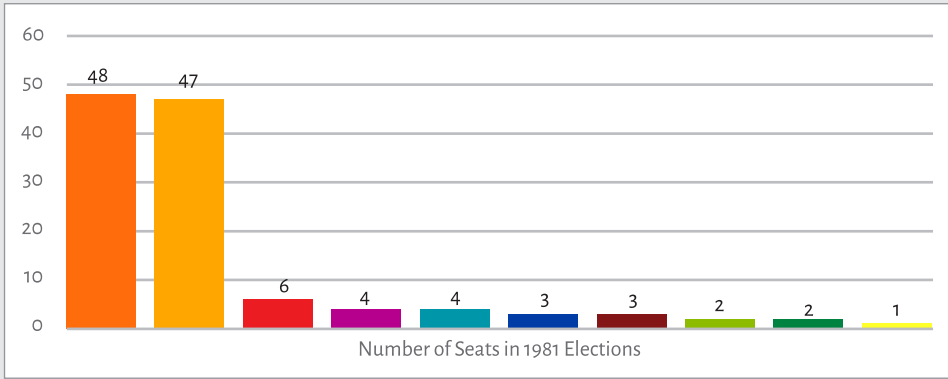
and the small parties was significant. The size of both Labor and Likud was reduced with the 1996 and 1999 elections (which were held together with the direct election of the Prime Minister). The 2006 and 2009 elections produced an upheaval in Israel's political map because of the ephemeral phenomenon of the Kadima party. In Israel's last two elections (2013 and 2015) the gap between the two dominant parties (Labor and Likud) and the other parties was significantly reduced, especially when compared to the large gap that characterized elections in the 1980s. Moreover, the new electoral threshold eliminated micro-parties, reducing the number of parties in the Knesset.

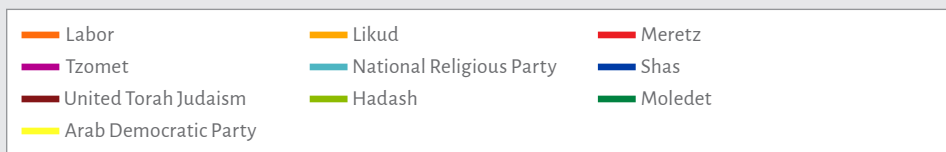
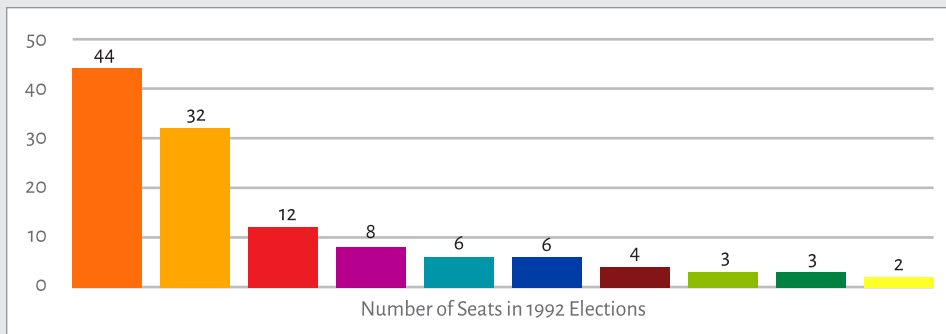
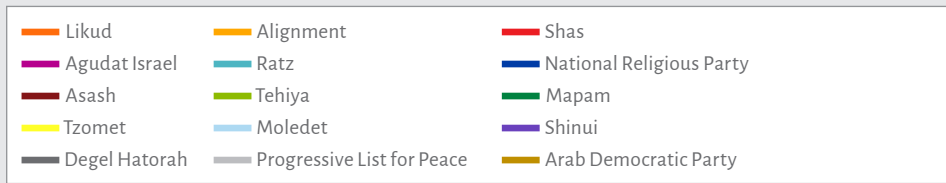
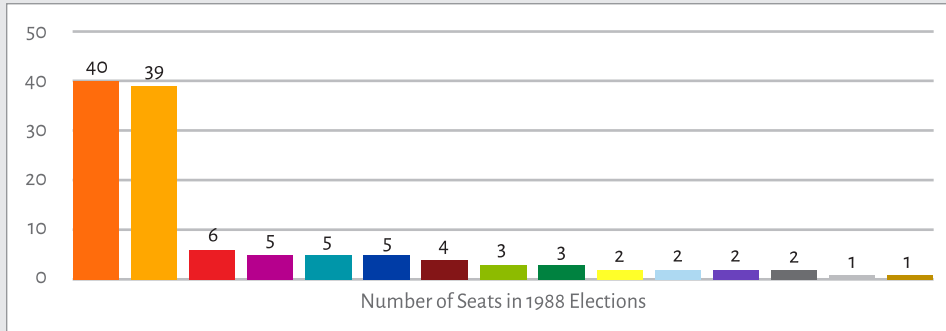


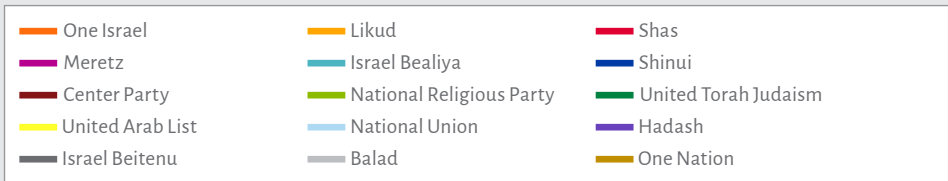
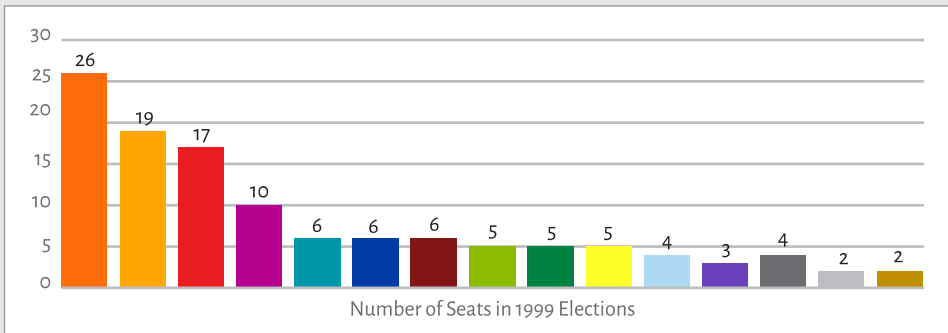
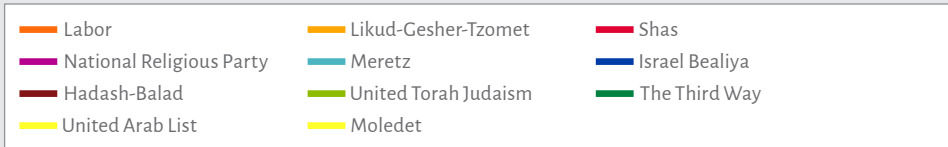
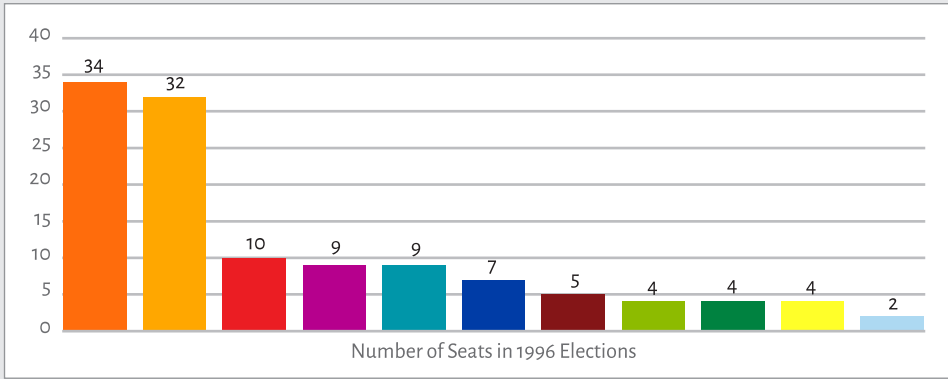


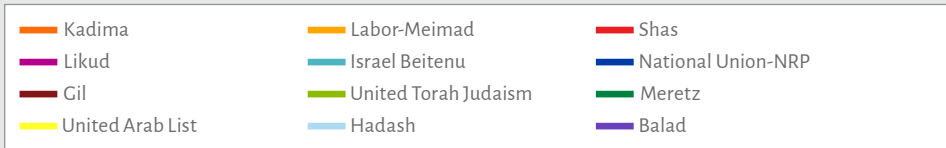
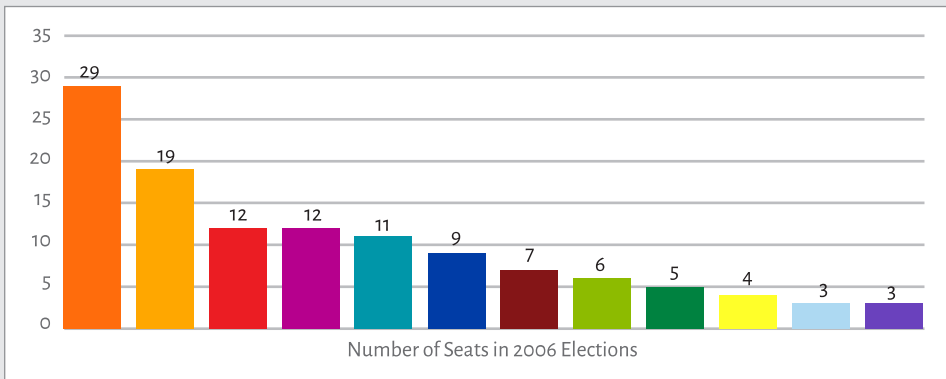
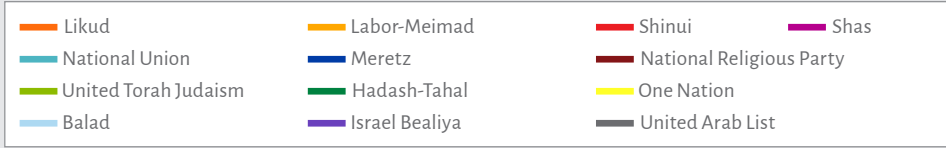
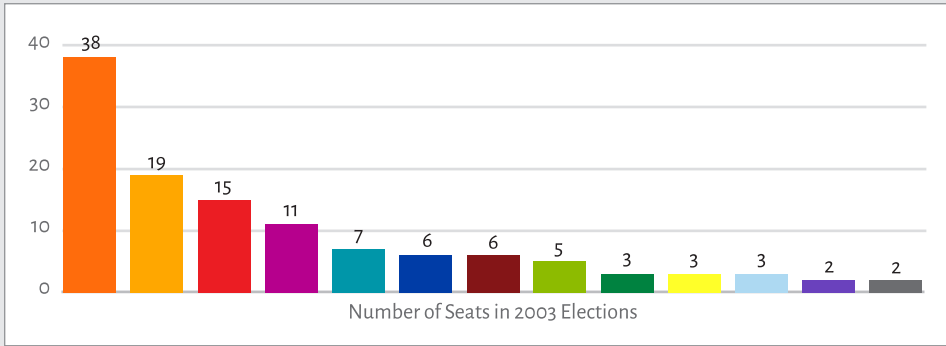


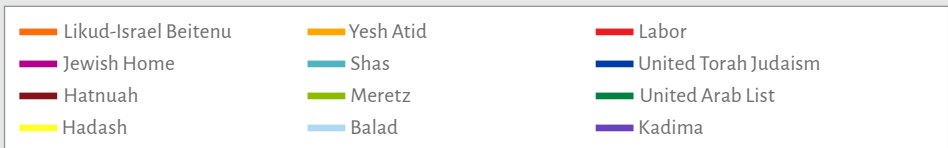
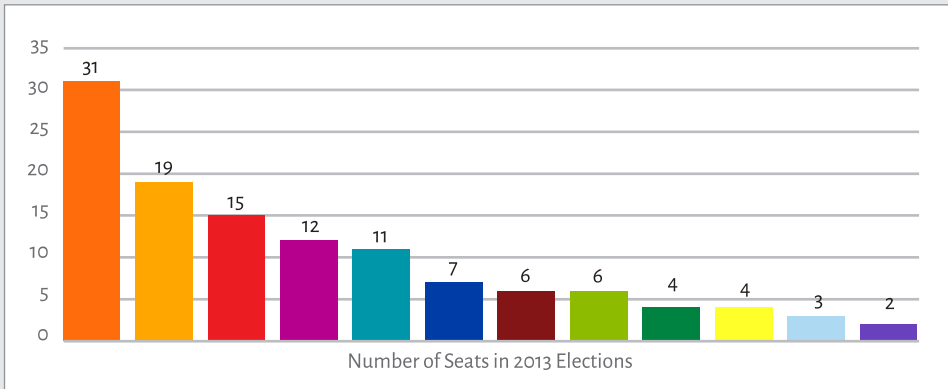
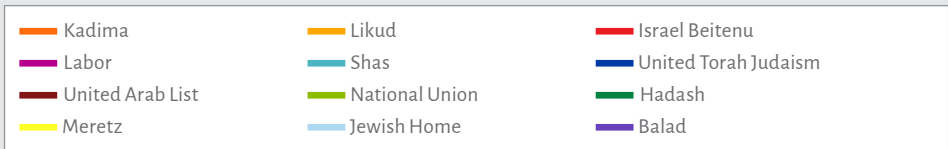
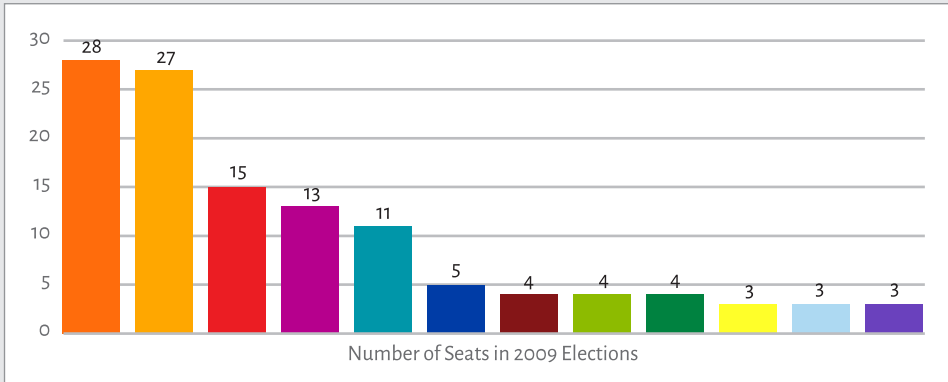


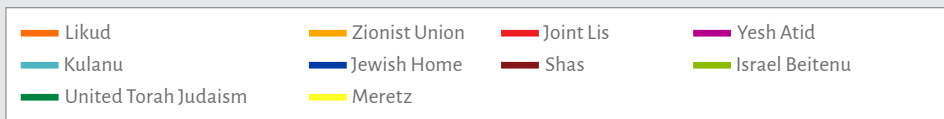
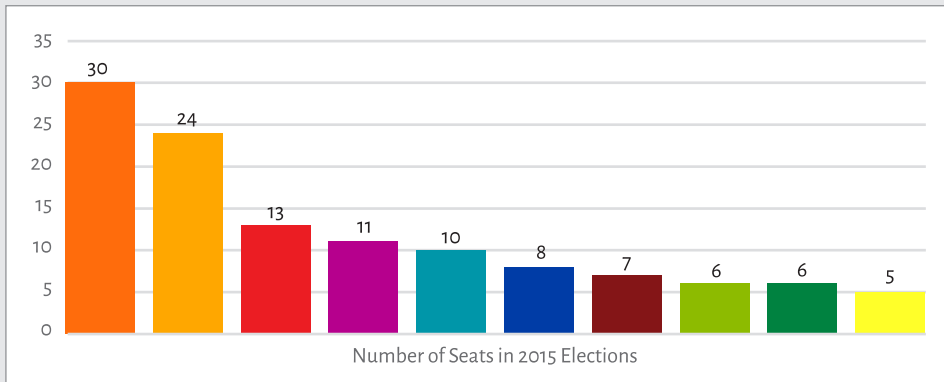












Appendix 9: Opinion Poll on the Proposed Reforms

We conducted an opinion poll among 666 respondents who are representative of Israeli society. The poll was conducted during the second week of August 2015 by renowned Israeli pollsters Dr. Mina Tzemah and Mano Geva of the Midgam Institute. Respondents were asked to what extent they agree with the following statements:

- It is necessary to increase the strength of large parties.
- It is necessary to limit the extortion power of small parties during coalition negotiations.
- Each party should announce before elections if it intends to join a left-leaning or a right-leaning coalition.
- In many countries, voters can select the candidates they prefer on the list of the party they vote for on election day. Election ballots include not only the name of the party but also the list of its candidates, and voters can check the candidates they want to promote upward on the list. Do you think

that Israel should adopt a similar voting system?

- The National Electoral Commission should oversee the primary elections of parties in order to prevent corruption.
- Negotiations between parties for the formation of a coalition should be limited to three weeks (starting from the publication of election results).

The poll results clearly indicate widespread support for all the above statements (all of which are based on the reforms proposed by this paper). This support is consistent among nearly all social categories: men and women, veteran Israelis and new immigrants; secular, religious and ultra-Orthodox; Jews and Arabs; rich and poor; young people and senior citizens; right and left.

The tables below include only the answers of people with an opinion (i.e. people whose answer was one of the following: “strongly agree,” “strongly disagree,” “agree,” “disagree”). The tables do not include respondents who declined to answer or who said they don’t have an opinion.

It is necessary to increase the strength of large parties					
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	# of respondents
24.8%	38.0%	27.6%	9.7%	100%	569

It is necessary to limit the extortion power of small parties during coalition negotiations					
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	# of respondents
25.0%	36.2%	26.7%	12.1%	100%	577

Each party should announce before elections if it intends to join a left or right coalition

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	# of respondents
34.7%	39.9%	19.0%	6.3%	100%	599

In many countries, voters can select the candidates they prefer on list of the party they vote for on election-day. Election ballots include not only the name of the party but also the list of its candidates, and voters can check the candidates they want to promote upward on the list. Do you think that Israel should adopt a similar voting system?

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	# of respondents
29.7%	45.3%	17.2%	7.8%	100%	563

The national electoral commission should oversee the primary elections of parties in order to prevent corruption

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	# of respondents
45.8%	43.0%	7.5%	3.8%	100%	612

Negotiations between parties for the formation of a coalition should be limited to three weeks (starting from the publication of election results)

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	# of respondents
34.3%	43.2%	17.2%	5.4%	100%	577

The highest support is for the supervision of primary elections (89%) and for the right of voters to select the candidates of their choice on election day (85%). Most people also support reducing the period of coalition negotiations (77.5%) and having parties declare before elections which coalition they intend to join (75%). There is also a majority that supports the idea of strengthening large parties (63%) and of limiting the extortion power of small ones (61%).





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ENDNOTES

- 1 While giving the possibility to reduce the problems involved by the current way of selecting candidates for the Knesset.
- 2 For the sake of increasing the accountability of MKs to their voters.
- 3 Whether as a union of parties or as a common list.
- 4 In a way that shall reflect, as much as possible, Kenneth Arrow's requirement of a positive link between the will of voters and the result of the elections (See: Kenneth J. Arrow, *Social Choice and Individual Values*, Wiley, 1964).
- 5 i.e., for a stable and functioning government, as defined, inter alia, by L. Dodd in his book *Coalitions in Parliamentary Government* (Princeton, 1976).
- 6 Below are the most common arguments against inter-party competition prior to parliamentary elections, such as election day primaries: a. They affect the cohesion of the party; b. They give an advantage to famous people; c. They are expansive and therefore are corruption-prone. The proposed reform does not ignore those claims, but aims at reducing the disadvantages of the current selection process.
- 7 As is the case for example in Australia, which has an "alternative vote" system, or in countries such as Ireland and Malta, which have a "single transferable vote" system.
- 8 Such as in the system of "approval voting" suggested by Brams & Fishburn (Steven J. Brams and Peter C. Fishburn, "Approval Voting," *American Political Science Review* 72 (3), pp. 831-847).
- 9 Nir Atmor, Yitzhak Benson, Abraham Diskin, Vlad Herbesh, *Regional Elections in Israel* (Van Leer Institute, 2009).
- 10 For an up-to-date comparative review of voting systems, see: www.aceproject.org and www.idea.int.
- 11 Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State* (Wiley, 1963).
- 12 See: Reuven Hazan and Abraham Diskin, "Plus ça change et plus c'est la même chose: The 2015 Israeli Elections" *Electoral Studies* 40 (2015), pp. 411-418.
- 13 Arend Lijphart and Abraham Diskin, "Electoral Reform in Israel: The Basic Options" (Working Paper of the IDI Conference, March 1989).
- 14 An alternative deserving mention is the one introduced by Article 45 of the Constitution of the Fourth French Republic (1946). This article required a vote of confidence for the Prime Minister himself but not for his government. This article was meant to put an end to the political instability that characterized the Third Republic. In spite of this article, Paul Ramadier asked for a confidence vote for his entire government and not only for himself in 1947. He set a precedent that made the governments of the Fourth Republic as unstable (indeed, more unstable) than the governments of the Third Republic.
- 15 Arend Lijphart, *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries* (Yale University Press, 1984).
- 16 Abraham Diskin, Hanah Diskin, and Reuven Hazan, "Why Democracies Collapse: The Reasons for Democratic Failure and Success" *International Political Science Review* 25/3 (2005), pp. 291-309.

- 17 Moshe Koppel and Abraham Diskin, "Measuring Disproportionality, Volatility and Malapportionment: Axiomatization and Solutions" *Social Choice and Welfare* 33 (2009).
- 18 Markku Lassko and Rein Taagepera, "Effective Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to Western Europe" *Comparative Political Studies* 12/3 (1979).





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ISBN 978-965-7674-35-2



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