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ISRAEL'S ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND POLITICAL INSTABILITY

Electoral fragmentation, party unity, and the prime minister's political leadership

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Abstract

Israel's political system is almost a synonym for electoral fragmentation and multilevel political instability. Yet, one position within Israel is quite stable: the prime minister's position. Based on research on leadership patterns in parliamentary systems, I show that Israeli prime ministers use electoral fragmentation to maneuver between institutional settings: cabinets, governments, parliaments, and their parties. The variance between levels of institutional instability accords with four leadership patterns of prime ministers: as part of the party's leadership collective, party-based, prime ministerialized, or presidentialized. These leadership patterns depend on the party system's structure, prime ministers' popularity, and the interaction with the party they lead. These factors affect prime ministers' ability to use Israel's electoral fragmentation to survive in office. Consequently, they reflect different modes of operation for prime ministers and yield different patterns of political instability in Israel.

Introduction

From its establishment in 1948 and until June 2021, Israel went through 24 parliamentary elections and the formation of 36 governments. Thus, on average, Israel holds elections about once every three years, while new governments are sworn in on average about once every two years. Furthermore, in multiparty parliamentary systems a coalition of parties (or cabinets) forms the government. When a party joins or leaves the coalition, its cabinet changes (Müller et al. 2008: 6). By September 2019, Israel saw 76 different government cabinets,¹ reflecting the fact that parties enter and leave Israeli government coalitions at a pace that exceeds any other average per-year rate documented by PARLGOV, a leading data-based observer of parliamentary democracies (Döring and Manow 2020).

Israel has numerous social and political cleavages: doves and hawks, Jews of varying religiosity levels, Arabs and Jews, rich and poor, and different ethnicities within the Jewish population (Arian and Shamir 2008). This diversity is represented in Israel's parliament (Knesset), ensuring that these diverse voices are heard, but also creating a fragmented political system (Shamir and

Arian 1999). Israel uses a proportional representation electoral system with a single national electoral district to allocate 120 seats in the Knesset to parties able to overcome the electoral threshold (Shugart 2021). This single electoral district, which is quite a unique feature in parliamentary systems (Carey and Hix 2011), is an outcome of historical reasons rather than a planned attempt to provide a high level of representation (Rosenthal 2017: 29–33).

From 1951 until 1992, Israel's electoral threshold was 1%. At that point, it was increased to 1.5%. It was raised again in 2004 to 2%, and in 2014 it rose to 3.25%. The combination of a diverse society, a high degree of proportional representation and low entry barriers to the parliament results in a high level of what Shugart and Taagepera (2017: 73–77) called the Effective Number of Parties in Parliament (ENPP). While not necessarily increasing the likelihood of regime instability (Diskin et al. 2005), political instability stemming from a multitude of parties in parliament complicates the capacity to govern by creating instability in the cabinet and government (Heller 2001; Huber and Lupia 2001).

In contrast to this institutional instability, during the same 73 years, Israel saw only 13 prime ministers, with two of them serving more than a decade in office. For the most part, Israeli prime ministers served more than the average of 4.4 years, often seen in many parliamentary democracies (Kenig 2020). Thus, unlike Israeli political institutions, the position of the Israeli executive head is quite stable. Hence, the main puzzle this analysis examines is the discrepancy between Israel's political instability and the relative stability of its prime ministers in an environment with a great deal of electoral fragmentation. In short, *how can Israeli election results produce chronic instability in parliament (the Knesset) and the composition of the government but stability in the prime minister's position?*

I maintain that Israel's high degree of electoral fragmentation yields potentially unstable political institutions. These institutions become increasingly more unstable when prime ministers enjoy party unity, little political competition, and high levels of electoral support. Such personal support stems from the public's appreciation of the prime ministers' personal qualities, either real or perceived (Stokes 1966). The public tends to consider these qualities irrespective of the issues that the candidates and parties wish to promote (Schofield 2003; Stokes 1963). In such cases, prime ministers will destabilize the system to maintain their position in office. I maintain that these leadership patterns are an outcome of the leaders' activities in light of various contextual and institutional factors (Elgie 2018). I identify the qualitative differences among four leadership patterns of prime ministers in parliamentary systems as part of a party's leadership collective, party-based, prime ministerialized, or presidentialized. Each of these leadership patterns reflects a different power structure between the prime minister and his/her party with regard to electoral support patterns and institutional rules. I use these concepts to explain the connections between Israel's electoral system and institutional political stability from 1948 until 2021.

Parties in parliamentary regimes, electoral outcomes, and government stability: some general comments

In parliamentary democracies, parliament establishes, removes, and replaces the government (Samuels and Shugart 2010). Furthermore, in parliamentary democracies, party unity is the key to handling the party's decision-making: nominating candidates, creating (or dissolving) coalitions, and handling public policy processes (Samuels and Shugart 2010). Hence, party governance is the key to an effective executive uniting all party factions around the party's policy agenda, leadership, and designated constituency (Andeweg 2020; Hazan 2003). There is a fine line between *party cohesion*, which is a self-enforcing set of joint preferences, and *party discipline*,

which is based on institutional incentives for party members to toe the party line (Hazan 2003). Party cohesion is based on an equilibrium of preferences between the different party factions. With party discipline, institutional rules (election rules, the party's financial rules etc.) compel party factions to maintain unity (Hazan 2003).² In political systems which are party-focused, parties rule on the basis of collective cohesive leadership that depends on the party's valence: the party's popularity due to its policy positions and the socio-demographic characteristics of its loyal supporters (Schofield and Sened 2006). The result is the party-based leadership model in which the party leadership collectively decides on its positions with little dissent from party activists and supporters (Schofield and Sened 2006).

A key issue for governance as an outcome of election results is a party system's fragmentation: the number of parties and the divergence between these parties' ideologies and values. These two parameters potentially reduce the ability of the reigning political leadership to form coalitions and design and implement public policy (Sartori 1999; Tsebelis 1999). Thus, political fragmentation is a key variable for understanding governance. One indicator of political fragmentation is the Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties. This measure is calculated by summing the inverse of the squared proportions of all seat shares of parties in parliament. A high ENPP denotes the presence of many parties with a smaller number of seat shares in parliament (Shugart and Taagepera 2017).

When the ENPP is large, the formateur party seeking to create a coalition must include a wide variety of different policy preferences in the coalition (Schofield 1995). To create a coalition, parties in parliamentary regimes nominate a leading party member to be the prime minister (Lupia and Strøm 2008). When bargaining to construct cabinets, prime ministers allocate portfolios and budgets to existing or new coalition partners to compensate for any ideological losses the parties entering the coalition need to absorb (Sened 1996). Thus, fragmentation means that parties present diverse policy positions to the electorate. Therefore, prime ministers need to compensate them for convincing them to join the coalition (Sened 1996). Hence, the second leadership pattern is evident when there is a high level of ENPP and a cohesive party. In such cases, the prime minister will preserve the stability of parliament, the government, and the cabinet using policy and portfolio payoffs. Let us refer to this leadership pattern as the premier leadership pattern, as prime ministers might be first in their parties, but they need to consider the party's wishes and preferences.

A qualitatively different situation occurs when prime ministers become more popular than their parties (Schofield and Sened 2005). This situation reflects the personalization of politics (Rahat and Kenig 2018), meaning that the parties' electoral valence is less than the party leader's valence (Schofield and Sened 2005). Such a direct focus on the prime minister as an individual could create the *prime ministerialization* of politics: an increased focus on the prime minister's position as the key figure in the executive (Dowding 2013; Rosenthal 2021). Once the interests of the prime minister and the party diverge, the party is strong enough to remove the prime minister from power. While the prime ministers could destabilize all levels of governance, they still need the support of a united party. In such situations, if the interests of the prime minister and the party diverge, the party will have at least two competing factions: the prime minister's supporters and at least one other group. In such cases, party discipline can be more important than the party's cohesion (Hazan 2003). Hence, in the third leadership pattern, while all party factions accept the prime minister's rule and there is a high ENPP, the prime minister is more popular than the party. In such situations, there will be instability in the parliament, the government, and the cabinet. With intraparty unity decreasing, the party will maintain its discipline but not its cohesion.

Another outcome of the personalization of electoral politics is the presidentialization of executive politics in parliamentary democracies. In such situations, not only do political systems focus

on prime ministers and potential candidates for this position during elections (Andeweg 2020), but they also do so throughout all stages of governance (Elgie and Passarelli 2019; Poguntke and Webb 2007; Webb and Poguntke 2013). When a parliamentary system becomes presidentialized, it empowers the executive's leader, potentially creating a differentiation between the leader's incentives and those of the party (Samuels and Shugart 2010). Furthermore, the use of intraparty primaries to select the party leader might promote a leader who is an external candidate and at odds with the party elite s/he just defeated (Samuels and Shugart 2010).

Hence, the presidentialization and prime ministerialization of politics in parliamentary systems mean a focus on the prime minister throughout the policy process. However, in presidentialized parliamentary systems, the prime minister will be the decisive player. Thus, in such systems, when the parties no longer have control over the prime ministers, we would expect that the prime ministers would go against competing party factions even if doing so means splitting the party. Therefore, the final leadership pattern is a presidentialized parliamentary system with a high ENPP, and instability in the parliament, government, cabinet, *and* the formateur party. Table 8.1 summarizes the results of the various leadership patterns.

Israel's electoral system

Israel's electoral system is based on a single electoral district consisting of 120 representatives drawn from closed party lists, whose seats are allocated using proportional representation. As I showed above, one institutional factor affecting fragmentation in the electoral system is the threshold for entering the Knesset. Israel's first election took place in 1949, with the electoral threshold effectively set at 0.83. From 1951 until 1992, it was 1%. In 1992, it was increased to 1.5%. In 2004, it was raised to 2%, and in 2014 it increased to 3.25% (Hazan et al. 2018). Furthermore, in 1973 the formula used to allocate seats changed from the largest remainder method (Hare) to the highest average method (d'Hondt) (Shugart 2021). The larger parties initiated this move because they benefited from the advantages it offered them (Shugart 1992). Overall, Israel's electoral method simply translates votes into seats proportionally (Shugart and Taagepera 2017). With a relatively inclusive proportional representation system, Israel's social cleavages, which translate into electoral and party politics (Arian and Shamir 2008; Nachmias et al. 2016), result in an Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties generally exceeding theoretical expectations regarding the ENPP that Israel's electoral method is supposed to produce (Shugart and Taagepera 2017). Figure 8.1 shows Israel's ENPP over time and Knessets.

The mean of the ENPP in Israel is 4.23 (Shugart and Taagepera 2017), with only four Knessets, 7–8 and 10–11, having smaller numbers.

Israeli prime ministers' leadership patterns and political stability

Israel's formative years during 1948–1965 were dominated by Mapai (Israel's Labor Party) headed by David Ben-Gurion (Doron 2006). Mapai always formed coalitions because it never won enough seats to govern alone. However, as the winner of the largest number of seats and due to its centrality in the political system, Mapai was the formateur party throughout these years (Schofield 1995). Mapai had several layers of leadership: Ben-Gurion and his close aides, the veteran leadership including people belonging to Ben-Gurion's leadership generation who accepted his leadership from early on, and a variety of political machines spread throughout the country organized around Israel's main labor union, the Histadrut (Shapira 1993). From 1948 to 1963, Ben-Gurion was Mapai's leader (Arian 2005). However, he usually deferred to intra-party power-sharing arrangements in place before the state of Israel was formed (Shapira 1993).

Table 8.1 Leadership patterns of prime ministers in parliamentary democracies

| <i>Parliamentary democracy leadership pattern</i> | <i>Leader's valence</i> | <i>Party unity</i> | <i>Leader's stability</i> | <i>Party's stability</i> | <i>Parliament's stability</i> | <i>Government's stability</i> | <i>Cabinet's stability</i> |
|---|---|--------------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|
| Party based | Leader's valence irrelevant | Cohesion | Stable | Stable | Stable | Stable | Stable |
| Premier | Party's valence greater than leader's valence | Cohesion | Stable | Stable | Stability depends on party's interests | Stability depends on party's interests | Stability depends on party's interests |
| Prime ministerial | Higher than party's valence | Discipline by party leadership | Stability depends on party's interests | Stable | Stability depends on party's interests | Stability depends on party's interests | Stability depends on party's interests |
| Presidential | Party's valence irrelevant | Discipline by prime minister | Stable | Stability depends on prime minister's interests |

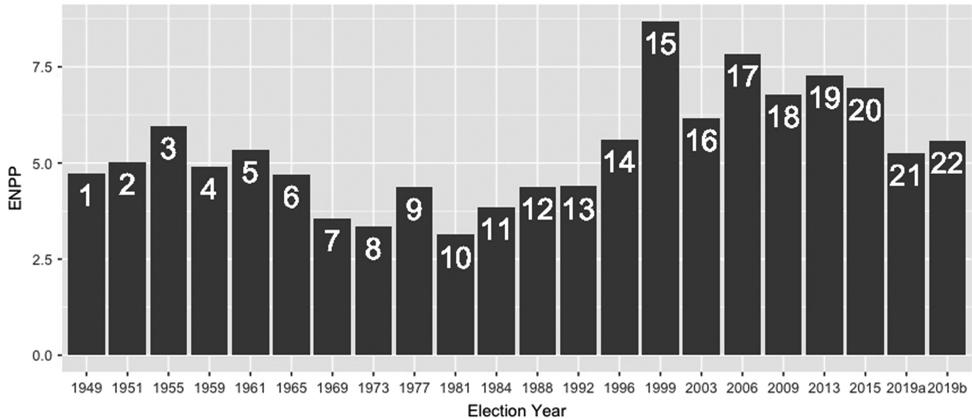


Figure 8.1 Effective number of parliamentary parties, 1948–2021. Note: The data for 71 years in the figure came from PARLGOV. The data for 2020–2021 are my own calculations. Knesset election data are available at: <https://main.knesset.gov.il/mk/elections/Pages/default.aspx>

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Furthermore, when Ben-Gurion breached this arrangement, the party elite practically removed him from power (Arian 2005).

Throughout this period (1948–1965), Israel saw 11 elected governments, 5 Knessets, and 15 Ben-Gurion-led cabinets, alongside three cabinets headed by Moshe Sharett (1954–1955) and two cabinets headed by Levi Eshkol (1963–1965). Ben-Gurion resigned and was replaced by Sharett as prime minister during 1954–1955. Ben-Gurion resigned again in 1963 and was replaced by Eshkol. That last resignation led to his removal from office by the party elite (Arian 2005). Hence, Ben-Gurion’s tenure exemplifies the prime-ministerial pattern: a higher than average ENPP with a leader safe in his political position due to his strong valence, who can secure his/her party the formateur’s position. As long as s/he coordinates with the party’s leadership, this arrangement continues. In such a situation, there is stability in the prime minister’s position and that of the formateur party, but complete instability in all structural and systemic parameters. When intraparty conflict erupts, the prime minister’s position is also destabilized. In our case, Ben-Gurion lost his position. This period ends when Ben-Gurion formed a party and tried to compete against Mapai in the 1965 election. However, the voters remained loyal to the party label (Mapai) rather than to Ben-Gurion (Arian 2005).

The next period goes from 1965 to 1977. During this time, Mapai changed its label to *Maarach* (Alignment). It was led by a series of prime ministers: Levi Eshkol (1965–1969, when he died) and then Golda Meir (1969–1974), who resigned due to the failures of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Her successor was Yitzhak Rabin, who did not try to get re-elected in 1977 because of a scandal in which he was involved (Arian 2005). During that period, the Alignment leadership was split over various matters. Nevertheless, Golda Meir, the prime minister, remained in a decisive position with little, if any, conflicts with other party leaders (Arian 2005; Weitz 2011). After Meir’s resignation, under Rabin, intraparty competition erupted among his generation’s leaders who sought to replace him (Shapira 1984).

From 1965 to 1977, there were three Knessets, five governments (including a unity government with the opposition), and nine cabinets. The Knessets completed their full term. The governments were replaced due to elections (Itzhak Rabin), a death (Levi Eshkol), and a resignation (Golda Meir). The ENPP during this period ranged from 4.71 to 3.35. Hence, in the post-Ben-Gurion era, there was a large, cohesive formateur party with a less fragmented Knesset and little

instability. Thus, the 1965–1977 period can be viewed as representing the party-based leadership pattern, evident in cohesion, low ENPP, and stability.

In 1977, after the election of the 9th Knesset, Israel witnessed the first replacement of a formateur party. The Likud Party headed by Menachem Begin was a cohesive opposition party that had sought power since its inception during Israel's formative years (Shapira 1991). Begin formed a coalition with the religious parties, which switched from their alliance with the Alignment to cooperate with Likud, alongside a new centrist party called Dash. Begin headed two cabinets during the period of the 9th Knesset. Dramatic changes took place under Begin's first government, most notably, the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt. To make this peace agreement, Begin made territorial compromises that led to the emergence of the Israeli far-right, which opposed them. In 1981, Begin headed the Likud in a tight re-election battle. However, in 1983 after forming two more cabinets, he resigned from office due to health issues and was replaced by another Likud leader, Itzhak Shamir (Arian 2005). Shamir led two further cabinets before seeking re-election in 1984. Hence, we have here a cohesive party under (in Begin's case) a very popular leader's valence. Yet, due to external changes and challenges, Begin and then Shamir saw replacements in their cabinets.

Thus, in this seven-year period there were two Knessets and three governments (due to elections and illness), with transitions in the cabinets. Hence, there was stability on all fronts except the cabinet, which reflects the policy instability of that period: a right-wing party making territorial concessions to Egypt but going to war in Lebanon, while seeking to change Israel's economic structure (Doron and Rosenthal 2008). The Likud years show two prime ministers heading a cohesive party, forming governments from within the existing Knessets, and creating and dissolving cabinets to deal with policy challenges. Thus, this party setting is quite stable and allows for prime ministers' to maintain their position in power, as long as they wish. Due to Begin's personal valence, he can be defined as a prime-ministerial leader. Due to Shamir's lack of personal valence (Rosenthal and Doron 2009), he can be defined as a premier.

In 1984, Likud and Alignment were not able to form a coalition without each other. The same was true after the 1988 elections. Thus, until 1990 both parties shared power, seeking to handle several major challenges on a number of fronts. During the shared power agreement between the sides, Alignment leader Shimon Peres had one cabinet that ruled for two years. In accordance with the agreement between the parties, Shamir replaced Peres for two years. In 1988, the two sides tried to repeat this arrangement. However, this time the Likud had an electoral advantage over the Alignment (40 Knesset seats for the Likud and 39 for the Alignment). That advantage gave the Likud better prospects to form a government without the Alignment than the Alignment had without the Likud. Thus, the coalition agreement determined that Shamir would be the prime minister for all of the government's time in office (Arian 2005).

Nevertheless, 1988–1992 saw two governments and five cabinets due to internal battles between the Likud and Alignment (now called Israel's Labor Party, ILP), which eventually resulted in the ILP's removal from the government in 1990. Furthermore, Shamir faced continuous challenges to his leadership from within the Likud and projected low electoral valence (Rosenthal and Doron 2009; Schofield and Sened 2006). Therefore, the Likud Party was losing its cohesion. In 1992, Shamir lost the election to the ILP, which was headed by Rabin.

The ILP in 1992 was one of the first parties to change the wording on the ballot to "The Labor Party headed by Itzhak Rabin," thereby marking the beginning of an era of personalized campaigns in Israeli mainstream parties (Balmas et al. 2014). An ENPP of 4.39, a party that had more than a ten-seat advantage over the next largest party, and maneuvering in a coalition between parties that had no appetite for new elections allowed the prime minister to implement his policies (Sened 1996). Rabin led a government and three cabinets until his assassination in

November 1995. Rabin was replaced by his second in line within the ILP, Shimon Peres, who ruled over one cabinet and decided to hold new elections in May 1996. The fact that Rabin relied on his party and that the party was ready with a replacement after his assassination tells us that despite the personalization of electoral politics associated with Rabin, we can characterize his term as a prime ministerialization period. Rabin was a high-valence leader but had a disciplined party supporting him.

The May 1996 elections took place using a new electoral method: the direct election of the prime minister, which was used between 1996 and 2001. The reform created a hybrid regime that presidentialized the system in that it determined that the voters would vote directly for the head of the executive (Hazan 1996). However, it kept the parliament's power because the Knesset could dismiss the prime minister without new Knesset elections if it could muster 80 votes out of its 120 votes to do so. In addition, the new method allowed the Knesset to dismiss the prime minister's government and call for new elections for all (Doron 2001). Furthermore, the law determined that any candidate for the prime minister's position would have to lead a party competing for the Knesset. Hence, while the method tried to separate the prime minister's position from the Knesset, it actually embedded the former in the Knesset and the party system (Doron 2001).

Moreover, Israeli voters voted strategically for the prime minister's position and sincerely for the Knesset (Doron 2001). With the low electoral threshold of 1.5% to obtain a seat in the Knesset, this voting behavior created a fragmented parliament, with a large number of small parties seeking to attract niche groups within Israel's very divided society (Doron 2001; Sartori 1999; Shamir and Arian 1999). Thus, despite having a direct mandate from the people for the prime minister to head the executive, the executive needed the support of a wide variety of niche parties, each of which sought to attract a set of voters using sincere voting behavior for the Knesset. This method contradicted the needs of a popularly elected prime minister who was seeking the average voter's support. This combination resulted in dysfunctional governments in which there was great instability in the prime minister's position and the composition of the governments that had to deal with very fragmented and unsupportive parliaments (Harris and Doron 1999).

The main parties whose leaders were competing for the prime minister's position found themselves continuously replacing their leaders. Their intense intraparty conflicts affected their ability to act collectively to pursue their goals. This loss of unity was exacerbated by many parties adopting party primaries for the leader and party list (Rahat 2007). Hence, this "era of accelerated reform" (Hazan 1997) dismantled the core of the Israeli party system (Nachmias and Sened 2001), increased the fragmentation within Israel's parliament (Hazan et al. 2018), and the payoffs needed to create coalitions (Nachmias and Sened 2001).

Benjamin Netanyahu was the first to rule using this method. Between 1996 and 1999, the 14th Knesset had a 5.61 ENPP. During that period, Netanyahu created three cabinets. In 1999, Netanyahu lost the election to the ILP's leader Ehud Barak. The 15th Knesset reached a high point of 8.69 ENPP. Barak ruled from July 1999 until December 2000. In this period, the country had two governments and three cabinets. He resigned from his post and called for early elections, but only for the prime minister position. He lost that election to Ariel Sharon, the Likud's leader, who headed the second-largest party in Knesset. With a disciplined party, and other parties unhappy about having new elections, Sharon ruled for two years, during which he switched between five different cabinets. Both Barak and Netanyahu formed joint lists of parties united with their party for the election. However, these lists broke apart during their time in power, prompting them and their parties to seek the next party merger or split (Kenig 2005; Ottolenghi 1999). The direct election method can be associated with a presidentialized leadership pattern in which prime ministers rely on public support rather than their own party's support and survive in office by making and dissolving cabinets and governments.

In the 2003 elections, Sharon kept the prime minister's position. Before this election, Israel re-adopted the single-ballot proportional representation electoral system (Doron 2006) and increased the electoral threshold to 2% (Rahat 2013). Sharon's term between 2003 and 2006 was unique: he was a Likud leader who received an electoral mandate for strict hawkish policy positions. These positions meant negating any withdrawal from the territories Israel occupied in 1967. However, once in power, he advocated the unilateral withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza Strip and evicted all of its Israeli residents, promoting a policy he actually campaigned against (Rosenthal 2014). Paradoxically, while abolishing the direct election method was supposed to reduce the presidentialization of politics in Israel, Sharon acted in a presidentialized manner. He maneuvered against his right-wing coalition, formed four cabinets, and eventually split his own party to create a new party. Hence, Sharon maintained a presidentialized pattern of politics, splitting the Likud, but retaining power due to public support for him and his policies (Akirav et al. 2010; Rosenthal 2014).

Between 2006 and 2009, the party Sharon formed, Kadima (Forward), was the formateur but without Sharon: after suffering a stroke, he fell into a coma during the 2006 election and never returned to politics. Ehud Olmert, Sharon's successor, was less popular than Sharon, had difficulty maintaining his coalition, and resigned due to corruption allegations before the 2009 election. In that election, Netanyahu came back into power to govern for 12 consecutive years, six Knessets, four governments, and ten cabinets.

In 2014, Israel increased the electoral threshold to 3.25% and then introduced a "full" constructive no-confidence rule (Rosenthal 2017: 16–17). Since the 2015 election and until 2021, the ENPP under Netanyahu decreased from 7.28 before the reform to below 7 and toward 5. Between 2009 and September 2019 (which is the end of the PARLGOV data), Netanyahu saw five Knessets, three governments (one would be a caretaker government continuing until March 2020), and nine cabinets. After the March 2020 election, Netanyahu formed a power-sharing government with the Blue-White party. However, this government collapsed. In March 2021, Israel held new elections in which Netanyahu lost his seat as prime minister, and the Likud lost its position as the formateur party (Magen 2021).

During that period, Netanyahu faced a variety of scandals, corruption charges, and criminal proceedings. However, the Likud Party supported him, with Likud leaders and members publicly unsupportive of Netanyahu expelled from the party (Magen 2021). Netanyahu's electoral valence was celebrated by party leaders and activists, who often referred to him as "King Bibi" (Magen 2021). Hence, like Sharon's reign, Netanyahu's reign was also presidentialized, with a leader dominating his party based on his personal public support. Table 8.2 summarizes the main patterns the Israeli case reveals.

Concluding discussion

My goal was to explore the seeming paradox of the stability of Israel's prime ministers and the instability of its electoral system. I claimed that electoral fragmentation allows popular Israeli prime ministers to keep themselves in power, while destabilizing government, cabinets, and parliaments. I identified four patterns of prime ministers. Those who are more based within their parties and are part of a party compromise, rather than leaders who are popular among voters, I referred to as examples of party-based prime ministers. The second is the premier leadership pattern: a prime minister who is first among equals but needs the party to be in that position. The prime-ministerial pattern involves a prime minister whose personal valence is greater than that of his/her party. Finally, in the presidentialized pattern, the incentives of the prime minister may be different from those of the party. To what extent did these different political leadership patterns affect Israel's political stability?

Table 8.2 Historical periods, prime ministers, and leadership patterns

| <i>Historical periods</i> | <i>Prime ministers</i> | <i>Parliamentary democracy leadership pattern</i> | <i>Knesset#</i> | <i>Avg. ENPP</i> | <i>Parliaments</i> | <i>Governments</i> | <i>Cabinets</i> |
|---------------------------|------------------------|---|-----------------|------------------|--------------------|---|-----------------|
| 1948–1965 | Ben-Gurion | Prime ministerial | 0–2 | 4.86 | 3 | 5 (including a temporary state council) | 7 |
| | Sharett | Party based | 2–3 | 5.96 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| | Ben-Gurion | Prime ministerial | 3–5 | 5.47 | 3 | 4 | 6 |
| | Eshkol | Party based | 5 | 5.35 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| 1965–1977 | Eshkol | Party based | 6 | 4.71 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| | Meir | Party based | 6–8 | 3.86 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| | Rabin | Premier | 8 | 3.35 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| 1977–1984 | Begin | Prime ministerial | 9–10 | 3.846 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| | Shamir | Premier | 10 | 3.86 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| 1984–1990 | Peres | Premier | 11 | 3.86 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Shamir | Premier | 11–12 | 4.23 | 2 | 3 | 6 |
| 1992–1995 | Rabin | Prime ministerial | 13 | 4.39 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| 1995–1996 | Peres | Premier | 13 | 4.39 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1996–2003 | Netanyahu | Presidential | 14 | 5.61 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| | Barak | Presidential | 15 | 8.69 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| | Sharon | Presidential | 15 | 8.69 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| 2003–2009 | Sharon | Presidential | 16 | 6.17 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| | Olmert | Premier | 17 | 7.84 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| 2009–2021 | Netanyahu | Presidential | 18–23 | 6.659 | 6 | 3 | 10 |

When an institutional environment, such as Israel's, can be molded with few roadblocks, leaders can re-shape the way institutions function (Riker 1980; Shepsle 2006). Thus, the connection between electoral constraints and political maneuvering allows the different leadership patterns to affect stability. The party-based leadership pattern turns electoral fragmentation into a stable ruling cabinet, government, and parliament. The prime-ministerial leadership pattern relies on electoral valence and party discipline to ensure the prime minister's stability. The presidentialized prime minister can use his/her personal electoral valence to destabilize all political institutions, including all political parties, in order to remain in power. However, one should keep in mind that different cabinets, governments, and parliaments mean different policy agendas and commitments. Hence, the same person could head cabinets that vary in their composition. However, due to the cabinets' varying compositions, they might have to constantly change the government's policy plans. In some cases, that situation meant the lack of a coherent public policy strategy and the emergence of myopic views within Israel's political elite (Rosenthal 2017, chap. 8). Such situations make it difficult for governments to design long-term plans for dealing with issues such as foreign policy, security threats, and environmental hazards (Dror 2001).

Notes

- 1 PARLGOV data are available online and can be downloaded at: <http://www.parl.gov.org/explore/> observed June 22, 2021.
- 2 Hazan and Itzkovitch-Malka (2017) provide a more elaborate conceptual scheme of party unity by adding the concept of party loyalty. For simplicity, I use the two earlier concepts that Hazan suggested influence party unity: party cohesion and party discipline.

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