

## THUNDER BEFORE THE STORM: PRE-ELECTION AGITATION AND POST-ELECTION TURMOIL

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Few would argue with the police spokesman who noted a couple of weeks before election day 1981 that "there hasn't been an election campaign in Israel as violent as the present one."<sup>1</sup> Yet even fewer seemed to realize what the nearly immediate consequence of this public agitation would be — a sharp rise in public protest and civil disturbance *after* the elections were over. In this the 1981 elections were merely continuing a pattern already well established years beforehand. For the election campaign in Israel is *not* a "noisy" exception to the rule of public quiet; rather it is a symbol of — and to a great extent even a factor behind — the relatively high level of public protest/disorder found in Israeli society at all times.

This does not mean, of course, that the precise events which occurred during May–June 1981 were representative of the type of agitation found during normal times or even previous elections.<sup>2</sup> To the contrary, Israel had never seen anything quite like it. Hooliganism abounded. Labor Alignment speakers, especially, were hounded into silence or intemperate outbursts.<sup>3</sup> Local campaign headquarters were gutted while windshields and windows were smashed for displaying the "wrong" campaign stickers.<sup>4</sup> Garbage cans with burning rubbish inside were heaved into campaign rallies. Arrests ran into the hundreds. Government bodyguards even had to replace private guards to protect Peres as a result of assassination threats (Rosenberg 1981).

But if Israelis looked to the morning after June 30 as a return to normality, they were profoundly mistaken. Not that the election hooliganism and agitation continued. Most people were too exhausted, pleasantly surprised, or overly frustrated by the razor thin "victory" of the Likud to continue along the same

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path. But others were only too willing to carry on the agitation for their own purposes, even raising the ante if that seemed possible. Ultra-orthodox Jews caused a national furor (and a government mini-crisis within a month of its being formed) by attempting to block the government-licensed archaeological dig at the City of David and added insult to injury by desecrating the grave of Theodor Herzl. Ultra-nationalists began to illegally move into vacated Yamit dwellings to block the upcoming Sinai evacuation. In short, the political temperature — which had been artificially raised during the campaign — now seemed to take on a life of its own. Rather than the fever being broken by the act of balloting, it rose even further. The illness for Israel was no longer acute; it had by now become chronic.

#### METHODOLOGY AND GENERAL FINDINGS

While a study of this type could have used protest statistics for previous periods which have been already collected in other projects, it was felt that an accurate portrait of the situation could not be derived due to the flawed nature of the previous projects' data collection. The primary source for almost all these studies was *The New York Times*, with secondary (control) sources being regional journals (e.g., *Asian Recorder*, *Africa Digest*, *Middle East Journal*, etc.).<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, while they perform an adequate job of covering the major political demonstrations and other critical forms of public agitation, these sources do not even attempt to report the more mundane but far more prevalent (and thus at least equally significant) lower-key protest endemic to many societies.

The Israeli case at hand serves to illustrate the problem. For the years 1960-67 Taylor and Hudson's survey, for example, counted twenty-five street demonstrations. The present study — using the native (national) newspaper *The Jerusalem Post* as its primary source<sup>6</sup> — scored two hundred and twenty-eight such outdoor demonstrations over the same period! In addition, the present study included all forms of public group agitation: indoor protest meetings; politically oriented strikes;<sup>8</sup> miscellaneous forms of group<sup>9</sup> civil disobedience and protest (e.g., sit-ins, hunger strikes, squattings, etc.); as well as the more traditional outdoor demonstrations (e.g., rallies,<sup>10</sup> marches, riots, etc.).<sup>11</sup>

Of course, the number of protest events — while significant — does not tell the entire story. The power or strength of the protest is of some interest as well. To this end, Ted Gurr's (1968) "Magnitude of Civil Strife" scale (hereafter called "kratos")<sup>12</sup> was employed with one major modification. Whereas in "intensity" component is scored on a body count basis (i.e., the cost in human

casualties), the present study refines this by differentiating between those events which are peaceful, disruptive/obstructive, involve violence vs. property, violence vs. people, and general riots.<sup>13</sup> Each higher intensity was assigned a larger numerical score. The same was done for the other two components of "kratos" — size (the number of participants), and duration of each event (see table 3). The combined average score of all three components yielded the general average magnitude of protest for each period, regardless of any increase or decrease in the number of protest events.

The periodization was done in blocs of two and six months. Two different pre-election periods were scored (E-2M and E-6M), encompassing two and six months prior to each election day. In relation to E-6M, four *post*-election (Government) periods were tested [G + 6M, G + (2) 6M, G + (3) 6M and G + (4) 6M], encompassing a two-year period. With regard to E-2M, two post-election periods were scored: E + 2M and G + 2M. The latter's count began not from election day but rather from the day in which the newly elected Government coalition received its vote of confidence from Israel's parliamentary body — the Knesset. This occurred anywhere from one to three months after the elections. The interim period is marked by great flux with no real political authority to which any protest can be addressed. It was therefore supplemented by the G + 6M and G + 2M scores. In all, then, nine elections were held over this thirty year period, affording a respectable sample for determining whether any protest-election nexus exists.<sup>14</sup>

The relationship between pre- and post-election public agitation was apparent almost from the beginning of Israel's existence. As table 1 shows, of the nine election campaign periods surveyed only two displayed a decline in number of protest events in the two months after election day (E + 2M) in comparison with the same period of time before it (E-2M).<sup>15</sup> Much the same situation holds true when the "post-election" two month period is designated as that which commences after the new Government is given Knesset approval (G+2M). Thus, in most of the nine election periods the number of public protests and disturbances rose after the campaign itself ended. Nor were these increases insubstantial. As can be seen from table 1, in some cases (e.g., 1951, 1961) the E+2M rises exceeded one hundred percent and in one year (1951) the G+2M increase was fourfold. In only one year (1959) was there a sharp immediate post-election decline (80 percent) but by the time the Government was formed the number of such events had almost equaled that of the pre-election situation.

The picture remains the same if the time periods are lengthened to six months (table 2). In the eight elections — 1951 through 1977 inclusive<sup>16</sup> — the G+6M figures show five increases, one decline, and two identical results when compared to the E-6M aggregates. Here again there are some sizable increases,

TABLE 1

*Pre- and Post-Election Protest in Israel, 1951-1981 (2 Month Periods)*

Year	Pre-Election Period (E+2M)	Election Day	Post-Election Period (E+2M)	Government Formed	Post-Government Period (G+2M)
1951	4	30 July	10 (↑)	9 Oct.	17 (↑)
1955	2	26 July	4 (↑)	3 Nov.	4 (↑)
1959	5	3 Nov.	1 (↓)	16 Dec.	4 (↓)
1961	3	8 Aug.	7 (↑)	2 Nov.	4 (↑)
1965	8	2 Nov.	12 (↑)	12 Jan. 1966	8 (=)
1969	13	28 Oct.	9 (↓)	15 Dec.	6 (↓)
1973	11	3 Dec.	16 (↑)	10 March 1974	21 (↑)
1977	11	17 May	17 (↑)	20 June	15 (↑)
1981	29 <sup>a</sup>	30 June	32 (↑)	5 August	40 (↑)
			7 (↑), 2 (↓)	6 (↑), 2 (↓), 1 (=)	

↑ ↓ Indicates direction of change.

= Indicates no change.

<sup>a</sup> This figure both understates and overstates the amount of public agitation during this period. The newspapers reported "a number" of "incidents" involving a single person or a few people — beneath the "10" criterion used for all other periods. Thus, each event which involved more than ten protesters/agitators was scored individually; on those days when other types of relatively "minor" (numerically speaking) incidents were reported, it was scored as one large event.

especially in 1951, 1955, 1965, and 1977. But of the greatest importance is what occurs over the long run — up to two years after the Government is formed. As table 2 illustrates, in *over two-thirds* of the semi-annual (post Government formation) periods surveyed, the number of such events was *higher* than the respective six month pre-election period. In only slightly under an *eighth* of these was there any *decline* from the campaign period (in a fifth of them — six periods — the number of events was identical). In sum, no matter how the numbers of events are looked at it is clear that elections in Israel do not involve relatively high levels of agitation, but rather serve as springboards for post-election protest.

However, the issue of magnitude — *kratos* — shows a somewhat different picture (table 3). Comparing the *kratos* of protests immediately prior to and subsequent to the elections provides us with a reverse mirror image of the number of protest events: in six cases protest *kratos* declined immediately after the elections, in one it rose, and in another case it remained roughly level. The

TABLE 2

*Pre- and Post-Election Protest in Israel: 1950-1979 (6 Month Periods)*

Year	Pre-Election Period E-6M	Government Formation		Post-Election Period				Post-Election Change
		Election Date	Gov't Formed	G+6M	G+(2)6M	G+(3)6M	G+(4)6M	
1951	14	July 30	Oct. 9	26(↑)	19(↑)	21(↑)	14(=)	3↑; 0↓; 1=
1955	8	July 26	Nov. 3	18(↑)	18(↑)	9(↑)	13(↑)	4↑
1959	20	Nov. 3	Dec. 16	12(↓)	14(↓)	22(↑)	a	1↑; 2↓
1961	17	Aug. 15	Nov. 2	17(=)	9(↓)	17(=)	35(↑)	1↑; 1↓; 2=
1965	24	Nov. 2	Jan. 12	38(↑)	37(↑)	24(=)	16(↓)	2↑; 1↓; 1=
1969	24	Oct. 28	Dec. 15	24(=)	24(=)	57(↑)	81(↑)	2↑; 0↓; 2=
1973	55	Dec. 31	Mar. 10	64(↑)	75(↑)	90(↑)	62(↑)	4↑
1977	37	May 17	June 20	57(↑)	55(↑)	59(↑)	140(↑)	4↑
				5↑; 1↓; 2=	5↑; 2↓; 1=	6↑; 0↓; 2=	5↑; 1↓; 1=	21↑; 4↓; 6=

↑ ↓ Indicates direction of change.

= Indicates no change.

<sup>a</sup> Pre-election campaign period of 1961.

TABLE 3

*Pre- and Post-Election Protest "Kratos": 1950-1979*

E-6M <sup>a</sup>	Election Date	Gov't Formed	G+6M	G+(2)6M	G+(3)6M	G+(4)6M	Post-Election Average
1.708	30 July 1951	9 Oct. 1951	1.686(↓) <sup>b</sup>	1.772(↑) <sup>b</sup>	1.619(↓) <sup>b</sup>	1.786(↑) <sup>b</sup>	1.716(↑)
1.813	26 July 1955	3 Nov. 1955	1.787(↓)	1.982(↑)	2.037(↑)	1.910(↑)	1.913(↑)
1.902	3 Nov. 1959	16 Dec. 1959	1.650(↓)	1.750(↓)	1.798(↓)	<sup>c</sup>	1.733(↓)
1.867	15 Aug. 1961	2 Nov. 1961	1.722(↓)	1.654(↓)	1.714(↓)	1.980(↑)	1.768(↓)
2.190	2 Nov. 1965	12 Jan. 1966	1.721(↓)	1.805(↓)	1.898(↓)	1.595(↓)	1.755(↓)
1.558	28 Oct. 1969	15 Dec. 1969	1.563(=)	1.671(↑)	1.841(↑)	1.724(↑)	1.700(↑)
1.801	31 Dec. 1973	10 Mar. 1974	1.702(↓)	1.671(↓)	1.655(↓)	1.818(↑)	1.712(↓)
1.777	17 May 1977	20 June 1977	1.824(↑)	1.674(↓)	1.842(↑)	1.805(↑)	1.786(↑)
			1↑; 6↓; 1=	3↑; 5↓	3↑; 5↓	6↑; 1↓	
1.965 (E-2M)	30 June 1981	5 Aug. 1981		(E+2M) 1.934(↓)		(G+2M) 1.942(↓)	

Intensity — Peaceful = 1.0; disruptive/obstructive = 2.0; violence vs. property = 3.0; violence vs. people = 4.0; general riot = 5.0

Size — Small (10-99) = 1.0; medium (100-999) = 2.0; large (1,000-9,999) = 3.0; huge (10,000+) = 4.0.

Duration — Short (up to 3 hours) = 1.0; dispersed by authorities = 1.5; medium (3-24 hours) = 2.0; long (over a day) = 3.0.

↑ ↓ Indicates direction of change

= Indicates significant change

<sup>a</sup>  $\frac{\Sigma \text{Intensity} + \text{Size} + \text{Duration}}{\text{No. of Events}}$

<sup>b</sup> Increase or decline relative to E-6M period.

<sup>c</sup> Pre-election campaign period of 1961.

initial results of the pre- and post-election periods in 1981 indicate a continuation of this trend. This suggests that the election campaign period, while dampening the number of such events, also raises the intensity, size, and/or duration of those which do occur.

Nevertheless, as time goes on the *kratos* of protest does increase — for reasons to be discussed later on. Thus, three of the second and third post-election periods exhibit higher *kratos* scores than their respective pre-election periods (it is still lower in five). By the time one reaches the fourth period (18 to 24 months after the Government is formed) the situation becomes congruent with the *number* of protest events: in six cases the *kratos* score is higher and only once is it lower.

Taken altogether, then, of the thirty-one post-election periods, thirteen are marked by higher *kratos* than their previous pre-election periods, seventeen have lower *kratos* scores, and one is virtually the same. When one takes the overall *kratos* score of the four post-election periods together and compares it each time to its respective pre-election *kratos* score, the numbers signify no *kratos* trend either way; four pre-election periods have a higher *kratos* than their two year post-election periods, and in four cases the picture is reversed. In short, the only clear trend that can be ascertained is that there is a decided decrease of *kratos* immediately after the election; but by the middle of the Government's four year term in office the public's protest *kratos* even surpasses the vehemence it exhibited during the election campaign.

## DISCUSSION

There are a number of possible explanations as to why the number of protest events and ultimately also the magnitude of protest is greater after the election campaign than during it. Three central ones can be adduced: psychological (subjective) factors, institutional-political (objective and subjective) considerations, and economic causes (objective).

### *Psychological Factors*

Election campaigns by their very nature produce promises, claims, and expectations which have but a tenuous connection with political reality. The problem, however, lies not only in the content of the candidates' oratorical output but perhaps more importantly in the voters' reception of such output.

On the one hand, as Roper notes (referring to American Presidential campaigns), "elections are quadrennial myth builders which ... make voters

believe some man is better than he is" (cited in Mueller 1970). On the other hand, during election campaigns virtually all voters are hearing from some source the things that they wish to hear — especially in a multi-party system like Israel's where the array of promises and policies runs the gamut. Indeed, in such a system where one party usually does not win an outright majority, the chances of each voter's preferred party constituting one element of the governing coalition are quite high, further affording a sense of "the right thing will be done" by those in the system and thus lessening the need for non-traditional forms of political activity.<sup>17</sup> This was particularly relevant in the 1981 elections as the race was so close, and any number of party permutations and combinations were conceivable — even the possibility of a national unity government which once existed in the late 1960s.

Even when the campaign "output" does not jibe with a voter's expectations, the subjective interpretation of such oratory may provide the same sense of good feeling. As Edelman argues, "people read their own meanings into situations that are unclear or provocative of emotion" (1964, p. 30). In addition, as ambiguity increases, this "reinterpretation" of campaign oratory becomes ever more salient: "The less well defined the stimulus situation, or the more emotionally laden, the greater will be the contribution of the perceived" (Fensterheim 1953).

That this entire phenomenon occurs in Israel has been noted on a number of occasions. Writing about the elections of 1969, Torgovnik described how "the style type [of election campaign], dealing with ideals ... becomes important in electoral politics ... [because] the terminology of the style issue is somewhat vague, making it difficult to assign to it any one meaning." Indeed, he pointed out, "the closer a party was to power ... the more generalized was the style of its platform" (1972, pp. 23, 34). This meant that the majority of voters were fed "interpretable" oratory. The then dominant Alignment Party (Labor) found itself in much the same position as its sister umbrella organizations in a two-party system — trying to say what all potential voters wanted to hear: "The Alignment had to contend with the opposing positions of the Mapam and Rafi factions on labor relations.... Mapam demanded the freedom to strike; Rafi argued for an efficient economy. As a compromise, the Alignment platform stated clearly its opposition to compulsory arbitration ... and spoke of the need for efficiency" (ibid., p. 34).

The problem, of course, begins to make itself felt only after the elections are over. Whatever the winning parties' ambiguities and/or double-faced promises, the voter has interpreted the oratory to mean something concrete will be done on the issues along the lines of the received/reinterpreted promises. Thus, even if the winning parties from their own perspective do not go back on their



promises, they are caught in the vise of their supporters' subjective expectations. The result, as Etzioni concluded, was that "more protest ... will erupt the greater the discrepancy between rhetoric and delivery" (1970, p. 47) — a discrepancy which may be objective, subjective, or as is usually the case, both.

In Israel this problem has recently become quite acute, especially on matters concerning socioeconomic policy. Simply put, Israel's two central parties have reached the point where their "official" socioeconomic programs are in direct conflict with their respective supporters' basic interests! The Ashkenazim, who constitute the Labor Alignment's ethnic core, also constitute Israel's broad middle class whose interest lies in the government pursuing a laissez-faire economic and social policy. It need hardly be noted that Labor continues to stand for quite the reverse, despite some moderation and modification of its Socialist platform. On the other hand the Likud, which supports a laissez-faire socio-economics (also modified and moderated), garners its support predominantly from the Orientals who as a group tend to be found lower down on the socioeconomic scale — and who are as a result much more amenable to a Socialist program involving redistribution of income, expanded welfare, etc.

In such a topsy-turvy ideological situation it comes as no surprise that neither party in the 1981 elections showed any inclination to talk seriously, in specifics, about these issues and what each planned to do in order to resolve Israel's worsening internal problems. The gap between campaign rhetoric and post-election delivery had to be great since there existed quite a difference between what the parties said and what they intended to do even assuming that they themselves knew their own intentions.

Israel's post-election rise in protest, then, especially over the long run, can in part be attributed to psychological frustration. Yet it is not altogether clear just who is frustrated more — the winners or the losers. There is no doubt, though, that both contribute to post-election dissatisfaction, albeit for different reasons.<sup>18</sup>

Paradoxically, the problem may be especially acute for supporters of the victorious parties — for non-ideological reasons. Part of the difficulty stems from the campaign itself. Norton Long pointed out some time ago that "the openness of the campaign organization, its need of volunteers, its fear of giving any offense ... encourage and invite the entrance into the organization of the most diverse kinds of actors. Many of these must at a later date be painfully combed out of the organization's hair" (1962). Needless to say, such a comb-out is especially frustrating to the (d)ejected supporters, in light of their past activity and post-election expectations.

All this assumes of course that post-election protest results from the winning supporters — active and passive — not being satisfied with the actions or output

of the parties which they supported. However, this may be only half the story, for even if those parties *did* execute according to plan, such execution would alienate those voters who lost the election. Here one can surmise that a time variable is at work; many voters on the losing side probably do not believe that the winning parties will or can carry out their program (assuming that it differs markedly from the previous one). Thus, they will afford a “honeymoon” period to the victors — until the promises start being kept. As Barnes and Kaase have discovered in their recently concluded study of five countries: “Policy dissatisfaction has an impact on protest potential. In a broad sense, then, protesting is a response to dissatisfaction with specific societal goals” (1979, p. 439).

In sum, the government is caught between the anvil of its supporters’ expectations and the hammer of its antagonists’ fears. One way or another more citizens become dissatisfied as time goes on. Indeed, because of party ambiguity and the voters’ cognitive reinterpretations during the election campaign, the chances are high that *both* sides will become dissatisfied regardless of what the victorious parties do. This problem is particularly acute when the government comprises a coalition of minorities, as has always been the case in Israel. As Downs notes, such a government must alienate more and more different minority groups as it begins to execute concrete policies (1957, pp. 55-60).

#### *Institutional-Political Considerations*

While the psychological component is related to the political system’s output, no less important are the problems inherent in citizen input to the system — rather limited, even in a democracy. Of course, the main means for such input is the fact of voting itself, the performance of which has significance beyond the voting booth.

First, casting the ballot seems to change the average citizen’s perception of his own potential role within the political system. In a study on the American voter, Ginsberg and Weissberg found that “among those respondents who indicated prior to the [1968] election that people like themselves had no influence on the government, almost half (49.4 percent) had come to believe that they did have quite a lot of ‘say’ following the election” (1978). This might tend to *dampen* post-election protest — at least in the short run. However, over time the realization sets in that the previous attitude was correct after all, further heightening general frustration. Indeed, insofar as Israeli post-election *kratos* is concerned one can clearly see the time variable at work (i.e., how frustration rises from the first to the fourth post-election period). Protest is more markedly intense two years after the election than immediately subsequent to the election.<sup>19</sup>

Second, not only the act of voting but the campaign itself seems to have an effect on the voter's perception of input potential. Edelman points out how "election campaigns ... give people a chance to express discontents and enthusiasms, to enjoy a sense of involvement." But, he continues, while "voting may be the most fundamental of all devices for reassuring masses that they are participants in the making of public policy ... this is participation in a ritual act ...; only in a minor degree is it participation in policy formation" (1966, pp. 30, 190). In short, elections act as safety valves par excellence — when open, only "hot air" emerges from the masses; when not open (between elections) the political pot starts to boil.

Etzioni makes precisely this point: "Only a few political tools are available to the average citizen between elections. If he becomes seriously aroused about one or more issues, he may be forced to wait to exercise his franchise as long as four years, and then he may cast only one vote to express his various positions.... Between elections ... his real options as a non-demonstrator are few" (1970, p. 6). True, other tools for citizen input have been developed: letter writing, petitions, advertisements in newspapers, campaign contributions and lobbying, but as Etzioni notes, "almost all political tools other than demonstrations are particularly suited to the privileged rather than the underprivileged groups. To use them effectively requires money, education, and organizational experience" (ibid., pp. 18-19).

In Israel's case the problem is especially sharp because of the nature of its proportional electoral system. Since the entire country constitutes one election district there is no territorial or regional representation, and consequently no representative to whom the voter can turn to for redress. In addition, despite some recent moves to democratize the internal party structure,<sup>20</sup> by and large the system remains "oligarchical, closed and centralized" (Goldberg 1980, p. 101). Also, given the fact that the parties predated the state itself, they developed all types of auxiliary institutions — social, economic, and political — to further their respective "movements": publishing houses, sports teams, health systems, newspapers, schools, etc. This in effect stunted the growth of voluntary civic institutions which could be used as tools for lobbying or otherwise transferring messages from the citizenry to its government. In short, the Israeli system provides even less quasi-formal access for citizen input (outside the ballot box) than many other western democracies.<sup>21</sup>

Not that voting is itself an ideal means for political expression. While pulling the lever or dropping the ballot into the box may be an *active* form of political expression, it is emptied of much content through the great difficulty for the voter (at least in Israel) in determining the final candidates or options to be voted on. With regard to the critical decision of who shall be a candidate and

what the party platform should stand for, the voter is passive — especially in Israel with no tradition of primary elections. Thus, many politically interested citizens who want not only to respond to choices presented by the system but also to actively take part in such option formulation will naturally turn to other, more concrete and direct, means of political expression such as protest demonstrations, etc. As Verba et al. argue elsewhere: "Not only does he [the voter] have relatively little effect on the outcome, but he does not choose the alternatives with which he is faced.... Cooperative activity is ... more precisely related to citizen problems than elections" (1971, p. 18). Once those elections are over and the political addressee is established in place, the interested citizens turn to more unambiguous tools of political "participation" to make their specific concerns known to the new powers that be.<sup>22</sup>

From the perspective of the citizens' success as well as from the standpoint of the system's stability, it is preferable that such "participation" be within an organized pressure group framework. During election campaigns, however, pressure groups have their hands full in employing those formal channels which are open to them — direct mailings, collecting and disbursing contributions, influencing party platforms, etc. After the elections much of this activity dies away (except insofar as preliminary preparations for the next elections are concerned), leaving lobbying as the central means of influence, and public protest plays a not inconsiderable part in the overall pressure campaign.

If this is true, one would expect that interest group initiated protest would be felt to a larger extent in the post-election periods than during the election campaign. In order to determine if this is the case in Israel, the protests were also scored along an organizational axis: ad hoc, interest group, and political party. The former were not only spontaneous demonstrations but also those organized by a group of people for a specific purpose at a point in time (e.g., residents of a neighborhood demonstrating in order to get traffic lights installed at a street crossing). All formal organizations (e.g., war veterans) or on-going groups (e.g., Black Panthers) were placed in the second category. Any protest initiated by a political party was placed in the third category.

The results confirm the hypothesis (table 4). As noted earlier, the general trend of post-election protest is up. But this increase is more marked among interest group protest events (a rise in 21 post-election periods compared to the campaign period, with only 6 declines) than among ad hoc protest (16 increases, 13 declines). Even political party induced protest scores higher (than ad hoc protest) after the elections than before (16 increases, 9 declines). The same general pattern holds up when the overall post-election increase is controlled for. As a percent of its own six month period, pressure group protest registers 17 increases and 13 declines (political party protest has 15 and 12 respectively),

TABLE 4

*Organizational Basis of Pre- and Post-Election Protests, 1950-1979*

Year	Protest Organizations Per Election	E-6M	G+6M	G+(2)6M	G+(3)6M	G+(4)6M	# Change	% Change
1951	Ad hoc	12 (86%)	20 (77%)	16 (84%)	10 (48%)	11 (79%)	2 ↑, 2 ↓	4 ↓
	Pressure Grp.	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (5)	4 (19)	1 (7)	3 ↑, 1 =	3 ↑, 1 =
	Polit. Party	2 (14)	6 (23)	2 (11)	7 (33)	2 (14)	2 ↑, 2 =	2 ↑, 1 ↓, 1 =
1955	Ad hoc	4 (50)	9 (50)	11 (61)	4 (44)	9 (69)	3 ↑, 1 =	2 ↑, 1 ↓, 1 =
	Pressure Grp.	4 (50)	5 (28)	7 (39)	2 (22)	4 (31)	2 ↑, 1 ↓, 1 =	4 ↓
	Polit. Party	0 (0)	4 (22)	0 (0)	3 (33)	0 (0)	2 ↑, 2 =	2 ↑, 2 =
1959	Ad hoc	15 (75)	7 (58)	10 (71)	12 (55)	a	3 ↓	3 ↓
	Pressure Grp.	4 (20)	5 (32)	2 (14)	8 (36)	a	2 ↑, 1 ↓	2 ↑, 1 ↓
	Polit. Party	1 (5)	0 (0)	2 (14)	2 (9)	a	2 ↑, 1 ↓	2 ↑, 1 ↓
1961	Ad hoc	10 (59)	8 (47)	7 (78)	10 (59)	16 (46)	1 ↑, 2 ↓, 1 =	2 ↑, 1 ↓, 1 =
	Pressure Grp.	6 (35)	5 (29)	2 (22)	5 (29)	14 (40)	1 ↑, 3 ↓	1 ↑, 3 ↓
	Polit. Party	1 (6)	4 (24)	0 (0)	2 (12)	5 (14)	3 ↑, 1 =	3 ↑, 1 ↓
1965	Ad hoc	14 (58)	20 (53)	17 (46)	15 (63)	11 (69)	3 ↑, 1 ↓	2 ↑, 2 ↓
	Pressure Grp.	5 (21)	12 (32)	19 (51)	6 (25)	3 (19)	3 ↑, 1 ↓	3 ↑, 1 ↓
	Polit. Party	5 (21)	6 (16)	1 (3)	3 (13)	2 (13)	1 ↑, 3 ↓	4 ↓
1969	Ad hoc	16 (67)	9 (38)	12 (54)	29 (51)	36 (44)	2 ↑, 2 ↓	4 ↓
	Pressure Grp.	7 (29)	11 (46)	10 (42)	25 (44)	45 (57)	4 ↑	4 ↑
	Polit. Party	1 (4)	4 (17)	1 (4)	3 (5)	0 (0)	2 ↑, 1 ↓, 1 =	2 ↑, 1 ↓, 1 =
1973	Ad hoc	43 (78)	37 (58)	29 (39)	47 (52)	30 (48)	1 ↑, 3 ↓	4 ↓
	Pressure Grp.	11 (20)	22 (34)	43 (57)	38 (42)	25 (40)	4 ↑	4 ↑
	Polit. Party	1 (2)	5 (8)	3 (4)	5 (6)	7 (11)	4 ↑	4 ↑
1977	Ad hoc	10 (27)	34 (60)	31 (56)	25 (42)	67 (48)	4 ↑	4 ↑
	Pressure Grp.	23 (62)	23 (40)	23 (42)	34 (58)	73 (52)	2 ↑, 2 =	4 ↓
	Polit. Party	4 (11)	0 (0)	1 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 ↓	4 ↓

Due to rounding off not all percentages equal 100 percent exactly.

↑ ↓ Indicates direction of change.

= Indicates no change.

\* Overlap with 1961 pre-election period.

# Change relates to absolute numbers (periods). % change is in comparison to E-6M.

while ad hoc protests register 19 post-election *declines* in percentage and only 10 increases!

The evidence seems to suggest that pressure groups use the most efficient political means at their disposal at any point in time. When the political system is institutionally relatively “open” and most receptive to citizen input (that is during the election campaign), its use of less formal political pressure such as protest is circumscribed. After the elections, when the election is less institutionally penetrable, the arena of political combat shifts to the streets.

One should note that there is another, albeit minority, side to the issue here: the behavior of the politically alienated or disaffected Israeli society, for example, encompasses a few extremist groups, both on the far left (“rejectionist” Palestinian anti-Zionists) and the far right (ultra-fanatic religious anti-Zionists), who don’t accept the legitimacy of the State of Israel and certainly not the processes of its political system. Any input to the authorities, by definition, is of an extra-parliamentary and non-electoral nature. The major question for such groups is not strategic but tactical — when is the best time to press forward their demands? As the *post*-election ultra-religious demonstrations illustrate, the answer to such a question might well be after the election campaign is over, when the governing parties are no longer occupied with election matters, and when it might be expected that other citizen groups are too spent after their campaign exertions. One could even speculate that a “bottleneck effect” may be at work here. Not being able to effectively express themselves for a relatively long time during the campaign itself (because of their refusal to partake in the normal processes of the democratic system) such groups “explode” once the cap is removed.

In sum, because specific citizen input is rendered difficult by the nature of modern representative democracy in general, and especially where institutional constraints are manifest which obstruct or even block such input as is the case in Israel, the interested voters will not only cast a ballot but *subsequently* utilize other (less formal) means to express in non-ambiguous fashion what is the central issue and proper policy as far as they are concerned. And insofar as politically alienated groups are concerned, the choice of such means is merely a matter of timing — waiting for the electoral battle to end before starting its own political “guerilla war.”

### *Economic Causes*

“Can it be that the government sometimes uses its influence over aggregate demand to *cause* business cycles rather than to eliminate them? Many economists and political scientists believe that this sometimes happens — not

only in the U.S., but also in other democratic nations" (1979, p. 302). In these two sentences Baumol and Blinder succinctly sum up a central and on-going debate in political economy — the influence and effect of government policy in manipulating the economy for its own ends, especially the winning of elections. But if a business cycle/electoral cycle nexus is proved to exist, might not this suggest a possible correlation between economics and protest as well? The usual scenario, as outlined by Baumol and Blinder, runs as follows:

Some time between one and two years before the election, an incumbent president ... opens up the fiscal policy throttles ... set [ting] in motion a vigorous economic expansion.... Thus, when election day arrives GNP is expanding smartly. Depending on how skillful the timing is, the unemployment rate may be either high but falling rapidly, moderate and still falling, or stable and low. And the incipient inflation has yet to show its face. All in all, these are very pleasant circumstances under which to stand for reelection (ibid., p. 304).

And, one might add, this is the type of situation where the citizenry would have least cause to be disgruntled and protest.

On the other hand, there is an inevitable price to be paid. As Nordhaus notes: "Immediately after an election the victor will raise unemployment to some relatively high level in order to combat inflation" (1975). The results are not surprising, Mueller discovered in America: "A decline of popularity of about three percentage points is suggested for every percentage point rise in the unemployment rate over the level holding when the President began his present term."<sup>23</sup> Thus, in the two year period following the election, public disgruntlement rises and governmental popularity declines — a situation ripe for rising protest.

While there are doubts that the political and economic cycles are linked in all democracies, insofar as Israel is concerned the situation looks clear-cut. Assessing the economic data between 1952-73 Ben-Porath notes that "the systematic difference between the rate of growth in the post and pre-election period is glaring," whether from the perspective of private consumption or per capita."<sup>24</sup> He notes other aspects as well: "The rate of growth of per capita import surplus shows something of this induced cycle, reflecting at least the permissiveness that the government exercises in relation to election dates." Most damning, because it is a matter of the government's own administrative action, is the critical issue (in Israel) of devaluations. Ben-Porath found that "of the seven devaluations that took place in the period (1952-1973), the closest that one ever came to preceding an election was eighteen months."<sup>25</sup> The necessary but unpopular decisions were taken *after* the elections; the less necessary but

popular ones *before*. In short, the Israeli business cycle has been continually manipulated to coincide with election and non-election periods, and it is hardly surprising to find the Israeli protest cycle synchronized to it as well: less public protest during the former, "prosperous" periods; more such protest during the latter, more economically difficult times.<sup>26</sup>

In this area Israeli governments have a decided advantage, given the relatively centralized nature of the Israeli economy. The Histadrut, Israel's huge labor union federation which covers over three-quarters of Israel's salaried work force (and which employs almost a quarter through its subsidiary companies), is inextricably tied to the Labor Alignment which ruled Israeli politics for twenty-nine years. (This in part also explains the huge increase in protest under the Likud government which does not control the Histadrut.) The government, for its part, also employs about a quarter of the work force, so that its economic manipulation had (and to a lesser extent still has) a direct impact on a significant part of the country's wage earners.

From one perspective the actions of the Likud government before the 1981 elections were no different from its predecessors, but from another there was quite a difference. The previous Labor governments followed a policy which was long term, attempting to be as discreet as possible, as can be seen from the timing of its devaluations. They tried to "fine tune" the cycle so that the peaks would occur right before election day while the troughs took place after the balloting was over. On the other hand, due to its inexperience as well as its relatively revolutionary (for Israel) *laissez-faire* economic policy, the Likud found itself early in 1981 in a situation of economic stagnation, if not recession. Disaster loomed from the electoral, if not economic, standpoint.

Jettisoning Finance Minister Hurwitz whose tight monetary policy had led to this unwelcome pre-election state of affairs, the Likud turned to Yoram Aridor to turn the tide. In an unprecedented wave of tax cutting (after all, he had little time to spare), the new Finance Minister let loose a burst of pre-election public and private spending which blatantly mimicked what had been more subtly done in the past. But in so doing he was establishing a new floor of socioeconomic expectations which could not be fulfilled after the elections. If the past is any indication, the Likud government will have to pay quite a stiff price for its pre-election largesse.

## SUMMARY

On the face of it, the unruly election campaign of 1981 might seem to fit A.J. Milnor's aphorism that "All nations in which popular elections are held begin



with a problem and end with an advantage.”<sup>27</sup> But as has been argued here, the original problem may in turn lead to an even bigger one because of the various factors — psychological, institutional-political, and economic — which underlie democracies in general, and especially Israel in particular.

To be sure, the 1981 campaign was something special in the *intensity* of its electoral agitation. But this may have been due to some unique features of the election itself. It was the first campaign ever in Israel in which the public perception was that both sides had a chance to win, and the poll fluctuations reinforced that perception. (Almost everyone in 1977 felt that the Labor Alignment would win as they had always done in the past; the fact that almost everyone was wrong in this does not alter the fact that their campaign actions were based on such an erroneous perception.) Thus, the 1981 campaign was the first real “race” among equals in Israel’s relatively short democracy, and the overzealousness of some sectors among the public reflected that fact. Indeed, the anomalous phenomenon of the Likud supporters attacking the “out” party — Labor — can in part be explained by the fact that in 1981 they were faced for the first time with the threat of losing what they had so long fought to achieve: the reins of government. In addition, for the first time the ethnic factor was injected into the campaign in a major way (partly as a result of the parties’ need to obfuscate their socioeconomic platform, as was discussed earlier), and this too gave it a stridency heretofore unknown among the Israeli public.

But whether the factors behind the campaign were unique or not, the pattern in the 1981 elections and its aftermath continues along the path set by its predecessors. Agitation and protest have become over time an integral part of the Israeli democratic process, albeit in somewhat different forms at different times — provocative/illegal campaign activity before the elections, street demonstrations and citizen “democracy” after the ballots are counted. Whether the latter are positive or negative phenomena is open to question. But if the data from the past is any indication, the Israeli politicians’ headaches only begin after the victory celebrations are over.

#### NOTES

1. Salpeter. See also Bar (1981) for corroboration.

2. While table 3 of this article seems to indicate that the 1965 elections were more violent, such was not the case. Most of the protest violence which occurred then took place in the six months before the elections (E-6M) but not during the actual election campaign itself (E-2M). In addition, as can be seen from table 1, 1981 had almost four times the number of protests events during the two month election campaign period as compared with 1965.

3. For example, at one infamous Petach Tikva rally, Labor party chairman Shimon Peres publicly accused his hecklers of being “Khomeinistim, Fascists.” See Segal (1981).

4. The Labor Party's most popular sticker was in part to blame. Instead of some platitudinous positive campaign slogan, it offered the decidedly negative cry of "Anything but the Likud."

5. Hibbs (1973) is based on Taylor and Hudson's (1972) data files. Gurr (1968) is based on *The New York Times*, *Newsyear*, and *Africa Digest*.

6. In order to control against possible reporting bias, another national newspaper, the highly respected *Haaretz*, was covered in randomly selected months. The comparisons showed virtually no differences in the number of protests reported or in their internal variables (size, duration, etc.).

7. But not regular conferences, conventions, etc., which issued protest resolutions as party of their proceedings. However, a special indoor gathering called by an established organization for the express purpose of public protest was counted.

8. But not economic strikes against a private or publicly owned company (or even government institution) on the issues of wages and/or working conditions. However, work stoppages to protest government policy on non-salary economic issues such as rising prices, high taxes, etc. were included.

9. Any assemblage of ten or more adults was considered to be a group. This follows Taylor and Hudson (1972, p. 423).

10. But not election rallies and other events which are traditional parts of the formal political process, unless they involved disturbances above and beyond sporadic heckling.

11. This study did not include protests of the Arab population in the administered territories (including East Jerusalem). Israeli Arab protests within the pre-1967 borders were included, as were Israeli Jewish protest events in the territories. The criterion, in short, was Israeli citizenship and not the locale. However, non-citizens' (temporary residents, visitors, etc.) protests within the pre-1967 borders were also included (almost negligible). For more detail with regard to the methodology employed see Lehman-Wilzig (1981, pp. 170-210).

12. The Greek word for "rule," one of the two roots of "democracy."

13. Nesvold (1969) scaled political violence along four different positions. However, all of the categories included in the intensity component of this study's "kratos" fall within her first (and weakest) position. Phenomena such as coup d'etat, revolt, guerrilla war, assassinations, civil war, etc., which fall into her positions two through four, are virtually non-existent in Israel. Indeed, for the period which she covered (1948-61) Israel was given a "political violence score" of 5, with the seventy-one countries studied ranging from 0-113 (Israel tied for ninth place as *least* violent). This by no means suggests that Israel is devoid of, or not sensitive to, public protest. What is important for each country are the protest event variations (over time) from the norm to which that country is accustomed.

14. The first election campaign, in 1949, was not checked due to the very unstable situation *externally* as a result of the War of Independence.

15. Two months is the approximate amount of time for Israeli national election campaigns, give or take a couple of weeks.

16. The 1981 post-election six month results were not included because this article was written well before the period's conclusion.

17. Where equilibrious two-party systems are in evidence, *all* backers of both parties are hearing the "right thing" from a party with a good chance of taking power. But even more significantly, as Downs and others have noted, the tendency here on the part of both umbrella-type parties is to be as ambiguous as possible, or alternatively to promise different things to different supporters. The result is the same as that for multi-party systems — most voters are massaged and assuaged. See Downs (1957, chap. 8).

18. For an in-depth discussion of frustration as a causal factor of political aggression see Mueller (1979).

19. There is another possible psychological explanation for this which by and large does *not* apply to the Israeli case. When the Opposition returns to power it is usually heard arguing that it will take time to fix its predecessor's "mess." This may also hold the dogs at bay for a year or two. Israel,

however, kept on returning the same party to power — until 1977. The newly installed Likud Government repeatedly urged patience, as it would take some time to clear away the debris of the previous twenty-nine years. And the Israeli electorate was patient; but when it saw matters going from bad to worse (the fourth six-month post-election period) protest exploded upwards, more than doubling the number of any previous Likud period.

20. For a brief survey of the 1981 pre-election, internal party candidate selection procedures see Honig (1981). She notes that even ostensible democratic procedures do not always lead to the pluralistic outcome intended. In any case, "the processes by which the parties choose and rank their Knesset candidates ... are marked by serpentine intrigues and some times agonizing complexities." For a general assessment of changes in this area, see Hoffmann (1980).

21. Writing letters to the Government is an almost unheard of practice in Israel (letters to the editor are popular). In the U.S., though, it is widespread. A look at pre- and post-election letter writing to the White House is interesting in that the numbers seem to reinforce the point of this paper. Over a five election period (1952-69), the number of letters written were as follows: 1952 — 9,018; 1953 — 20,155; 1956 — 15,233; 1957 — 12,606; 1960 — 12,579; 1961 — 28,652; 1964 — 35,438; 1965 — 35,000; 1968 — 22,700; 1969 — 66,115. Thus, of the five post-election periods, three were marked by huge jumps, one a moderate decline, and one no change. People obviously get more worked up after an election than during! Rosenau (1974, p. 72). He notes "the enormous ... increase in the flow of mail that occurs ... each time the party previously out of power gains the presidency" (p. 73). If one translates "change of government" to change of Prime Minister in the Israeli case, much the same pattern emerges. As can be seen from table 2, the post-election periods under Ben-Gur on's aegis (1951-61) were not marked by large increases. To a limited extent after 1965 (Levi Eshkol) and patently after 1969 (Golda Meir) and 1973 (Yitzhak Rabin) the post-election numbers rise dramatically. When the actual transferral of party power takes place in 1977 a veritable explosion ultimately occurs.

22. As part of this project's work, a public opinion poll was conducted in December 1981 (through Dr Mina Zemach of Dahaf, an Israeli public relations firm) with regard to the Israeli public's attitudes vis-à-vis public protest. Among the more interesting results was the fact that while only 8.9 percent are active in the public sphere (active party member, active pressure group member, or active independent), 21.5 percent indicated that they have participated at least once in a public protest event. This tends to strongly corroborate the present analysis. See Lehman-Wilzig (1982).

23. Mueller (1979, p. 34). For a more in-depth analysis of this whole general issue see Kramer (1978).

24. Ben-Porath (1975). Tufte (1978, p. 12), too, concludes that in Israel's case acceleration of income occurred in 67 percent of the election years within his time frame, while in only 50 percent of the non-election years [period].

25. Ben-Porath (1970, p. 400) lists pre-election administrative acts too: reduction of income taxes, as well as cinema and beverage taxes.

26. The present project tested (through regression analysis) various economic factors for their influence on public protest events. Among others, a significant positive correlation was found for inflation (T-value 7.104) and somewhat less so for unemployment (T-value 1.400). This reinforces the impression that manipulation of the economy (i.e., low inflation and low unemployment before the elections) will tend to reduce the amount of public protest during such periods. For a detailed analysis see Ungar and Lehman-Wilzig (1982, p. 281).

27. Milnor. See too Tocqueville (1945, p. 140) for much the same idea.

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