



Alternative Ways to Democracy: The Example of Israel

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ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO DEMOCRACY: THE EXAMPLE OF ISRAEL

EACH generation seems to work out its own definition of democracy. Since the totalitarian states have imitated many of the more external signs of democracy such as elections and party systems, an effort has been made to establish a definition which will clearly distinguish totalitarian from democratic régimes. There is a strong tendency to call a state democratic if the governmental power can be transferred from one party to another in a regularized way; that is, peacefully and in accordance with the rules of the constitution.¹ The party in office must not use its power to block the return of the other party or parties. Any attempt to do so is a violation of the rules of the game and is in itself an argument for a change of administration. In short, it is to the system and not to a leader or a party that the supreme loyalty of the voters is directed.

The frequent alternation of parties, it is further argued, keeps the government in harmony with the shifting distribution of power in society. Social changes quickly have their influence on the political situation and on the policies that are pursued. The equilibrium of the political system is maintained.²

It is obvious that this understanding of democracy draws heavily on Anglo-Saxon experience with a two-party system and the rule of law. But is the Anglo-Saxon form the only possible form of democracy? A priori this would hardly seem likely. It is the purpose of this article to describe what may be regarded as an alternative form, and to try to explain some of the political, economic and social conditions in which it appears and is maintained.

We shall use the government of Israel as our example of a politi-

¹ For some relevant discussions, see Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York, 1950); S. M. Lipset, M. A. Trow and J. S. Coleman, *Union Democracy* (Glencoe, 1956); Carl J. Friedrich, *Constitutional Government and Democracy* (Boston, 1950); H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York, 1946), pp. 225-26, 242; S. N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Political Sociology* (Tel Aviv, 1955), pp. 28-30 (in Hebrew).

² See Talcott Parsons, "Voting and the Equilibrium of the American Political System", in Eugene Burdick and Arthur Brodbeck, eds., *Continuities of Social Research*, Vol. III: *American Voting Behavior* (Glencoe, 1959).

cal system which is democratic and yet different from the Anglo-Saxon model. Among the basic features of the Israeli government are a multiple party system and coalition ministries in which one center party (Mapai) is always present and always stronger than the other parties. To leave this party out of the ministry is simply not a part of the accepted procedures of the system. The party is one of the political institutions of the country and is identified with the state in the minds of many voters. In fact, too, because of its long term of office it has permeated the governmental, administrative, economic and other institutions of Israel. Yet that country is democratic, for shifts in public opinion and in the distribution of social power lead to changes in governmental policy and the vital harmony between state and society is maintained.

Having analyzed the Israeli system in the main body of our paper, we shall devote some concluding paragraphs to a comparative note. Its purpose is to stimulate analysis of some other political systems that are also democratic but different from the Anglo-Saxon model of democracy.

I. *Mapai: A Case of an Institutionalized Party*

A. *Mapai—a Dominant Center Party*

An analysis of Mapai (Labor party) is the key to an understanding of the Israeli political system. Mapai gained more votes in all three elections to the *Knesset* (parliament) than any other party. Actually it obtained more seats than the next three parties combined. (See Table 1.)

Mapai has been the major party in all eight Israeli governments during the ten-year period following the establishment of the state of Israel. Usually it has held nine out of sixteen portfolios in the various coalitions, always including the key ones of prime minister, defense, foreign affairs, police, treasury, and education, leaving to other parties the post office, welfare, justice, agriculture, interior³ and other secondary ministries. Thus Mapai has been the dominating political force in the Israeli government.⁴

³ The Interior Ministry has limited political significance in Israel because it has no control over the police force (which is under the control of a separate ministry), because its budget—like the budget of all ministries—is under scrutiny of the Treasury, and because the local municipalities have a strong tradition of political independence.

⁴ B. Akzin, "The Role of Parties in Israeli Democracy", *Journal of Politics*, vol. XVII, 1955.

TABLE 1

SEATS GAINED BY PARTIES AT THE THREE *Knesset* ELECTIONS

	1949	%	1951	%	1955	%
Mapai	46	38.3	45	37.5	40	33.3
Herut	14	11.7	8	6.7	15	12.5
General Zionists	7	5.8	20	16.7	13	10.8
Ahdut HaAvoda	19	15.8	15	12.4	10	8.3
Mapam				9	7.5	
Hapoel Hamizrahi	16	13.3	8	6.7	11	9.2
Mizrahi			2	1.7		
Agudat Israel			3	2.5		
Poalei Agudat Israel			2	1.7	6	5.0
Communists	4	3.3	5	4.2	6	5.0
Mapai Arab parties	2	1.7	5	4.2	5	4.2
Progressives	5	4.2	4	3.3	5	4.2
Sephardim	4	3.3	2	1.7	..	..
Yemenites	1	0.8	1	0.8	..	..
Minor parties	2	1.7	..	..	..	..
	120	99.9	120	100.1	120	100.0

Mapai's control over the political life of the country goes far beyond a strong control of the government. Israel differs from other societies by having three major national political organizations, each with a "government" of its own. In addition to the regular government the Jewish Agency and the General Federation of Labor (*Histadrut*) have important political functions. The former is the major agency which recruits financial aid for Israel from Jews in the Diaspora and organizes migration to, and settlement in, Israel. The scope of its activities is well illustrated by the size of its budget, which was 211.5 million Israeli *lirot* (about 122 million dollars) for 1958-59, compared with the budget of the Israeli government, which amounted to 969 million Israeli *lirot* in 1957-58.

The political significance of the Jewish Agency will be clarified by examinations of the political significance of immigration. According to Israeli law new immigrants become citizens upon arrival in the country and immediately obtain the right to vote. Since the Israeli political parties have cognate parties in the Jewish communities abroad, regulation of immigration has direct political consequences.

The Jewish Agency is governed by a coalition of all the major Israeli parties except the Communists. As in the government of the state of Israel, Mapai has more representatives on the Executive

Board of the Jewish Agency than any other party.⁵ More than that, its members hold important positions, as for instance chairman of the board in Jerusalem, heads of the departments of settlement, of absorption of new immigrants, of education and youth.

The third national political organization of extraordinary importance is the General Federation of Labor. Its special position in Israeli society has often been discussed.⁶ The *Histadrut* is governed by an Executive Board elected by a national convention. The elections are organized according to the proportional system and representation is by political parties. The Board is a coalition government in which all the major *Histadrut* parties except the Communist participate. Mapai has an absolute majority in the *Histadrut* (see Table 2). In 1957, eight out of thirteen members

TABLE 2
POLITICAL COMPOSITION OF *Histadrut* CONVENTIONS, V-VIII, 1942-1955

	V April 1942	VI Jan. 1945		VII May 1949	VIII Feb. 1955
	%	%		%	%
Mapai	69.3	53.7	Mapai	57.06	57.54
Hashomer Hatzair	19.2	20.7	Ahdut	34.40	14.61
Left Poale Zion	5.8		HaAvoda		
Unity of Labor Party	..	17.7	Mapam			12.54
Haoved Hatzioni	..	3.0	Progr.	3.8	5.25
Aliya Hadasha	..	3.0			
Revisionists	..	0.2			
Religious Workers	..	1.0	Rel. Wkrs.	2.0	1.96
Yemenites	..	0.5			
Unattached	..	0.2			
General Zionists Worker	3.5	..	Gen'l. Zionists	..	3.01
Proletarian Group	2.2	..	Communists*	2.6	4.09
Total	100.0	100.0		99.86	99.80
Valid Votes	81,198	106,420		130,670	410,435

* Varying composition between 1949-55.

⁵ The Zionist Congress elects two branches of the executive board, one seated in Jerusalem and one in New York. The Jerusalem branch is believed to have more political significance. Mapai had five out of eleven members, including the chairman, on the board elected by the 23rd Zionist Congress in August 1951. In New York, Mapai had two members out of eight.

⁶ See Margaret L. Plunkett, "The *Histadrut*: The General Federation of Jewish Labor in Israel", *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 155-182.

TABLE 3
CONSTITUTION OF THE FOUR ASSEMBLIES OF THE ELECTED

	I 4-19-1920		II 12-6-1925		III 1-15-1931		IV 8-1-1944 ^a	
	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%
Abdut HaAvoda	70	22.3	54	24.4	31	43.7	63	52.9
Hapoel Harzair	41	13.1	30	13.6	1	1.4	..	..
Communists	..	..	6	2.7	2	2.8	21	17.6
Yemenites	12	3.8	20	9.0	3	4.2	..	..
Other Oriental Lists	60 ^b	19.1	20	9.0	..	..	..	..
Religious Parties	64	20.4	19	8.6	5	7.0	17 ^c	14.3
Revisionists	..	..	15	6.8	15	21.1	..	..
Var. Middle Class Lists	67 ^b	21.3	44 ^b	19.9	14	19.7	..	..
League for Women Rights	..	..	13	5.9	..	..	18	15.1
							Aliyah	
							Hadasha	
Registered Voters	314	100.0	221	99.9	71	99.9	119	99.9
Valid Votes	28,755		64,714		89,656		303,000	
Valid Votes, per cent of Reg.	22,257		36,737		50,436		202,448	
	77.0		56.7		56.2		67.0	

^a Includes: Sephardim, 54; Bucharim, 5; Gurgim, 1.

^b 10 lists in 1920, 13 in 1925, 3 in 1931.

^c Sephardim votes included 6 Middle Class, 5 Revisionists, 4 Mapai.

^d Sephardim, General Zionists and Revisionists boycotted the elections.

^e Only Hapoel Hamizrahi participated.

of the Executive Board of this organization belonged to Mapai. Thus Mapai is not just the major partner in the government of the state; it is also the strongest political force in the Jewish Agency and the ruling party in the *Histadrut*.

Mapai domination in the political realm antedates the establishment of the Israeli state. The Jewish community in Palestine had a semiautonomous political status under the British mandate. A political organization was established in 1920 and later was formally recognized by the British government. While the organization officially had only education and welfare functions, attempts were made by the Jewish community, in its struggle for full political independence, to increase the functions and the significance of this organization. Its semiofficial parliament was called Assembly of the Elected⁷ and the "government" elected by it was named The National Committee.⁸ (See Table 3.)

Mapai originated in 1930 from a merger of two smaller parties. Since then it has become a major political party in the *Histadrut* (see Table 2) and an important political factor in the Zionist Congress. Mapai showed its power for the first time in the 1931 elections to the Assembly in which it obtained 43.7 per cent of the vote and gained control of the National Committee. From this election till the day a premiership was created in the first Israeli government, a Mapai member was the head of the National Committee. Thus it can be said that Mapai has been in office twenty-eight years and has never been replaced.

B. *Mapai—an Institutionalized Party*

Does this mean that Mapai cannot be replaced? There are countries in which one party remained in office for similar periods (Democrats in the United States for twenty years; Liberals in Canada for twenty-two years, in one province—Manitoba—for forty-three years) and was ousted by legitimate procedures. Can Mapai be ousted in a similar way? While there is no unqualified answer to this question, a number of factors make such a change quite unlikely in the near future, short of a major economic crisis or an international rupture.

The multi-party system and the coalition structure of the government are important factors. We suggest that if parties elicit strong ideological commitments and the center party is relatively large, no stable government can be formed without the center party. Mapai is such a center party, with a "hard core" of more than 30 per cent

⁷ *Asefat HaNivharim*.

⁸ *HaVaad HaLeumi*.

of the votes. Thus Israel had a "Right" coalition—Mapai with General Zionists and other parties (December 23, 1952-January 26, 1954)—a "Left" coalition—Mapai with Ahdut HaAvoda, Mapam and other parties (November 3, 1955)—and a center coalition—Mapai with the Progressive party and some religious parties (March 10, 1949-November 1, 1950), but never a government without Mapai. *There seems to be no basis for a coalition without Mapai.* The only way to create a government without Mapai which would have the confidence of the absolute majority of the *Knesset* is by a coalition which would include parties of the Left or of the Right. In a country like Israel where ideological commitments to parties play an important rôle, such a coalition is not a realistic alternative.

The fact that parties other than Mapai have no realistic chance to become coalition leaders and must choose between permanent opposition and more or less minor coalition partnerships creates in them "irresponsible" tendencies. The term "irresponsible political behavior" is usually applied to extreme parties which have no or little chance of coming into office and therefore make promises to the voters and claims upon the government that they would not be able to fulfill, were they to obtain office. The Communists and Herut (extreme Right) come close to this type of total opposition party. But there is another type of irresponsibility which develops when one party seems to be a constant and dominant partner of coalitions. Other parties tend then to become irresponsible in the sense that they are ready to bargain about many issues of public interest in order to be included in the coalition and as a price for staying in it. As they have to choose between being an insignificant opposition or a minor member of the coalition, they often choose the latter. The religious parties in Israel have often followed such a pattern.⁹ Irresponsible politics in turn causes some voters to shift to the major party which "does the job" and manifests responsible leadership. This validates the claim of the Mapai spokesman that there is no alternative to the party in office. Thus a vicious circle is created: one party remains in office for a long time; this creates irresponsibility in other parties; and this in turn strengthens the position of the party in office.

What are the social conditions on which this political structure is based? How permanent are those conditions? Would it be conceivable that in the next elections to the *Knesset* (in 1959) about

⁹ Amitai Etzioni, "Kulturkampf ou Coalition: Le Cas d'Israel", *La Revue Française de Science Politique*, vol. VIII, No. 2 (June 1958), pp. 311-331—republished in English in *Sociologia Religiosa*, vol. 1, No. 4 (1958), pp. 3-27.

10 per cent of those who voted for Mapai in previous elections would vote for another party, thus undermining the basis of the present coalition system? Most well-informed political observers would agree that such a change can hardly be expected. The major reason rests on the assumption that, like many parties in office for a long period, Mapai has become so strongly institutionalized that it has a strong grip on a "hard core" of voters needed to maintain its superior position.

On the one hand, a party which remains in office for a long time often loses some public support because the necessity of taking certain action inevitably alienates some groups. For example, a responsible government frequently has to introduce measures which alienate large contingents of the voters without creating any special support from any group, as for instance, new taxes. Even if a party tries to avoid taking action on controversial issues, as Mapai does with the Israeli constitution and some religious issues, it alienates those groups which expect the party to take action. Thus, on one hand, being in office leads to the accumulation of enemies. On the other hand, holding office may have a positive influence on future elections. The leadership of the state and that of the major party are often fused; people who identify with the state tend also to favor the leading party. The party tends to receive credit for any progress which is achieved during its régime. The opposition is labeled as a group of people who "only talk".

Party patronage is another factor. The amount of patronage available depends to some degree on the moral atmosphere and on the institutionalization of a civil service. But even more important is the amount of control which the political organizations have over economic activities. In Israel, as well as in many other newly developed countries, conditions encourage a widespread political influence on the allocation of manpower, capital, land, and power positions. The sources of foreign currency are of major significance in a small, expanding economy. The scope of government control over these sources is well reflected in the following figures. Compared to 28.4 per cent of income from exports and 4.3 per cent of income from private investment, which are only regulated by the government, about 65 per cent of the foreign currency income is virtually state income and is allocated and controlled by the government or by the Jewish Agency.¹⁰ It is almost inevitable that partisan considerations have some influence when political organizations control the economy, and when this control is extensive,

¹⁰ These figures represent the period of 1949-1956.

these considerations are very important. In such state allocations and controls, parties in power have an advantage over those in opposition.

The most important economic control which the Israeli parties exert on their members concerns place of employment. In an economy where the closed shop is the rule, parties control labor exchanges and trade unions. Parties also organize services for their members including health plans, housing projects, vacations, and recreation.¹¹ Thus all parties, especially the stronger ones, can expect to hold the allegiance of a large proportion of their members.

But in a régime where ideology plays an important political rôle, economic control is not sufficient. The parties attempt to secure ideological control by maintaining their own media of communication and by curbing the access of their supporters to communication media of other parties. All Israeli parties publish their own newspapers and exert pressure on their members to subscribe to these newspapers. The larger parties have publishing houses. Until recently, parties were quite influential in the school system. The separate party housing projects, vacation centers and social clubs serve also to increase intra-party communication and to decrease inter-party communication. The members' *Weltanschauung* is constantly reinforced so that they will be ready to resist any "hostile" communication.¹²

In this sphere also the parties in office seem to have some limited advantages over other parties. Israel has no television; the single radio station is controlled by the government. The government has an elaborate information service headed by a Mapai member. This service usually does not communicate political ideology but it functions to increase the loyalty of new and old citizens to the state by emphasizing its achievements and its bright future. This inevitably has some political repercussions.

While the Israeli parties in general and Mapai in particular have considerable economic and ideological control over a good many of their members and supporters, this hold is far from being strong enough to make shifts of voters' loyalties impossible. Less than a third of the voters are party members, and in every election thus

¹¹ See Gerda Luft, "The Party That Shapes Policy", *The Jerusalem Post*, July 11, 1955, quoted by M. H. Bernstein, *The Politics of Israel* (Princeton, 1957), p. 71.

¹² The manipulation of communication channels as a means of maintaining members' loyalties has been analyzed by Philip Selsnick, in his *Organizational Weapon* (New York, 1952).

far at least 15 per cent of the voters have changed their party allegiances.¹³ On the other hand, this very control gives each party a stable core and gives Mapai a hard core of 30 per cent of the electorate, which is sufficient to maintain its dominant rôle in the coalition system unless some serious crisis should occur.

About half of the voters who will participate in the next parliamentary elections have emigrated to Israel during the last ten years. Could this group cause a considerable change in the outcome of the election? Judging by past elections the answer is clearly in the negative. All attempts to establish new immigrant parties have failed. New immigrants are known to distribute their votes roughly in the same way as the old citizens.

The recent political changes in France illustrate the problem of a third form of institutionalization, namely the investment of the parties in office in the Armed Forces, police and other security agencies. These "instruments of violence" can be neutral in the political game and thus serve equally all parties which may come into power. If this is the case, they support the institutionalization of the democratic system. If they support parties in office, they increase the institutionalization of these parties and undermine the system. If they support moderate or, more likely, extreme opposition parties, they endanger the parties in office and the democratic system at the same time.

Mapai's position from this point of view has undergone a considerable change. In the pre-state period its control over the various underground forces was relatively weak, compared to its control over other national political organizations.

This difference between the power distribution in the civic political bodies and that in the underground forces sometimes caused "lack of subordination" of these armed forces to the civil authorities. When the state of Israel was established action was taken to change this situation. First of all, the Armed Forces have been de-politicized. Units which had political loyalties have been disbanded. Soldiers and officers are not allowed to be politically active. There has not been a case of "lack of subordination" since the establishment of the Israeli Defense Forces. Recently this came to a significant test when these Forces were ordered to withdraw from Sinai amid strong public protest.

¹³ But note that most changes are among parties with similar ideologies. Thus while more than 15 per cent shift, only about 6 per cent or less shift from parties left of Mapai to parties right of Mapai or vice versa. Thus Mapai's superior and center position is maintained. See Table 1.

De-politicizing of the Defense Forces has been considered an insufficient safeguard for the régime in a country where such Forces are so powerful. This may explain why today many of the top positions in the Defense Forces are in the hands of Mapai members or neutrals. Out of the five chiefs of staff of the Israeli Defense Forces during 1948-58, two have been active Mapai members before and after their service, two are known to be supporters of Mapai in their private life, and the fifth has never shown any special political inclinations. The names of generals and colonels are usually not published in Israel, but the government year book gives a list of twelve of the top commanders of the Defense Forces.¹⁴ Most of them are known as members or close adherents of Mapai. The Israeli police commander-in-chief and his deputy are Mapai members; so are many of the higher officers. There is little information on other security agencies, but they seem to be staffed similarly. It is of interest to note that when, in January 1952, a political demonstration by Herut (extreme Right) members broke through the police lines in front of the *Knesset*, an army unit was called to help.¹⁵ This shows that the government, and first of all Mapai, can rely on the loyalty of the army.

II. *Democracy and an Institutionalized Center Party*

The party in office has never been replaced in Israel and it is unlikely to be replaced in the near future. Still the changing power distribution in society corresponds to the changing policy of the government. What are the mechanisms which enable a democracy to function without replacing the party in power?

A. *Changes in the Composition of the Coalition Government*

Mapai, like other parties in democratic countries, is quite sensitive to public opinion. Although its control over some of its supporters is quite extensive, Mapai can never be secure in its control over its followers. While it never lost its core support, its leaders feel that this was achieved only by the party steering a cautious course, based on a combination of responsible leadership with enough "flexibility" (opponents say "opportunism") not to lose the support of the voters.

Mapai has some difficulty in determining what the public wants. There are no by-elections to the Israeli parliament. If a member dies or resigns, his party appoints a new representative. Since local

¹⁴ *The Government Year Book* (Jerusalem, 1958-59), p. 84.

¹⁵ *Ha'aretz*, Hebrew daily, Tel Aviv, Jan. 8, 1952.

elections usually take place on the same day as parliamentary elections, they cannot indicate public attitudes between elections. Experience has shown that other elections, as for instance to the *Histadrut* conventions, do not reflect clearly the outcome of forthcoming national elections and therefore they are not considered as reliable political indicators.¹⁶ There is no Israeli Gallup Institute or any close equivalent which could serve as a means for assessing the public. Therefore, the main test for the policies of each government coalition comes with the general elections to the *Knesset*. If the electorate then shows dissatisfaction with the government line, Mapai tends to change its policy and its partners in the coalition. Thus, while Mapai stays in office, the government policy may change considerably and in relation to changes in public opinion and pressures.

The first regular Israeli government (March 10, 1949–November 1, 1950) consisted of a coalition of Mapai, Religious United Front, the Progressive Party and Sephardim. The government was under criticism from three major opposition parties: from Mapam (Left-wing party) in regard to the Israeli stand between East and West; from Herut (extreme Right) with respect to the defense policy; and from the General Zionists (Right wing) in the matter of economic policy.

As this was a time of mass immigration and rapid economic expansion, a strong inflation developed.¹⁷ The government introduced a far-reaching system of control which included licensing of imports and exports, complete control over foreign currency, and government allocation of raw materials and of consumer goods. Nearly a thousand different products were rationed. Luxury items were highly taxed. Credit allocation was controlled by the government.

The General Zionists, a party of big business, exporters, importers, citrus plantation owners, and to some degree supported by small business men and artisans, objected to all this. The party advocated a liberalization of economic policy, that is, the curtailment or abolishment of governmental regulations and of various allocations.

¹⁶ For instance, Mapam lost 7.25 per cent of its seats in the *Histadrut* convention between 1949 and 1955 (in 1955 both splinters are counted together) but in elections to the *Knesset* in the same years it received the same per cent of the seats—15.8 per cent.

¹⁷ The amount of money in circulation tripled in three years (end of 1948 to end of 1951). Credit expanded in the same period from 80 million to about 150 million Israeli *lirat*. The consumer's price index jumped from 100 (September 1951) to 178 (December 1952).

The ration system, which many loathed, was made the symbolic target in the political campaign.

In the elections to the second *Knesset* which followed, the public shifted its support to the General Zionists. While the General Zionists were a small party with 5.8 per cent of the seats in the first *Knesset* (1949), they obtained almost three times as many seats in 1951 (16.7 per cent) to become the second largest party. The other two opposition parties lost considerably (Herut fell from 11.7 per cent to 6.7 per cent and Mapam from 15.8 per cent to 12.4 per cent). Mapai lost only 0.8 per cent of its seats, but the lesson was obvious. Large groups of the public were not satisfied with Mapai's economic policy, and it adjusted to this situation in several ways. First, the party abolished some of the more disagreeable measures of control. Then, in December 1952, the General Zionists were included in the government. Finally, a "New Economic Policy" was introduced which was a compromise between Mapai's policy and the General Zionists' ideas. Mapai economists pointed out that the changes in economic policy were possible now because the economic situation had changed. The change was brought about mainly by the reparation agreement with Germany. But it is clear that the election played its rôle. Although the General Zionists left the government at a later time and the economic situation changed again, Mapai never tried to return to the 1949-51 system of rationing.

A similar change took place after the elections to the third *Knesset*. The primary cause of conflict and adjustment was defense policy this time. During the days of the second *Knesset* (1951-55) the pressure from the Arabic countries increased by means of economic boycott, border incidents, and infiltration activities inside Israel. Israel reacted by retaliatory operations which were focused on the centers from which the Arabic activities were launched. The frequency and scope of these activities varied in relation to the pressure exerted by other nations on the Arabs and on Israel. Public opinion in Israel was split on these retaliatory activities. Herut and Ahdut HaAvoda (Left wing) demanded a more aggressive line and questioned the military and political expediency of limited retaliatory activities. All the other parties were for continuation of the moderate line.

The election to the third *Knesset* showed that the public now was more concerned with the defense issue than with economic problems and that it protested against the continuous insecurity. The public supported the extremists (or activists as they are called

in Israel): Herut almost doubled its seats (from 6.7 per cent to 12.5 per cent) and became the second largest party in the *Knesset*. The other party which supported the activists' line also improved its position. Mapai lost a considerable number of seats (4.2 per cent) and so did other parties.

Mapai's reaction was as quick and as determined as in the earlier case. Ben Gurion reassumed the Prime Ministership and the Defense Ministry; Sharet—who supported the moderate line—resigned from the government. Since a coalition with Herut is inconceivable for Mapai,¹⁸ a Left-wing coalition was formed on November 3, 1955 which included the Left-wing activists. When Nasser arranged his weapons deal with Russia and nationalized the Suez Canal only one year later, the Israeli government switched from limited retaliatory activity to broader military activity. In October 1956 the government ordered the Israeli Armed Forces into the Sinai peninsula. Thus again the government acted in accord with a new public trend. A new policy was introduced and a new coalition was formed.

Of course a change in public opinion was not the only cause of the change in government policy, but the election results had considerable influence. The objective situation was interpreted differently by moderates and activists. If moderate parties had gained in the elections and the activists had lost, Sharet might have remained in the Cabinet as Prime Minister and/or Foreign Minister and the policy as well as the composition of the Cabinet might have been quite different. It is not accidental that public support turned to the activists; the objective situation produced this support. Thus one can see the elections as one mechanism through which the policy of the government is adjusted to the situation and to the electorate wishes without a change of the party in office.

B. *Changes in the Inner Balance of Mapai*

The study of factions and pressure groups within a party is of special interest from several points of view. First, these groups determine to a considerable degree the party's policy and the composition of party representation in the various political institutions. Second, the larger the party and the more interests and groups there are represented in it, the more some functions of the parliament, such as policy-making and consensus formation, are taken over by party organs. The party's higher bodies have to reach a working consensus among the various groups before party policy

¹⁸ Because of the strong ideological differences between the parties.

can be determined.¹⁹ Mapai itself comes close to being a federation of groups.²⁰ The major groups are: an organization of collective settlements (*Kibbutzim*) which supports Mapai (about 97 per cent of the eligible population votes Mapai), an organization of co-operative villages (*Moshavej Ovdim*) (about the same ratio of support), the *Histadrut* group, professionals and intelligentsia, Mapai members in government administration and representatives of new immigrants. All these groups are represented in the Mapai Center (196 members) and many of them in the Mapai secretariat (15 members, in March 1958).

How does the federative structure influence the democratic process? Through it, those who support Mapai have a voice in the decision-making process in non-election years and without changing the party alliance. Thus, before Mapai changed its defense policy, the fight between moderates and activists was taken up in the Mapai Center, with Ben Gurion heading the activists section and Sharet the moderate one. Only after it was decided here by a majority vote that Ben Gurion's policies should be promoted did Sharet resign and Mapai offer the new policy to the whole government.

The functions, prestige, and voting power of collective settlements are declining, while those of the coöperative villages are increasing. For reasons discussed elsewhere, collective settlements still have considerable privileges and power.²¹ But in the last years the coöperative villages have struggled for increased representation of their group. To some degree their demands have been met but the collective settlements are still somewhat over-represented. This is likely to diminish in the near future. Thus, changes in the social significance of groups are reflected in changes in their political power through change in their representation in Mapai's policy-making bodies.

¹⁹ In cases where there is only one party as in totalitarian states, the factional struggle is an uninstitutionalized substitute for rivalry among parties. In some states in the United States where there is only one active party, the factional struggle is the most important form of political expression. Unlike the totalitarian countries, it is here institutionalized in democratic party conventions and primaries. See V. O. Key, *Southern Politics* (New York, 1949).

²⁰ Factions have not been tolerated since 1944 when a faction split Mapai and created its own party.

²¹ See Amitai Etzioni, "Agrarianism in Israel's Party System", *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, vol. XXIII, No. 3 (August 1957), pp. 363-375.

Another group struggle which has aroused much public interest in recent years is that between *Histadrut* (trade union) leaders and Mapai economic experts concentrated in the Treasury. The economists press for enlarged investments in order to achieve an increasing degree of economic independence and strength. The trade-union leaders insist that this should be done without a considerable decrease in the standard of living of the workers. Till now the trade-union leaders have had the upper hand. One of the reasons why they are so influential is that they represent a much larger and better-organized group of voters than the economists.

Is group representation really democratic? First of all one should note that it is part of the democratic process in all democratic countries, especially in those where there is a two-party system, because fewer interests are directly represented on the party level, and more are represented on the faction level. It is more important to examine the way in which faction representation is determined. Even where there are officially controlled and supervised primaries, nomination is still open to much abuse. Oligarchic procedures in units which participate in the democratic mechanisms seem to be almost an "iron law". While there are no primaries in Israel, two thirds of the members of Mapai Center are elected by Mapai locals and one third suggested by the Mapai Secretariat and approved by the convention. The latter are in most cases group representatives, often elected leaders of their groups or organizations. New immigrants, intelligentsia, and youth representatives are frequently selected in less formal ways. Thus group representation in Mapai is quite democratic in a sense. It is an important mechanism through which powerful groups and Mapai's policy are maintained in balance.

C. *Structural Weakness of Mapai*

Mapai's political power, which has been stressed above, is an important factor of the whole process of institutionalization. But the picture should be balanced by showing a major weakness of Mapai which is important because it makes Mapai sensitive to group pressures and public opinion. Mapai is often seen as an omnipotent party, as a strong monolithic political body with branches in all the major power centers. This description is misleading in one important respect. It does not take into account the federative nature of Mapai, in which the main power rests in each group and little in Mapai as a party. There is a powerful group of Mapai members in the trade unions, in the coöperative

movement, in the three major cities, in the Treasury, and so on. But their relations to other Mapai groups vary all the way from close coöperation to open hostility. In most cases the relationships are highly voluntary because each group is very independent. The weakest group is the party bureaucracy which supposedly ties them all together. The party personnel is small in number, low paid, has little prestige and consists mainly of party representatives who failed to maintain a position in other organizations. Many Mapai branch secretaries are just clerks for party activities and mediators among the various local centers of power. The Mapai Center, itself, is a place where the various groups determine their relative power and work out common policies, not a center of a powerful party machine which has strong control over its representatives in various political organizations. This is an important reason why Mapai, with all its weight and power, when it comes to coördinated action on the national scene in opposition to other groups, is internally weak and highly sensitive to pressures of various groups.²²

III. *A Comparative Note*

Is Israel an exception to the "normal" democratic model or are there other countries which come close to her form of democracy?

The Swedish government in the last twenty-six years (since 1932) has seen a coalition government in which the Social Democratic party is the basic political partner. Since 1949, Germany has been run by a coalition government in which one party, the Christian Democrats, plays the rôle of the decisive partner. The situation formally resembles a two-party system because two parties, the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats, obtain the majority of the votes, but many commentators agree that this is misleading since the class and religious structure of Germany does not give the Social Democrats a real chance to obtain much more than 35 per cent of the vote, which means that there is no alternative party to the CDU at the moment. The special importance of Adenauer for the maintenance of the system can be compared to the position which Ben Gurion holds in the Israeli system. While Ben Gurion has the charismatic rôle of the state founder, Adenauer plays a similar rôle as the one who restored the new German Republic to a respectable place among the nations. The coalition partners of the CDU are weaker than the partners of Mapai,

²² That unorganized voters or weaker groups lose out in this process is obvious, but this is a problem of democracy in general.

especially since the CDU gained an absolute majority of the seats in the Bonn parliament (1957). On the other hand, nine years in office have been enough for the CDU to become considerably institutionalized. Group struggles within the CDU are an important mechanism of German democracy as well (Catholic labor, big business, Catholic and Protestant clergy, liberals and others).

Another illustration is the French Fourth Republic which in some respects functioned similarly to the Israeli system. The MRP, like Mapai, participated in a large number and great variety of coalitions. The decisive difference between Israel and France is that the MRP was by far weaker than Mapai and therefore the coalition system never achieved the stability which the Israeli system has. No central party became institutionalized and the extreme parties on left and right were considerably stronger. The final blow to the system was given by power organizations which had political orientations differing from those of the elected government of France.

Thus if coalition governments are formed on a continuum according to the strength of the center party, the Israeli and Swedish governments would be in the middle, Germany on one side and the Fourth Republic on the other. There are of course other types of coalition governments without one center party, but a discussion of those would take us far beyond the scope of this paper.

Mapai is often compared to the British Labour party and the Social Democrats in the Weimar Republic. These comparisons have certain merits when one attempts to point out the ideological position of Mapai in an *abstract* continuum of political ideologies. Mapai subscribes to a Left-wing noncommunist ideology. But beyond that, the comparison is of little help. The British Labour party is one in a two-party system; it entered and left office several times in the last three decades, while Mapai became a highly institutionalized party.

The comparison to the Weimar Social Democrats is even less meaningful. The Social Democrats were not able to continue in office because, among other reasons, rightist forces were highly entrenched in the army, the bureaucracies and the judicial system. This is almost opposite to the situation in Israel. The center of the Israeli political spectrum is not liberal, as in so many Western societies, but social-democratic with an approximately even distribution of the more leftish forces on one side and conservative and liberal groups on the other side. More than that, for historical reasons which cannot be discussed here, the left-of-center ideologies

and groups have stronger political, economic and prestige positions than the right and liberal forces. While socialist parties in Western societies are often parties of reform and change, Mapai is more representative of the Israeli values and social structure than any other party. To be a Social Democrat in Israel—and the same holds for many of the newly developed countries—means to be in conformity with the majority of the politically conscious members of society. It is like being a moderate liberal in the present Congress of the United States. Thus in conducting a comparative analysis we have to take into account not only the substance of political values but also the place of such values in the political spectrum of the society. What is quite revolutionary in one society may be rather on the conformist side in another society. The different place in the political spectrum is of great significance in view of the different political conditions with which revolutionary and reform parties are confronted as compared to those in which conforming and status quo parties are placed, disregarding the actual content of their ideologies.

Mapai can be fruitfully compared to other state founding parties which have become highly institutionalized in young nations, as, for instance, the Congress party in India, the Neo-Destour in Tunisia, the Convention People's party in Ghana, and the A.F.P.F.L. in Burma. Of course, there are considerable differences among these countries and between them and Israel, but they all seem to have in common a leader and a party with the charismatic rôle of gaining independence and establishing the state; left-of-center ideologies; state-regulated economies; a high degree of economic dependence on external sources (perhaps with the exception of Ghana); and control over the labor organizations, excluding the Communists.²³

A comparative study of democratic societies cannot be carried out here. The main purpose of this paper has been to describe a democracy that functions through mechanisms other than the frequent alternation of parties in office. The concluding paragraphs are meant to suggest that such mechanisms can be found also in countries other than Israel and that a comparative study of these countries might throw light on the nature and organs of modern democracy.

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²³ See S. M. Lipset, "Socialism—Left and Right—East and West", *Confluence*, vol. 7, No. 2 (Summer 1958), pp. 173-192.