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# Analysing The Trends of Split-Ticket Voting in Israel

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### Introduction

When and why do voters split their tickets? Who is the typical ticketsplitter? Are there institutional conditions which affect the phenomenon of split-ticket voting? How is split-ticket voting related to coattail influence? The answers to these four basic questions can provide us with a better understanding and forecasting of election results.

The analysis of split-ticket voting patterns is limited to elections in which voters are given at least two sets of electoral choices. Systematic analysis over time is possible where election laws determine that elections to different institutions and/or at various levels take place at the same time. Thus, it is no wonder that American political scientists are interested in this phenomenon much more than their colleagues in other countries. In Israel, for example, there is no legal necessity to hold elections at the national and the local levels at the same time, although this was the conventional arrangement until 1973, providing wide possibilities for the study of voting behavior.

The voting behavior of the Israeli electorate is interesting in itself, while its theoretical importance goes far beyond local-domestic significance. Israel has been described several times as an *etat partitaire*,<sup>1</sup> a characteristic which is crucial to the phenomenon of split-ticket voting as well as coattail influence. However, especially since the Yom Kippur War of 1973, the Israeli political system has undergone a basic change.<sup>2</sup> One of the fundamental changes was the weakening of the *etat partitaire*, namely, a vast decline in the power of the parties as compared to other political institutions, especially interest groups. This trend should have led, among others, to an increase in the rate of split-ticket voting. The primary aim of this article is to prove that the expected increase did not occur and to explain the reasons for this.

Elazar's arguement that split-ticket voting has been increasing in Israel since the 1960's will be challenged through an analysis of three elections: 1973, 1977 and 1978.<sup>3</sup> Elazar perceives this trend in the contest of a "transition from ideologically based politics to politics based on territorial subdivisions,"<sup>4</sup> considering it as a "sign of the growing maturity of the electorate"<sup>5</sup> and "an indicator of greater political integration."<sup>6</sup> The tendency to analyse split-ticket voting in the broader context of a basic social or political change is not unique to Elazar. De Vires and Tarrance did the same with regard to the American electorate, adding an optimistic assessment that the ticket-splitters "offer the best hope for the revitalization of our unique American democrary,"<sup>7</sup> a conclusion which is not far from Elazar's normative consideration of the split-ticket voting phenomenon in Israel.

However, Elazar's conclusions are not based on systematic measurement. Hence, the first task at this stage is to formulate an appropriate method to measure the phenomenon of split-ticket voting.

#### Method

Burnahm defined split-ticket voting "as the difference between the highest and lowest percentages of the two-party vote cast for either party among the arrary of statewide offices in any given election," and, by the same token, concluded that "zero on this scale would correspond to absolute uniformity in partisan division of the vote for all offices at the same election."<sup>8</sup> Such a conclusion may be credible in terms of survey data, but not when using aggregate data.

Dealing with aggregate data necessitates taking into account two elements: a) the risks of an "ecological fallacy;" b) the possibility that the rate of ticket-splitting is actually much higher than that which has been measured because voters who split their tickets in opposite directions cancel each other out, thus being computed as straight-ticket voters. Arian and Weiss, analysing split-ticket voting in Israel, tried to solve this problem by stating that "in the case of a party which received 35 percent of the vote to the Knesset and 30 percent of the vote to the municipality, approximately 30 percent of the voters voted twice for the same party."<sup>9</sup>

Arian and Weiss developed an index of split-ticket voting aimed at comparing rates of split-ticket voting in different communities in a single election, or in more than one election in the same community. x is the percentage of votes received by a given party on one level; y is the percentage of votes received by that party at another level; n is the total number of parties competing. In order to avoid negative differences between x and y, they squared the difference. Thus, their index was as follows:

$$\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (x_i - y_i)^2}{n}$$

Pomper criticized this index, stating that is "fluctuates within no standardized range" as a result of the failure "to take the square-root of a sum of squared differences."<sup>10</sup> While Pomper's criticism is in principle useful and explains to what extent the original index was statistically biased, he himself ignores the mathematical rule that taking a square root must give two results, positive and negative. Thus, nothing has been solved. Had Arian and Weiss, as well as Pomper, used the absolute value of the difference, they would have solved the problem of negative numbers. But their main failure lay in placing the number of parties in the denominator. This has nothing to do with split-ticket voting. The proper denominator should be 2, since each voter's preference was considered twice in the numerator when analysing the two parties he supported. Consequently, the revised index of split-ticket voting should be:

$$\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} x_i - y_i}{2}$$

The index ranges from zero (no split-ticket voting at all) to 100 (maximal split-ticket voting). The values obtained by using this index are the assumed percentages of voters who split their tickets.

Arian and Weiss examined split-ticket voting at the national and municipal levels in four elections: 1955, 1959, 1965 and 1969.<sup>11</sup> The 1973 elections were the last in which the national and municipal levels could be compared and are the first of three cases examined here. The next national election was held in May 1977, while the municipal elections were held in November 1978. The latter is the second case analysed below, but here the analysis framework is different because in the interim an institutional change occurred. For the first time, mayors were elected on a personal basis, while the local councils continued to be elected through party lists. Previously, the councils themselves had elected the mayors following coalition bargaining.

The third case examined are the elections of June 1977 for the Histadrut (labor federation). These elections had also been previously conducted on a single ballot, with the local organs of the statewide organization—the workers' councils—being constituted according to the results in each community. In June 1977, for the first time, the workers' councils were elected on a separate ballot. Thus, voters could split their tickets between the national and the local levels. The secretaries of these councils continued to be elected by the councils themselves.

The Histadrut is a national federation of trade unions, founded in 1920. It is the broadest voluntary organization in Israel and is highly politicized. In the 1977 election to the Knesset, there were 2,236,293 eligible voters, as compared to 1,565,000 in the Histadrut elections a month later. The Histadrut elections have important political implications, since this organization controls basic social services, such as health insurance and pension funds. The Histadrut employs more people than any other organization in Israel. The elections to the professional trade unions which comprise the Histadrut are held separately at different times, and with no formal connection to the elections to the national institutions and workers' councils of the Histadrut.

In order to set a useful comparative framework for the three cases analysed, it was decided to consider the party system as being composed of four components: Alignment (a socialist bloc which held office at the national level until 1977); Likud (a right-wing bloc which was in opposition at the national level until 1977); the religious camp which includes three parties in the Knessett;<sup>12</sup> and other which are often the smaller parties at the national level and the local lists (often not related to any existing national party) at the local level. This four-fold framework makes possible a systematic treatment of all split-ticket voting settings.

All election results were computed according to the revised index presented above. In the analysis of the Histadrut elections the votes in the kibbutzim and moshavim were omitted because these agricultural set. tlements are not connected to any workers' council and therefore their members did not take part in the elections at the local level. Of the 68 workers' councils, 66 were analyses; two are Arab-dominated and therefore require special treatment. In the elections to the local authorities, 92 communities were analysed-34 of them cities and the rest smaller communities which do not have the formal status of a city. The Arab communities were again omitted, as were two small Jewish communities-in one, the religious camp and the Likud formed a pre-election coalition and ran on a joint list and with a single candidate for the office of mayor, while in the second only local lists took part, and not the three traditional political blocs. In the 1973 elections, 92 communities were analyses at both levels. These elections reflected the electoral system for the Knesset, in which there are party list and the whole country is considered a single constituency. This is a radical PR version which leaves almost no room for regional interests. When the expression of regional preferences is blocked at the national level, it is hypothesized that these will emerge forcefully in the municipal elections.

#### Findings

The results for the three elections—1973, 1977 and 1978—are presented in Table 1.

	1973		1977		1978	
ld is his	Knesset	Municipal	National	Local	Council	Mayor
Alignment	40.0	39.1	52.7	52.9	30.5	33.2
Likud	34.1	28.5	32.1	31.3	26.4	31.2
Religious	12.3	15.4	2.0	2.4	18.3	12.1
Others	13.6	17.0	13.2	13.4	24.8	23.5
n	1317731	1309729	762490	754274	1110000	1085199

Table 1: Election results by political blocs (in percentages)

Alignment voters are consistently more stable than others, with an average difference in the three cases of 1.27%, as compared to 3.73% for the Likud, 3.23% for the religious camp, and 1.63% for the others. The relatively high difference of the religious camp in 1978 is a result of the election laws stating that a candidate for mayor must win at least 40% of the

vote in order to be elected. The religious parties are well aware of the fact that this requirement is usually beyond their strength and prefer, therefore, to form pre-election coalitions with one of the two great blocs. Hence, some of the Alignment's candidates and especially those of the Likud gain many religious votes on the personal ballot.

Using aggregate data does not enable us to draw decisive conclusions as to the specific directions of the split votes, but we can assume that the strongest links exist between the Likud and the religious parties, and between the Likud and the smaller parties and local lists. In each of the three cases these links are reflected in better achievement at different levels. For example, the Likud was stronger at the national level in 1973 and 1977, while the religious and other parties were both stronger at the local level. In 1978 the Likud was stronger on the personal ballot, while the religious and other parties were stronger on the council ballot. When there are two levels, such as national and local, some of the religious voters prefer to give their votes on the national ballot to the Likud, while some Likud voters are loyal to this bloc only on the national ballot and vote for local lists on the other. The evidence needed to test these two hypotheses must be drawn from survey data.

Table 2 describes the nationwide rates of split-ticket voting by three alternate methods of measurement. First split-ticket voting is calculated without taking into account specific results in communities but by analysing the total achievement of the four blocs. Second, average split-ticket voting for a community is calculated on the basis of the results in each community. Finally, the number of voters in each community is taken into account in order to form a weighted average of split-ticket voting.

	1973	1977	1978
General	6.5	0.8	7.5
Community average	20.1	6.3	13.9
Community weighted average	15.8	2.3	11.7

Table 2: Split-Ticket Voting by Three Methods of Measurement

The transition from the first method of measurement to the other two decreases the risks of "ecological fallacy," namely, using large units of analysis partially cancels real split-ticket voting. The data presented in Table 2 reveals that the first alternative provides biased results, expressed in low rates of split-ticket voting. The difference between the community averages and the weighted averages may indicate a trend of low split-ticket voting in large communities, resulting in a decreased rate of split-ticket voting when using the community weighted averages. But a word of caution is required at this point: low rates in large communities may again be a result of the "ecological fallacy." The differences in the rate of split-ticket voting in the three cases refute the argument that split-ticket voting has consistently increased over time. In 1973 this rate was high, then dropped in 1977 and rose again in 1978, though it did not reach as high a level as in 1973. We therefore have to look for more profound causes to explain the differences among them. Already at this stage we can conclude that the clue lies in the differing nature of the three cases.

Of the total number of communities, 35 can be analysed comparatively in all three elections, while in others the voting districts differed from election to election. Table 3 describes rates of split-ticket voting in these 35 communities in all three elections.

and an array of the second	1973	1977	1978
Eben-Yehuda	41.3	16.3	5.7
Or-Akiva	5.3	11.0	8.25
Azor	21.6	8.6	15.1
Eilat	11.8	3.5	9.5
Ashdod	22.3	7.55	42.7
Ashkelon	8.3	4.2	7.3
Beer-Yaakov	32.2	10.3	34.6
Beit-Shean	8.0	4.35	4.4
Beit-Shemesh	20.6	17.55	19.4
Bnei-Brak	15.9	6.0	5.4
Bat-Yam	4.8	6.0	5.4
Gedera	36.6	3.9	12
Gan-Yavne	11.2	18.7	3.55
Dimona	28.9	5.35	10.9
Hadera	12.8	6.6	6.0
Holon	10.0	0.7	10.7
Yavne	13.9	5.75	31.0
Yehud	15.7	7.4	8.6
Yerucham	24.7	8.3	1.8
Kfar-Saba	16.8	1.3	7.2
Karmiel	12.4	3.65	11.0
Migdal-Haemek	14.9	5.15	25.0
Maalot	8.0	27.0	18.5
Nazeret-Illit	6.7	6.6	8.0
Netanyah	13.9	1.85	8.6
Acre	17.0	12.8	19.3
Kadima	9.3	7.45	11.9
Kiryat-Gat	7.4	2.65	18.3
Kiryat-Malachi	8.0	6.35	17.0
Rosh-Haayin	33.4	16.1	5.1
Ramla	24.3	2.15	3.8
Ramat-Hasharon	48.3	0.7	17.1
Shderot	14.8	1.45	3.3
Tel-Aviv	6.8	0.45	11.5

#### Table 3: Split-Ticket Voting by Communities

Of the 35 communities, 16 reflect the general pattern whereby the 1973 elections are characterized by high rates of split-ticket voting, the 1977 elections by low rates, and the 1978 elections by rates which are higher than those of 1977 but lower than those of 1973. In 19 communities there are deviations from the general pattern. These deviations were caused by five cases of high rates in 1977, seven cases of low rates in 1978, five cases of high rates in 1978, and eight cases of low rates in 1973. These last eight cases can be explained by the absence or marginality of local lists. In such cases, Likud supporters tend to vote a straight ticket and the overall rate of splitticket voting declines. Nazeret-Illit is a typical example, with no local lists and a very straight voting pattern by Likud supporters of 24% at the national level and 25.1% at the municipal level. The five cases of high splitticket voting in 1977 resulted from an opposite trend: strong local lists were supported by those who voted for the Likud at the national level. Gan-Yavne is a good example of this: Likud received 34.5% on the national ballot and only 16.6% at the municipal level as a result of the 18.6% success of a local list.

The 1978 deviations can be divided into two categories: those communities in which split-ticket voting rates were very low, and those in which they were very high. The latter type appears where the religious parties did not take part in the personal ballot but did take part in the council ballot. As a result, most religious voters shifted their support to the Likud. In Migdal-Haemek, for example, the religious parties gained 20.2% at the council level, but did not take part in the personal ballot. Therefore, the Likud's mayoral candidate won 53.7% of the votes although his party achieved only 38.6% on the council ballot. In general, the religious parties did not take part in the personal ballot in communities where they had no realistic chance of achieving the 40% minimum required for election.

Low rates of split-ticket voting in 1978 appeared in communities in which religious candidates ran for the office of mayor. In these communities the religious parties achieved relatively high results and their supporters did not shift their votes to Likud candidates. In Gan-Yavne, for example, where there were no local lists, the religious parties gained 33.4% on the council ballot and 35.4% on the personal ballot; the Likud, 28.7% and 25.2%; and the Alignment, 37.3% and 39.4%, respectively. No candidate achieved 40% in the first round. In the second round, the Alignment candidate was defeated, achieving only 44.1% while most Likud supporters backed the religious candidate who won by 55.9%. The deviations described above strengthen the argument that much of split-ticket voting is a result of transfers between the Likud and the religious parties, and to a lesser extent between the Likud and the local lists. Alignment voters are revealed as the most stable of the four groups.

### Analysis

The main trends still need to be explained. Why was split-ticket voting relatively high in 1973, low in 1977, and medium in 1978? Were there

systematic factors which affected the various rates and which have theoretical significance beyond the Israeli context? The explanations which will be presented here aim at building a framework which can also be applied in other political systems.

Five factors strengthen split-ticket voting:

a) Elections which permit the expression of personal preferences are characterized by high rates of split-ticket voting, in contrast to elections in which voters are confronted only with party lists. Even when candidates represent parties, their very existence as individuals weakens party solidarity and contributes to high rates of split-ticket voting. Very high rates of splitticket voting will appear if personal candidates and not party lists exist at both levels. If there are candidates at one level and party lists at the other (as in 1978), split-ticket voting will be somewhat lower, but still higher than in a situation in which party lists exist at both levels (as in 1973 and 1977).

b) Split-ticket voting is an acquired behavior pattern. Hence, the more institutionalized a procedural setting which enables ticket-splitting, creating a tradition of split-ticket voting, the more voters tend to split their tickets. Faced with new electoral procedures in 1977 and 1978, some voters were not fully aware of the split-ticket possibility. In contrast, in the 1973 elections the voters encountered the same electoral procedure for the fifth time, namely, elections to be the local authorities and to the national legislature on the same day.

c) In elections held at different levels, i.e. national and local, there is much more room for split-ticket voting than in elections held at a single level. The existence of different levels legitimizes the possibility of split-ticket voting since voters can easily differentiate between them. This differentiation is strengthened in countries where the electoral system at the national level is such that the entire country is treated as a single constituency, while an electoral system in which candidates are elected by district does not block the regional factor and reduces tensions between center and periphery.

The 1973 and 1977 elections involved different levels, while in 1978 only the local level was involved. If two levels exist, split-ticket voting is higher when both have the same degree of political salience. This was the case in the 1973 elections; in 1977, however, the political salience of the national level was high while that of the local level was low.

The electoral system of the 1977 Histadrut elections did not take into account the fundamental units of the Histadrut periphery—those which function at the grass-roots of trade union politics—namely the workers' committees, which are organized by place of employment. In contrast, the workers' councils are considered less important bodies which were traditionally dominated by the central leaderships of the parties. Workers' councils are composed along geographical lines, while the main problems of workers have nothing to do with regions but with occupational and professional issues which cut across regional lines.

d) In elections to different institutions there is even more room for split-

ticket voting than in elections to the same institution—for example national legislature, state legislature, local authority, presidency, trade union, etc. Elections to different institutions do not necessarily coincide with elections at different levels. It is possible to hold elections at different levels and to different institutions, but also to hold elections at different levels to the same institution, or at the same level to different institutions. When voters are confronted with elections to various institutions, they can easily split their tickets, while elections to the same institutions, while the 1977 and 1978 elections were held to the same institutions (Histadrut in 1977 and local authorities in 1978).

Higher rates of split-ticket voting in elections to different institutions can also be explained by a technical element of the electoral procedure. Rusk found that the institutional environment plays a crucial role in splitticket voting behavior.<sup>13</sup> In his study he presents evidence showing that the introduction and establishment of the Australian Ballot in America at the end of the nineteenth century led to an increase in split-ticket voting in comparison to the previous ballot systems. In this new system, both parties were placed on the same ballot, guaranteeing a secret vote. By the same token, we can argue that the existence of two separate polling stations in the Israeli 1973 elections, one for each institution, supplied the voter with a more appropriate institutional environment for ticket-splitting than in 1977 and 1978 when both ballots were cast at the same polling booth. Moreover, in 1973 there was a time gap between the two elections which did not exist in 1977 and 1978. This technical difference may also help explain the high rate of split-ticket voting in 1973 as compared to 1977 and 1978.

e) Elections lacking an ideological basis will lead to high rates of split-ticket voting, since ideology is strongly connected with partisanship. Elections which are ideology-based will discourage voters from splitting their tickets. In general, elections to the national legislature in an *etat partitaire* such as Israel can never be considered totally non-ideological, while local elections may or may not be. Of the three elections analysed here, only those of 1978 can be considered non-ideological when we define ideological elections as those in which *fundamental ideology* is salient.

Following this line of thought, it is easy to view the 1973 elections, when national elections were held, as ideology-based, and by the same token to label the 1978 municipal elections as non-ideological. But viewing the Histadrut elections of 1977 as ideology-based requires further explanation.

The upheaval of May 1977, expressed in the Alignment's defeat in the national election and in the formation of a Likud-based government, sharpened the ideological debate in the Histadrut elections one month later. Using Campbell's terminology, the upheaval of May 1977 created a *high-stimulus election* in June 1977. But his argument that "a low-stimulus election tends to follow party lines"<sup>14</sup> is inconsistent with the 1977 election in which party lines were strictly maintained although it was a high-stimulus

election, and perhaps even because of this. Campbell's differentiation between a low-stimulus and a high-stimulus election is insufficient. The decisive factor is the specific nature of the stimulus. The three cases analysed here all represent high-stimulus elections but the stimulus in 1977 was different from that of 1973 and 1978, and therefore had a different effect on voting behavior. While the stimulus in 1977 was domestic, the stimuli in 1973 and 1978 were on the international plane: the 1973 elections were held two months after the conclusion of the Yom Kippur War, and the 1978 elections were held two months after the signing of the Camp David Agreements. Municipal elections are almost unaffected by such international stimuli, but trade union elections are a classic arena for domestic influences. International stimuli tend in general to create a national consensus in Israel, as happened to some extent in 1973 and 1978, while domestic stimuli tend in general to create a dissensus which means deep ideological discussion.

An analysis of the three cases presented above reveals basic differences which are described in Table 4.

	Personal candidacy	Procedural institution- alization	Different levels	Different institutions	Lack of ideology
Histadrut 1977	Louis Trains	and the state		Sector Trees	in the
Local authorities 1978	+			an an star an	+
Local authorities and Knesset 1973	-	+	+		

Table 4: Factors Strengthening Split-Ticket	Voting
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In the 1977 Histadrut elections, a very low rate of split-ticket voting reflected the existence of only one strengthening factor (different levels). In the 1978 elections, two strengthening factors were present—lack of ideology and personal candidacy—and therefore the rate of split-ticket voting was higher than in the 1977 Histadrut elections. In the 1973 elections, the high rate of split-ticket voting reflected the presence of three strengthening factors: different levels, different institutions, and high procedural institutionalization which was accompanied by a long tradition of ticket-splitting.

#### Conclusion

Miller's statement that "coattail influence can exist only where straight ticket voting prevails"<sup>15</sup> is limited to two-party systems. In a multi-party system such as Israel, coattail influence can exist side by side with splitticket voting. While coattail influence was characteristic of Alignment supporters (especially in 1973), among Likud supporters and religious voters, such influence was much weaker, resulting in split-ticket voting. Coattail influence in the case of Alignment voters is not necessarily a result of charismatic leadership at the national level, but characteristic of socialist parties in which party discipline is salient and the organizational structure strong enough to maintain straight-ticket voting. Likud, a bloc of rightwing parties, lacks party discipline and has a loose organizational structure.

Miller's conclusion on the presidential coattail of 1952 is that "Eisenhower led the Republican congressional ticket primarily because he failed to carry with him voters who supported him but who would not vote for his party's congressional candidates."<sup>16</sup> This can be applied to the Israeli context. The more votes Likud had achieved in 1973 at the national level, the more widespread split-ticket voting should have been, namely, the religious and local lists should have been strengthened. The different trends of coattail influence between Alignment and Likud voters are interesting when we take into account the fact that the Likud had a distinguished charismatic leader, M. Begin, while the Alignment did not. Hence we can conclude that, in Israel, coattail influence is primarily an organizational, and to some extent even ideological factor, and not a personal.

Defining the socio-economic composition of the ticket-splitters is difficult without survey data. De Vries and Tarrance found that members of trade unions tend to split their tickets less than non-members.<sup>17</sup> While in the 1977 Histadrut elections all voters were trade union members, they constituted only a part of the 1973 and 1978 electorates. This tendency is consistent with the lower split-ticket voting in the 1977 electorates. This tendency is consistent with the lower split-ticket voting in the 1977 elections. But except for this pattern, our findings indicate a trend opposite to that presented by De Vries and Tarrance. The typical American ticket-splitter has a high income, is more educated than the average citizen, is younger, Protestant, professional and white.18 While the typical Israeli ticket-spliter has not yet been studied in a comprehensive survey, we can hypothesize just the opposite trends: less integrated into the social-political system, namely lower SES, lower income, less education, and affiliated with deprived ethnic groups. These conclusions are derived from two major findings: most ticket-splitters are Likud supporters who are mostly lower-class outsiders;19 split-ticket voting is high in communities whose residents are mostly lowerclass outsiders.

It can be argued that the basic paradox of right-wing parties being supported mainly by the lower classes should be accompanied by a moderating or compensating factor. Here, split-ticket voting emerges as an answer to this paradox. This hypothesis can be tested in future elections as well as in other political systems where right-wing parties gain much of their support from members of the lower class.

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<sup>19</sup>G. Pomper, "The Elections in Israel–1969," Book Review, American Political Science Review, 69 (March 1975), p. 295.

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<sup>12</sup>The three religious parties do not take part in the Histadrut elections, and most of their supporters are not members of the Histadrut. The religious list which took part in the Histadrut elections-the Religious Worker-is identified with the Alignment, and was headed by a Knesset member of the Alignment.

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