Coalition-Targeted Duvergerian Voting: How Expectations Affect Voter Choice under Proportional Representation

Matias A. Bargsted University of Michigan
Orit Kedar Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Inspired by analyses of majoritarian systems, students of consensual polities have analyzed strategic voting due to barriers to party success, namely, district magnitude and threshold. Given the prevalence of coalition governments in proportional systems, we analyze a type of strategic voting seldom studied: how expected coalition composition affects voter choice. We identify Duvergerian behavior by voters targeted at the coalition formation stage. We contend that when voters perceive their preferred party as unlikely to participate in the coalition, they often desert it and instead support the lesser of evils among those they perceive as viable coalition partners. We demonstrate our argument using data on coalition expectations from the 2006 Israeli elections. We find an appreciable albeit differential effect of coalition expectations on voter choice. Importantly, results hold controlling for ideological and coalition preferences. Lastly, we explore a broad cross-national comparison, showing that there is less, not more, proximity voting where coalitions are prevalent.

Currently, 16 out of the 21 parliamentary member states of the OECD group are governed by multiparty coalition governments. This is not surprising given the centrality of postelectoral coalition negotiations to the political process in consensual systems (Lijphart 1999). Elections in polities characterized by coalition governments present uncertainty for voters. Even when opinion polls provide some indication as to parties' likely vote shares, which parties will have a combined majority after the elections is usually unknown at the time votes are cast.

Voters in majoritarian systems typically face a different concern. Although once election results are announced it is almost always clear who will govern, the earlier stage in the political game is risky: it is often unclear whether their preferred party is a viable option or their vote will be wasted. They often vote strategically out of concern that their favorite party is not viable whether in their district or in general (see, e.g., Duverger 1955; Riker 1982; and of numerous recent empirical studies, see Alvarez and Nagler 2000).

Considerations of party viability have been imported into analyses of voter behavior in consensual systems. Students of comparative politics have shown that when district magnitude is small enough, voters in proportional representation systems, too, are concerned with the prospects of their preferred party being left out of parliament (Cox 1997, 99–122; Cox and Shugart 1996). This

Matias A. Bargsted is a PhD candidate in political science at the University of Michigan, 5700 Haven Hall, 505 South State Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1045 (bargsted@umich.edu). Orit Kedar is an Associate Professor of Political Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 77 Massachusetts Avenue, E53-429, Cambridge, MA 02139 (okedar@mit.edu).

INES data can be downloaded from www.ines.tau.ac.il/. Accompanying materials can be found at http://web.mit.edu/okedar/www/. An earlier version of the article was presented at the 2007 and 2008 annual meetings of the Midwest Political Science Association. We thank Fany Yuval for her insightful comments on an early draft of the manuscript. We are also grateful to Renan Levine, Meredith Rolfe, Chris Wendt, and Adam Ziegfeld for their helpful comments on the manuscript. We greatly benefited from comments by Larry Bartels, Ken Benoit, Guy Ben-Porat, André Blais, Ray Duch, Indridi Indridason, Sara Binzer Hobolt, Thomas Gschwend, Jeffrey Karp, Michael Marsh, Walter Mebane, Dan Miodownik, Lilach Nir, Gideon Rahat, Michael Robbins, Randy Stevenson, Raanan Sulitzeanu-Kenan, Cees van der Eijk, Jack Vowles, participants in the Work in Progress speaker series at MIT; Voters and Coalition Governments conference at the University of Mannheim; Voters, Coalitions, and Democratic Accountability conference at the University of Exeter; and three anonymous reviewers. Thanks to Gur Huberman. Part of the study was conducted when Kedar was a VATAT fellow in the Department of Political Science at Tel Aviv University. She gratefully acknowledges their hospitality and financial support. Any errors or omissions are the authors' sole responsibility.

American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 53, No. 2, April 2009, Pp. 307–323

 ISSN 0092-5853

logic focuses on the conversion of votes to seats, the first stage in the conversion of votes to policy. In consensual democracies, however, much of politics takes place *after* votes are converted to seats and once coalition negotiations begin; the conversion of seats to policy is no less, and often more, important a stage in consensual democracies.

This article builds on several studies from recent years to examine a key question in electoral politics of consensual systems: *how do coalition expectations affect voter choice?* We contend that coalition expectations have a considerable effect on voter choice. We identify Duvergerian behavior of voters targeted at the *postelectoral* stage of coalition formation. When voters perceive their favorite party as having little chance of participating in the governing coalition, they often desert it and instead support the lesser of evils among those they perceive as viable coalition partners. Specifically, controlling for voter ideology, the likelihood of supporting one's first choice decreases with the expectation that it will occupy the opposition benches, and the likelihood of supporting an acceptable party instead increases with the expectation that it will be a member of the governing coalition.

We use the 2006 Israeli elections as a case study for analyzing the effect of coalition expectations on the vote. In particular, we leverage on data collected by the 2006 Israel National Election Studies to analyze how voters' expectations regarding which coalition will likely emerge after the elections affect their vote choice. In these elections, it was well predicted that the center party Kadima would win a plurality of the seats and serve as a senior partner in a multiparty government. It was less clear, however, with whom (see analysis below). Different perceptions of coalition viability of various parties, we show, led ideologically and otherwise similar voters to support different parties. However, the effect varied across voters, with some responding to coalition expectations more than others.

Complementing this in-depth analysis, we explore a cross-sectional comparison of voter choice in 18 democracies. Consistent with the Duvergerian coalition-targeted voting found in the Israeli case, our analysis suggests that fewer voters vote for the party ideologically most proximate to them in polities in which coalitions are prevalent compared to those in which single-party government is the norm. This pattern is the opposite of what we would expect based on strategic voting targeted at party viability alone.

The rest of the article is organized as follows. The next section provides a bird's-eye view of the vast literature on strategic voting. The following section presents our argument about strategic coalition voting. The next section turns to an empirical analysis of the 2006 Israeli elections. The following section reflects on the generalizability of our analysis by exploring a cross-sectional comparison. The final section concludes and outlines possibilities for further research.

Sincere and Strategic Voting in Parliamentary Elections

The natural reference point of the literature on strategic voting in consensual systems is the vast literature on strategic voting in majoritarian systems. Following early works on strategic voting in majoritarian systems such as those by Duverger (1955) and Riker (1982), developing different measures and employing different empirical specifications, numerous studies have established how voters vote strategically in various majoritarian systems (see, e.g., Alvarez and Nagler 2000; Blais et al. 2001). Inspired by these and other analyses, studies have shown that voters under proportional representation have similar considerations. Cox and Shugart (1996) formalize and empirically examine strategic voting focusing on entry barriers in multimember districts. They show that voters desert both weak parties and parties enjoying "excess" votes out of concern of wasting their votes. Relatedly, Cox (1997) demonstrates the importance of district magnitude in determining voters' strategic considerations.[1]

While strategic voter considerations regarding the votes-to-seats stage are undoubtedly important for understanding voter choice, in consensual systems the transition from seats to policy is no less important. With a few exceptions mentioned here, this latter step, however, has received almost no attention from students of electoral politics. Gschwend (2007) examines how considerations pertaining to coalition composition affect strategic voting with regard to party viability. He shows that, attempting to make their preferred coalition more likely, German voters often strategically support the would-be junior member of that preferred coalition if they perceive it to be in danger of not passing the parliamentary threshold. Analyzing the 2002 New Zealand elections, the third elections under proportional representation, Bowler, Donovan, and Karp (2008) show that as coalition prospects of their favorite party decrease and those of their least preferred party increase, voters tend to support their second-best party at higher rates. Finally, Duch, May, and Armstrong (2008) develop a model which includes both voter ideological distance from a party and her distance from coalitions which the party may join. Utilizing 245 voter-preference

[1]Cox finds that a district magnitude of five is the largest to still allow strategic voting.

surveys, the authors show that strategic considerations have an important effect on voter choice.

Several authors have examined strategic voting in the Israeli case. Felsenthal and Brichta (1985) compare those who supported their most preferred party to those who supported another and find that neither political preference nor coalition expectations differ systematically between the two groups. Nixon and his colleagues (1995) perceive Israeli voters as acting strategically, incorporating policy considerations into their calculation, as does Felsenthal (1990), albeit the latter does not focus on coalition voting per se. Lastly, two recent studies convincingly demonstrate how coalition preferences affect voter choice beyond party or leader preferences. Blais et al. (2006) show that in the 2003 Israeli elections coalition preferences led one in ten voters to support a party other than the one they preferred most. And Abramson et al. (2006) demonstrate that in the 2006 Israeli elections voters acted strategically to achieve a favorable coalition.

We leverage on these studies and particularly on the latter two to develop a theoretical framework for the effect of expectations on strategic coalition voting. We identify a key factor in the voter's decision: the perceived chances that her preferred party will participate in the governing coalition. We then specify the effect of these perceptions on her vote and show how it may vary by voters and by parties. It is to this task we now turn.

Coalition Expectations and the Vote

Our argument is straightforward. In consensual systems, if concerned with policy, voters may consider not only the identity of political actors in parliament, but also what will likely occur after the composition of the parliament is announced (Kedar 2005). Such forward-looking choice, we argue, takes the form of strategic coalition voting. How do voters' expectations affect their likelihood of supporting different parties? In accordance with the great importance of postelectoral negotiations in the parliament under proportional representation, we draw a parallel to the Duvergerian logic voters may apply to a party's likelihood of making it into the parliament to party participation in the governing coalition. When a voter perceives her favorite party as a viable coalition partner she will likely endorse it. However, when her preferred party has little chance of participating in the winning coalition and might be left on the cold benches of the opposition, she may not do so. She might desert her favorite party and instead endorse the lesser of evils among those she perceives as viable coalition partners.

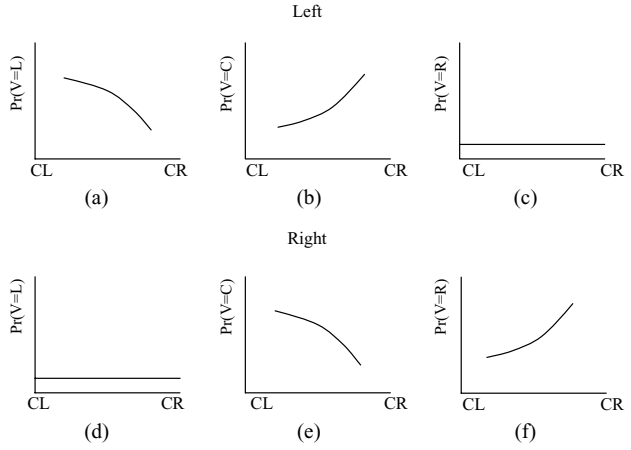
Strategic voting in FPTP systems is strongly correlated with expected party size (usually in one's district)—when a voter perceives a party to have limited support she may desert it in favor of a party with greater support and thus greater viability. This is somewhat different in the case of strategic coalition voting since viability and size are not necessarily as closely tied. On some occasions the formateur might prefer a small party to a large one as a partner so that the pie is divided among fewer (Austen-Smith and Banks 1988). In others, as in the 2005 German elections, personal rivalries among leaders affect party coalition viability irrespective of party size. Yet in other cases ideological compactness and pivotality affect party viability. Coalition expectations, then, are not merely about expected party size.

Let us present our predictions using a simple illustration. For simplicity, assume a unidimensional party system with three parties, L, C, and R, such that $p_L < p_C < p_R$. Absent coalition considerations, a voter v to the left of $(L + C)/2$ will support L, and a voter to the right of $(C + R)/2$ will support R. Voters whose position is $(L + C)/2 < v < C$ will support C according to proximity theory and L according to directional theory, and, similarly, those whose position is $C < v < (C + R)/2$ will support C according to proximity theory and R according to the directional model.

A different picture emerges, however, if coalition considerations are relevant for decision making. For simplicity, we assume that no party is able to govern alone. We further assume that coalitions are ideologically continuous, such that two potential coalitions are possible: center-left (CL) and center-right (CR). An ideologically discontinuous LR coalition is not possible.

To begin with, we focus on three groups: voters on the left (moderate or extreme) $v < (L + C)/2$, voters at the very center of the political spectrum $(C + L)/2 < v < (C + R)/2$, and voters on the right (moderate or extreme) $v > (C + R)/2$. Figure 1 demonstrates our predictions for the first and third groups (in the first and second rows, respectively). We present the perceived likelihood of a center-left (CL) versus the center-right (CR) coalition on the horizontal axis, and the probability of endorsing the Left, Center, and Right parties on the vertical axis, in the first, second, and third columns, respectively. Since only two coalitions are possible, all our predictions about the effect of a perceived center-right (CR) coalition turn on their head when considering the effect of the likelihood of a center-left (CL) coalition instead. Thus, panel (a) on the left describes the likelihood of left voters endorsing the Left Party, panel (b) the likelihood of left voters endorsing the Center Party, and so on.

FIGURE 1 Probabilities of Endorsing Each of the Three Parties



Note: The first row presents the probability of supporting each of the three parties for left voters. The second row presents the probability of supporting each of the three parties for right voters. The horizontal axis presents the likelihood of a center-left versus center-right coalition.

Examine first vote tendencies of ideologically left voters (panels a through c). As center-right coalition is perceived to be a more likely outcome (indicated by a move to the right on the horizontal axis), voter tendency to endorse L declines (panel a). Instead, as the center-right seems like a more viable option, voters opt for the Center Party—the lesser of two viable coalition-partner evils—in higher rates (panel b). Finally, the tendency of left voters to endorse the right party R is not sensitive to their assessment of the coalition that will likely evolve after the elections; it is constant at a low level (panel c). Vote-choice tendencies of right-leaning voters are a mirror image of those of the left. Here, too, their likelihood of endorsing the left party is low, irrespective of the coalition likely to emerge (panel d). It is simply ideologically too far. However, as a center-left coalition seems more likely (a move to the left on the horizontal axis), they endorse the center party in higher rates (panel e) and, accordingly, the right party in lower rates (panel f). In other words, when the prospects of a center-left coalition are high, they are likely to endorse the center party and shun their preferred party on the right.[2]

Under this three-party system configuration, the group of centrist voters is less interesting from a strategic voting perspective, as they are in a comfortable position: their ideologically closest party is also a viable coalition partner. They could still endorse a different party due to compensatory considerations (Kedar 2005), but these broader considerations are not within the scope of this study.

One might wonder why a voter would divert her vote from her favorite party and instead support another one. After all, while under FPTP a sincere voter risks a complete waste of her vote and thus might vote strategically; under PR if the party does not make it into the coalition, it will likely still be in parliament. In other words, strategic coalition voting may weaken the parliamentary base of one's favorite party. Our explanation is simple. A voter might desert her favorite party if she thinks the policy value of a would-be coalition party is greater than the policy value of her favorite party in opposition. And although policy impact of the opposition in consensual systems is usually greater than zero, other things equal, the impact of coalition members is greater than that of opposition members. The policy input of her most preferred party is favorable to that of a strategically supported coalition member, but that input is down-weighted if the party is in opposition compared to that of the coalition member. In other words, a voter might strategically support a likely coalition member if the weighted policy input of the latter pulls policy closer to her compared to the weighted policy input of the former.[3] Since in many polities, whether by law or by norm, the head of the biggest party is invited by the head of state to serve as formateur, when the party supported strategically is big an additional incentive of determining the prime minister is in play.

Other Electoral Configurations

This illustration presents our argument for a three-party system. The same logic holds, however, for systems with a plethora of parties. A left- (right-) leaning coalition can take multiple configurations, and include, in addition to the main party on the left (right) either smaller center parties or small ideological parties on the left (right). The key principle holds: voters might migrate from the party ideologically most proximate to them to the party ideologically most proximate to them among the coalition-member suspects.

Additionally, our argument is insensitive to relative sizes of parties. It holds for both systems in which a large party captures the center and smaller parties surround it, such as the Dutch party system with the CDA party capturing the political center, and for the more common

[2]The steepness of the curves, that is, the decline/increase in probabilities of supporting different parties, may depend on how acceptable the viable "lesser of evils" is to the voter.

[3]See Grofman (1985) for party performance weight, affected, among other things, by the party's viability as a government member.

two-block party system, as the prereunification German party system, with the small FDP capturing the center and surrounded by the CDU/CSU to the right and the SDP to the left. In both the single-hump and the two-hump party systems, moderate voters on one side of the ideological spectrum might endorse the center party or even the lesser of evils among parties across the political center, depending on their perception of the coalition that will evolve after the elections.

Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize two scenarios to which our argument does not speak. First is voter expectations regarding an ideologically discontinuous coalition formed immediately after the elections. Our argument assumes an ideologically continuous coalition, such that an LR coalition skipping C is not in the realm of our discussion. The second scenario is that of a broad national-unity coalition as in Germany after the 2005 elections, in which, usually in two-hump party systems, the main parties on the left and right coalesce. While we do not see these scenarios as impossible, our theoretical prediction does not speak to them.

Perceptions, Preferences, and the Vote: Is It All Endogenous?

Before turning to our empirical analysis, we need to iron out one additional wrinkle. Numerous studies incorporate voter perceptions or expectations via aggregate measures of party success, such as Cox's bimodality measure (1997) or Alvarez and Nagler's (2000) constituency-level measures of the degree to which one's favorite party is lagging in one's district and the closeness of the race. Two exceptions to this practice are Bartels's (1985) analysis of the presidential primaries preceding the 1980 U.S. presidential elections and Abramson and colleagues' (1992) study of the 1988 U.S. presidential primaries. In particular, Bartels focuses on the effect of expectations on the candidate nomination process. He finds both that voters prefer the candidate who has the best prospects and that preferences condition expectations regarding the electoral outcome of the primaries. According to Bartels, the effect of expectations has its most dramatic expression when the electoral competition is volatile and close, while the effect of preferences over expectations seems more stable across different scenarios. Relatedly, Abramson and his colleagues analyze how voters incorporate their subjective assessment of candidate winnability into their calculus. Under this logic, the authors find that a considerable set of voters votes strategically, supporting a less preferred but more viable candidate. Both studies assume that candidate preference and candidate perceived viability affect one another.

The relationship between a voter's coalition preferences and her expectations regarding postelectoral negotiations is undoubtedly important and relevant for our business. However, given the focus of our study, the key theoretical consideration for us is that both coalition perceptions/expectations and coalition preferences—even if codependent—are exogenous to our ultimate variable of interest, voter choice. Thus, similar to Abramson and his colleagues, we conceptualize expectations as possibly endogenous to preferences but exogenous to vote choice. Empirically, in our analysis below we include coalition preferences on the right-hand side. This is particularly important when examining the effect of perceptions/expectations on vote choice. It allows us to identify the effect of coalition expectations on vote choice *among ideologically similar voters.*

This consideration should not be confused with claims about a hypothetical unbiased character of voters' cognition. The abundant social, political, and cognitive psychological literature goes far in explaining the limitations of human attribution and projection (Ross and Nisbett 1991; Tversky and Kahneman 1974; Zaller 1992). However, despite cognitive shortcomings, some electoral contexts such as the one described here, we argue, enable and even encourage voters to assess the possible electoral configuration of government prior to casting their ballots.

Empirical Analysis

The 2006 Israeli Elections: Case Study in Comparative Perspective

To test our argument, we first focus on voter expectations and behavior in the 2006 Israeli elections utilizing unusual preelection data collected by the Israel National Election Studies. After analyzing these individual-level data, we utilize aggregate data to conduct an exploratory comparative analysis, placing the Israeli case in a comparative perspective and demonstrating the potential applicability of our results to other parliamentary democracies.

The Israeli institutional design lends itself to an interesting analysis. The Knesset, a unicameral parliament consisting of 120 seats, is elected via a single, nationwide district under proportional representation. The high district magnitude, accompanied by a low threshold of 2%, makes the Israeli electoral system one of the most proportional in the democratic world.[4] This combination allows

[4]The threshold has been inching up. It was preceded by thresholds of 1% and 1.5%.

for a plethora of parties in the parliament and provides conditions which facilitate the formation of coalition governments.

The months leading to the 2006 Israeli elections (March 28) were eventful even in Israeli terms.[5] In summer 2005, in a controversial move, Israel unilaterally withdrew from the Gaza Strip (officially referred to as "disengagement"). In November, four months prior to the elections, Prime Minister Sharon left the Likud party, and followed by Likud pragmatists and some key figures in the Labor party, formed a new center party, Kadima, which soon acquired massive support in the Israeli public. In winter 2005–06, after suffering two strokes, Sharon became incapacitated, and Ehud Olmert assumed prime-ministry responsibilities and leadership of Kadima. The new center party received much attention both in the media and in the general public, and other parties structured their campaigns in relation to it.

The scope of this article does not allow us to engage in a thorough discussion of the role of case studies in comparative inquiry. Nonetheless, a few words about the choice of the Israeli case are in order.[6] (Further discussion is found in the comparative analysis below and in the conclusion.) The characteristics of the Israeli case mentioned above facilitate conditions that allow us to test our theory, yet they do not encourage positive findings. In particular, that it was well predicted that a coalition government would emerge but its identity was uncertain allowed voters to form varying coalition expectations. That the party system was dealigned (Shamir et al. 2008) made it less costly for voters to defect from their most preferred party. However, the degree to which voter expectations affected their strategic choice remained to be seen. The uncertainty of the race, then, along with the dealignment of the party system, provides an excellent testing ground for our theory.

Data

The preelection survey was conducted via phone interviews in Hebrew, Arabic, and Russian (71.8%, 9.2%, and 19.0%, respectively)[7] during the month preceding the Knesset elections.[8] The survey included standard questions about respondents' positions on various issues, political trust, sense of efficacy, vote inclinations, and the like, along with respondent demographic background. In addition, voters were asked a set of questions about post-electoral politics: their expectations regarding party seat shares, the coalitions likely to evolve after the elections, and the chances that different parties would participate in the governing coalition. This is almost the only survey of which we are aware to include such items.

Coalition Expectations: Is It Really Possible?

Respondents in the survey were asked to place themselves and each of seven parties on a left-right ideological scale. This is a general 0–10 ideological scale, identical to the scale used by the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. The question does not define, nor does it ask voters about, any particular policy dimension.[9] The parties are the liberal party Meretz; the three main parties, Labor, Kadima, and Likud; as well as Israel Beitenu and Ichud-Leumi-Mafdal (hereafter IL-Mafdal); and the religious-ethnic party Shas.[10] With one exception, these seven parties are the largest in the Knesset, occupying 97 of 120 seats, leaving the remaining 23 seats to five additional parties.[11]

Figure 2 presents the average placements of the parties as perceived by respondents. Notice that Kadima is placed right at the center of the scale (4.98). Labor is placed to its left (3.61) and Meretz (2.38) to the left of Labor. To the right of Kadima is the religious and ethnic party Shas (6.12) followed by Likud (6.82). Lastly, yet not far from Likud, are Israel Beitenu (7.00) and IL-Mafdal (7.03), both perceived as particularly rightist.

We begin our analysis by empirically establishing two things. First, we demonstrate the low predictability of the 2006 elections, showing how much room there was for

[5] A comprehensive analysis of the months leading to the 2006 elections can be found in Diskin and Hazan (2007) and Hazan (2006).

[6] For classics on case studies in comparative inquiry, see Lijphart (1971) and Eckstein (1975).

[7] Only 40.1% of Arab respondents, however, reported support for one of the seven parties included in the survey. Among those, 20.8% voted for Labor, 12.1% for Kadima, 4.5% for Likud, 3.1% for Shas and Meretz combined, and none for the two remaining parties. This does not allow us to include Arab respondents in the multivariate analysis since we immediately run into a problem of empty cells.

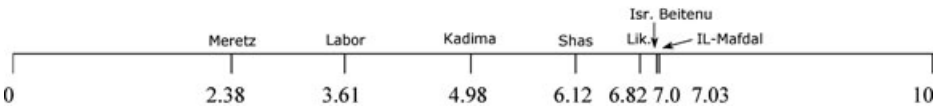
[8] Principal investigators: Asher Arian and Michal Shamir. The interviews took place between February 28 and March 23. The survey altogether included 1,919 respondents. However, the coalition survey items we use here were presented to a random subsample of 1,276 respondents.

[9] For details about question wording, see materials on the web address noted above.

[10] In English, Meretz stands for "energy," Kadima stands for "forward," Likud is "unity," Israel Beitenu is "Israel our home," IL-Mafdal is "national unity—religious national party," and Shas is an acronym for "Torah observing Sephardic."

[11] Gil (meaning age/joy), the pensioners' party, is an exception. The party gained support in the days leading to the elections, and contrary to all predictions won seven seats, becoming the sixth largest party in the Knesset. Smaller, mostly non-zionist parties were not included in the survey.

FIGURE 2 Party Placements



Note: The figure presents the average placements of seven parties as perceived by respondents on a general 0 to 10 left-right scale. The question, identical to the question used in the CSES, was: "There is a lot of talk about left and right in politics." "How would you rate the following parties on the left-right scale from 0 to 10, 0 stands for left, and 10 stands for right and 5 is in the middle?"

voters to form expectations in the face of a campaign whose outcome was uncertain. Second, we show that voters had solid and meaningful expectations/perceptions regarding possible coalitions evolving after the elections.

The 2006 Israeli elections presented voters with little uncertainty as to the party likely to win a plurality of the votes (and seats in the Knesset). Kadima led in the polls throughout the campaign, and although it lost some support in the weeks leading up to the elections (a fact probably partly related to Sharon's incapacitation in January), it still comfortably won a plurality of the seats, with 29 seats and a margin of 10 seats over the second largest party. And while it was well expected that Kadima would be the largest party in the seventeenth Knesset, it was also expected that, as in all previous elections, no party would be able to govern alone. The plethora of parties in the Knesset (12 in the seventeenth Knesset and 13 in the previous one) and the highly fragmented Israeli electorate left no doubt that a coalition, rather than a single party, would govern. What was less clear was with whom Kadima would form that coalition.

These trends are mirrored in voter expectations. When asked about the prospects[12] of participation in the governing coalition for each of the three main parties,[13] Kadima, Labor, and Likud respondents on average perceived Kadima to have a 79% chance of participating in the coalition (the median response was 90%). The average perceived chance of Labor, the main party left of Kadima, was 58%, and the average perceived chance given to Likud, the main party to the right of Kadima, was 49%. Importantly, the median response for both Labor and Likud was 50%.

Furthermore, respondents were presented with seven coalition scenarios (three center-left coalitions, three center-right coalitions, and a national unity coalition) and were asked to assess the chances of each of them taking place after the elections. A summary of respondent assessments is given in Table 1. As the table shows, there is no clear prediction as to the composition of the coalition after the elections. Generally, center-left coalitions are slightly more widely predicted than center-right, with the three center-left scenarios averaging a predicted probability of 0.51, and the three center-right scenarios

TABLE 1 Voter Expectations of Candidate Coalitions

Coalition	Perceived Probability
Center-left	
Kadima-Labor	0.62 (n = 1161)
Kadima-Labor-Orthodox	0.46 (1153)
Kadima-Labor-Meretz	0.45 (1148)
Center-right	
Kadima-Likud	0.46 (1165)
Kadima-Likud-Orthodox	0.41 (1156)
Kadima-Likud-other right	0.42 (1147)
National unity	
Kadima-Labor-Likud-other right-Orthodox	0.33 (1127)

N = 1276.
Note: Respondents were asked: "And now we want to ask you about the chances of different coalitions after the elections. On a scale of 0 to 100, 0 means you give no chance for a certain coalition, 50 means that the coalition's chances are half and half, and 100 means that you are sure this coalition will exist. Naturally you can give any number between 0 to 100. On such a scale, what are the chances that after the elections, there will be a coalition between. . ." The chances of the different scenarios were not required to sum up to 100.

[12] Respondents were asked about each party separately. Percentages were not necessarily to sum up to 100. This is also the case for coalition scenarios presented to voters and reported below.

[13] Although Labor and Likud have been traditionally the two biggest parties and the ones holding the prime ministry on the left and right, respectively, in the 2006 elections Shas ended up having a thin margin over Likud, turning the latter into the fourth largest party.

averaging a probability of 0.43. Finally, a national unity government is the least predicted option, with a predicted likelihood of 0.33. As these figures suggest, uncertainty as to the shape and direction of the government that would evolve after the elections was common.

How politically astute should voters be to hold coalition expectations? How many voters hold such predictions? Our survey suggests high rates. Examination of response rates indicates that the vast majority of voters are coalition-attentive. Ninety-five percent of respondents (1,206 out of 1,276) responded to the items mentioned above regarding the coalition prospects of Labor and Likud. Moreover, response rates to each of the seven scenarios described in Table 1 were also quite high, as the numbers in the table indicate.

Obviously, high response rates in themselves are not evidence of the meaningfulness of voter perceptions. It is important to note that Israeli voters are used to coalition governments; in fact, it is the only outcome with which they are familiar. Every single election since the formation of the state resulted in no more than a plurality of seats for the largest party and a multiparty government. Bueno de Mesquita's (2000) analysis of electoral reform (voted on in the Knesset in 1992) demonstrates how parties, on their end, assumed strategic coalition behavior on voters' part. Furthermore, just as in previous elections in which parties highlighted postelectoral bargaining in their campaigns (Aldrich et al. 2005), so they did in 2006. As MK Yossi Beilin, leader of the liberal party Meretz, put it during the campaign: "This time the elections are not about who wins, but what the coalition will look like" (*Haaretz*, February 8, 2006). The campaign itself, then, was framed in terms of the coalition that would evolve after the elections.

These findings are consistent with evidence from other countries showing that voters are able to process coalition information. Irwin and van Holsteyn (2003) establish the reasonableness of both seat-distribution expectations and coalition expectations held by Dutch voters. Following voter expectations throughout the campaign of the 2002 New Zealand elections, Bowler, Donovan, and Karp (2008) show that not only do voters form expectations regarding the coalition but also that these expectations change with opinion surveys over the campaign.

The low predictability—a macro feature of the elections—then, translates into electoral uncertainty for the individual voter. It is this uncertainty, we show in our next steps, that encourages voters to apply coalition calculations when casting their ballot. In particular, we demonstrate how voter expectations as to the coalition that is likely to evolve after the elections affect their vote choice.

Duvergerian Coalition Voting: The Role of Expectations

To test the effect of coalition expectations, we estimated a voting model for the 2006 Israeli elections, employing a Conditional Logit model. This approach enables us to capture the effect of ideological proximity to political parties as an attribute of voters' choice, and all other variables as an attribute of voters with respect to particular parties. Thus, we estimate a party-specific effect of coalition expectations for each of the parties included in the analysis. This is key since, as we argue above, the effect of postelectoral expectations on the probability of supporting any party need be neither identical across voters nor across parties.

We constructed the coalition expectation measure by subtracting the perceived chance that Labor would be a member of government from the perceived chance that Likud would be a member of government. The variable ranges from −100 (implying that the perceived probability of Labor being part of government is one while the probability of Likud is zero) to 100 (implying the opposite). Respondents whose score is zero perceive both parties to have equal probability of participating in the coalition. In line with our discussion of expectations above, the distribution of this variable indicates the evenness of voter perceptions of the political map: the median of coalition expectations is zero and the mean response is close to zero (−8.40). The 25th and 75th percentiles are set around somewhat left-skewed yet fairly central values, −30 and +10, respectively.

We began with a model which includes respondents' coalition expectations and controls for coalition preference, a voter-party ideological distance measure,[14] respondents' self-placement on a general left-right scale, as well as voter issue positions on three issues salient in the 2006 elections—separation of state and religion, government involvement in markets, and a peace agreement with the Palestinians involving a territorial compromise. These issue-specific positions mitigate potential concerns that one's coalition expectations are simply a reflection of ideological preferences. We also included standard sociodemographic controls (age, gender, education, and level of religiosity, as well as socioeconomic class, most effectively

[14]We used a quadratic function in which $d_{ij} = (v_i - c_{ij})^2$, where v_i is the position of voter i on the left-right ideological scale and c_{ij} is her perception of the placement of party j on the scale.

TABLE 2 Conditional Logit Model of Voter Choice with Preference Controls

	Meretz	Labor	Shas	Likud	Israel Beitenu	Ichud Leumi-Mafdal
Distance			−0.040			
			(0.007)			
Expected coalition	−0.002	−0.009	0.004	0.018	0.001	−0.004
	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.008)
Coalition preference	N/A	−0.781	0.716	1.100	0.800	0.503
		(0.317)	(0.352)	(0.215)	(0.222)	(0.308)
Left-right position	−0.427	−0.230	0.182	0.225	0.287	0.497
	(0.118)	(0.079)	(0.142)	(0.098)	(0.116)	(0.144)
State-religion	−0.103	−0.121	0.841	0.295	−0.148	0.640
	(0.243)	(0.154)	(0.399)	(0.182)	(0.203)	(0.302)
Size of government	0.257	0.382	0.523	0.019	−0.227	0.198
	(0.222)	(0.146)	(0.308)	(0.169)	(0.193)	(0.240)
Territories	−0.205	−0.092	0.707	0.335	0.246	1.197
	(0.300)	(0.174)	(0.299)	(0.175)	(0.200)	(0.289)
Age	−0.012	−0.010	−0.039	0.005	−0.009	−0.015
	(0.013)	(0.009)	(0.021)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.016)
Female	0.645	−0.161	−0.997	−0.472	0.226	−0.240
	(0.442)	(0.290)	(0.597)	(0.344)	(0.360)	(0.500)
Education	0.008	0.003	0.033	−0.034	0.001	0.206
	(0.081)	(0.048)	(0.111)	(0.064)	(0.072)	(0.095)
Housing density	0.027	0.195	1.028	0.071	−0.642	−0.342
	(0.684)	(0.441)	(0.604)	(0.458)	(0.531)	(0.615)
FSU immigrant	0.075	−1.331	N/A	−0.156	2.048	0.293
	(0.971)	(0.815)		(0.488)	(0.488)	(0.859)
Religiosity	−0.486	0.399	1.336	0.268	0.353	0.722
	(0.375)	(0.245)	(0.395)	(0.271)	(0.305)	(0.347)
Constant	−15.918	−1.419	−12.289	−4.341	−3.223	−14.645
	(1.887)	(1.271)	(2.796)	(1.566)	(1.762)	(2.535)
Log likelihood			−612.182			
Prob > χ^2			<0.001			
AIC			1382.364			
N			581			

Reference category = Kadima. Standard errors in parentheses.
Note: Regression coefficients were estimated using R (Version 2.8.0). N/A cells in the table represent a combination of variables with no cases in the sample.

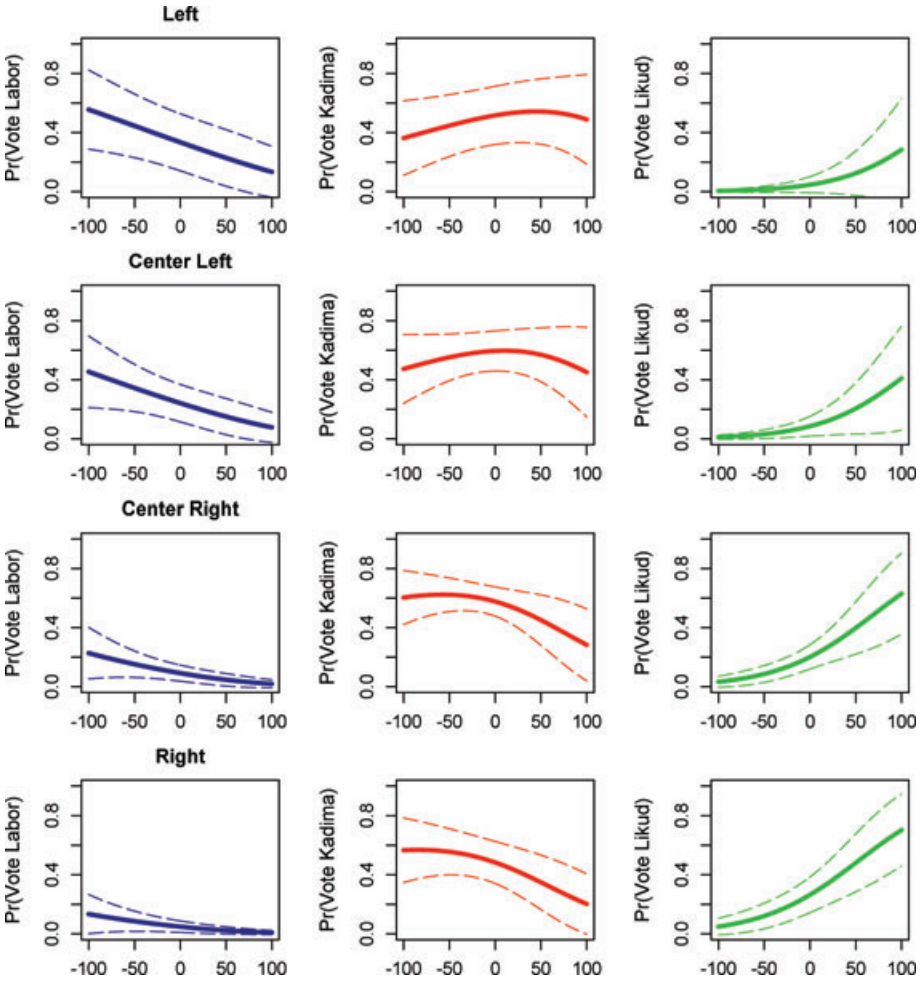
measured in Israel as the average number of family members per room in the house, and a dummy variable for immigrants from the former Soviet Union).[15]

Table 2 presents the results of this model. Several aspects of the results deserve some attention, although we only skim them here prior to examining the effect of coalition expectations. As expected, ideological proximity has a strong effect on voter behavior; the closer a political party is to an individual's own view, the more likely she is to endorse that party. Also, as expected, coalition preferences affect voter choice; preference for a left-leaning coalition (negative values) makes one more likely to vote for Labor compared to Kadima, and preference for a right-leaning coalition makes one more likely to vote for parties on the right.[16]

[15]We coded respondents as immigrants from the FSU if they immigrated from the FSU after 1989. This population accounts for 19.3% of respondents in the analysis.

[16]The N/A in Table 2 of coalition preference for Meretz voters is due to empty cells, given that there were no Meretz voters who mentioned preferring a right-leaning coalition. A similar problem occurs with the estimate of FSU immigrants voting for Shas.

FIGURE 3 Predicted Probability of Endorsing the Three Main Parties by Coalition Expectation



Note: Predicted probabilities are based on the model in Table 2. The model controls for coalition preference, ideological position, issue scales, policy positions and ideological proximity, and sociodemographic variables. Coalition expectations vary from −100 (certainty that Labor will be in government) to 100 (certainty that Likud will be in government). Voter positions are set to 1 (left), 3 (moderate left), 7 (moderate right), and 9 (right). Other variables are set to their mean.

How do coalition expectations condition voter choice? While the model indicates an effect of coalition expectations on vote choice for Likud and Labor, the two main ideological parties on both sides of Kadima, results indicate no such effect on the likelihood of supporting any of the other parties included in the survey, most of them substantially smaller—Meretz, Shas, Israel Beitenu, and IL-Mafdal.[17] We reflect on and further investigate this differential effect below but begin with the effect for Labor and Likud, the two main parties on both sides of Kadima.

To obtain an intuitive sense of the effect of coalition expectations, based on the estimated model in Table 2 we plot the probability a typical voter would support different parties as coalition expectations shift from −100 (certainty that Labor will participate in the coalition) to 100 (certainty that Likud will participate in the coalition). Figure 3 presents the effect of coalition expectations (on the horizontal axis) against the probability of endorsing each of three parties—Labor, Kadima, and Likud (from

[17] Although the seat share of Shas is identical to that of Likud, Shas is considered a party which gains club goods for its constituency rather than setting the ideological tone of the coalition.

the left column to the right) for four ideological groups—left, moderate left, moderate right, and right (in the four rows), holding all other variables at their means.[18] The top two rows and the bottom two are the empirical realizations of the theoretical predictions presented in the first and second rows of Figure 1, respectively. (As a reminder, our theory is agnostic with regard to voters right at the center of the scale. Such voters might support Kadima for strategic reasons, or simply because it is the party ideologically most proximate to them.) It is particularly important to remember that the estimation model in Table 2 from which the figures are plotted includes on the right-hand side ideological preferences in the form of both issue positions and specific coalition preferences. In other words, *the effect of coalition expectations we observe is not merely a reflection of political preferences; it is the effect of expectations controlling for preferences.*

The figure reveals several things. Let us examine first the results within each row. The first row presents the vote tendency of ideologically left voters. As the three charts suggest, for these voters, the tendency to endorse Labor (the leftmost figure) declines as a left-leaning coalition seems less likely, and, in accordance, a right-leaning coalition is perceived to be a likely outcome (a move to the right on the horizontal axis). In parallel, as the center figure indicates, the tendency of endorsing Kadima increases, albeit modestly. In other words, as the theoretical argument predicts, voters on the left desert Labor when they perceive it to have little chance of participating in the coalition, and instead endorse Kadima, the lesser of evils in their mind. Finally, and not surprisingly, the rightmost figure shows that the tendency of these voters to endorse Likud is next to zero, regardless of coalition expectations.

A similar pattern is observed for moderate-left voters (in the second row). The leftmost figure shows the declining tendency of moderate-left voters to support Labor, as a left-leaning coalition seems less likely and a right-leaning coalition seems more likely. The middle figure complements this pattern by showing that the likelihood of endorsing Kadima increases with these coalition expectations, albeit, again, modestly so, and the large confidence interval on the right-hand side calls for interpreting this pattern with caution. Lastly, the rightmost figure shows that moderate-left voters are unlikely to endorse Likud, regardless of coalition expectations.

Regarding moderate-right and right voters, our prediction holds that they endorse Kadima in higher rates when a center-left coalition seems likely and endorse Likud when a center-right coalition seems likely. Examining the figures, this time from the right column to the left, reveals a familiar pattern. Let us examine moderate-right voters first. As a voter perceives the chances of a center-right coalition to increase, she is more likely to support Likud. In parallel, the center figure shows a declining tendency of moderate-right voters to support Kadima, as a center-right coalition seems more likely. Both of these tendencies have a wide cloud of uncertainty around them on the right-hand side (probably because of the limited number of observations scoring on the higher end of the coalition index). Lastly, similar to our prediction of no support, there is limited to no support for Labor, and it is not associated with coalition expectations. The picture is similar for ideologically right voters. The likelihood of supporting Likud increases as a Likud-Kadima coalition seems more viable, and, in accordance, the tendency to support Kadima decreases. Finally, as expected, ideologically right voters are unlikely to support Labor.

Comparing across rows within each column shows an intuitive pattern. Other things equal, the more ideologically left a voter is, the more likely she is to endorse Labor (first column), and, similarly, the more ideologically right she is, the greater her tendency to support Likud (third column). As for Kadima, aside from the patterns mentioned above, the level of support is higher for the two moderate groups and lower for the two extreme ones.

In sum, as voters on the left perceive a Kadima-Likud government a more likely outcome, they desert Labor and endorse Kadima. For voters on the right we observe a decline in support for Likud accompanied by increasing support for Kadima under the reverse circumstances.

How much difference does strategic voting make? There are multiple ways of measuring and estimating the volume of strategic voting (for careful analysis, see Blais et al. 2001). Our goal in this project is to theorize and test for the effect of expectations on the vote. Indeed, a thorough discussion of the measurement and volume of strategic voting is not within the scope of this article. Nonetheless, it is helpful to sketch out a measure, even if as a crude illustration only. To do so, we first considered

[18]The probabilities were calculated holding ordinal and interval variables at their means and nominal variables at their modes (a woman, and a nonimmigrant from the FSU). The varying ideological positions represent different responses to the self-placement (0–10) on the left-right scale (Left = 1, Moderate-left = 3, Center-right = 7, and Right = 9). Standard errors of the predicted probabilities shown in Figure 3 are estimated via Delta Method using the msm R Package version 0.8.1 (Jackson, 2008). However, because of the limited number of Meretz supporters and the lack of FSU immigrants supporting the Sepharadi party Shas, R does not provide a full variance-covariance matrix. Thus, for purposes of graphical representation only, we artificially created two respondents who filled in these empty cells, scoring the mean or modal values on all other variables. With the exception of the Meretz coalition preference estimate (which decreases substantially once the empty cells are filled), the results replicate those reported in Table 2 with the two vectors of coefficients correlating at r = 0.9993.

respondents for whom Labor is the ideologically most proximate party (N = 335) and juxtaposed those who predicted a coalition with Labor was likely (expectations measure < 0) with those who predicted a coalition with Likud was likely (expectations measure > 0).[19] While 50% of the former group supported Labor, only 14.6% of the latter group did so. We repeated this exercise for Likud (N = 332). Among respondents ideologically most proximate to Likud 38.4% of those who predicted Likud will likely be in government supported it, while only 17.9% of those predicting Labor was more likely to be in government did so.

Expectations and Support for Other Parties. We return now to the other four parties included in the survey: Meretz, Shas, Israel Beitenu, and IL-Mafdal. The respective coefficients of coalition expectations in Table 2 (in the first, third, fifth, and sixth columns, respectively) are statistically insignificant, and, consistently, the pattern emerging from a figure parallel to Figure 3 shows no effect. Unlike support for the two main ideological parties, electoral support for the other parties was found to be invariant to coalition considerations (results are not reported here but available on our website noted above), with flat lines representing no change in the predicted probability of supporting various parties as expectations vary.

A potential concern is that support for these parties seems to be invariant to changes in expectations simply because our measure of expectations focuses on Labor and Likud. To address this concern, we conducted a set of auxiliary analyses. First, we examined the correlation between voting for a particular party (coded as a series of binary variables taking a value of one if the respondent voted for that party and zero otherwise) and each of the coalition scenarios (taking the values 0–100) described in Table 1 with the exception of the last one. Support for each of the four parties is no more strongly correlated with the likelihood of coalition scenarios including these parties than with the components of our original coalition expectations measure—perceived chance that Likud and perceived chance that Labor will be in government—or with our coalition expectations measure itself. In fact, the results indicate the exact opposite. For example, the correlations between voting for Mertez, Israel Beitenu, and IL-Mafdal and our measure of coalition expectations are −0.12, 0.13, and 0.08, respectively, while the mean (absolute value) correlations between these variables and the six coalition scenario questions are 0.04, 0.09, and 0.03, respectively. Moreover, among all indicators, the strongest correlates with support for each of these parties are either the variables composing our measure or the measure itself.

Further, we constructed a new expectations measure by conducting factor analysis of the six coalition scenarios. Two factors were extracted, one with all coalitions that included Labor (center-left coalition), and one with those including Likud (center-right coalition). The measure was calculated as factor(center-right) minus factor(center-left). As in the previous analysis, voting for the small parties was more strongly correlated with our coalition expectations measure (or with either of its two components) than with both of the extracted factors. In sum, support for the four parties is less strongly correlated with coalition measures including these parties than with variables focusing on the likelihood of Labor and Likud participating in government.

What may account for this pattern? Labor and Likud are bigger than the other parties (although Shas, which ended with as many seats as Likud, is an exception and Israel Beitenu is only slightly smaller), but, more importantly, they are traditionally the ones defining a left- or right-leaning coalition, respectively, while the others are not considered as ones that set the tone. This is also consistent with the fact that the two factors extracted in our additional measure are Labor and Likud coalition membership, although, of course, this could be due to the way the coalition scenarios are measured (as shown in Table 1, while different parties are included in each scenario, the scenarios all include either Labor or Likud). In other words, it is likely that voters think about the two traditionally (even if not by a large margin anymore) big parties as the ones defining the direction for the policy of the coalition.

Interactive Effect? Meffert and Gschwend (2008a) make a strong case for interdependency between expectations and political preferences. Similarly, as can be seen in our own Figure 1, the effect of coalition expectations is assumed to vary with the position of the voter. Although the statistical model we use allows us to account for nonlinear effects, we reconducted our analysis with an explicit interaction between a voter's position and her coalition expectations. We also ran the analysis with an extremity variable interacted with expectations. Our analyses did not yield any systematic results, and in most cases results turned out statistically insignificant. The interaction term for Labor and Likud repeatedly failed to reach standard levels of statistical significance. We did find a significant interaction coefficient and of the opposite sign than expected for Israel Beitenu. In the case of some of

[19]We included those respondents for whom two parties were equidistant as long as Labor or Likud was one of the two.

the other smaller parties (especially IL-Mafdal), we found interaction coefficients that reinforced the direction of the coalition expectations effect, but, again, they were statistically insignificant. Furthermore, extensive checks revealed five observations to which the signs (and the one significant coefficient) of the interactive effects could be attributed. Accordingly, and given these data limitations, we dropped the interactive effect from the model and relied exclusively on the ability of our model to capture the expected theoretical nonlinear dynamic. Obviously, these findings do not negate Meffert and Gchwend's general argument. Simply, in our data the employed multinomial logistic function can handle this properly, and as represented in Figure 3, the direction of the effect of expectations does indeed show a strong association with the left-right placement of the voter.

Robustness Tests. *Standardized expectation measures.* Since, as in all previous elections, it was well expected that multiparty government would evolve after the elections, the likelihoods of each of the three parties being in government are *not mutually exclusive*, and thus, it would have been empirically inappropriate to ask respondents to provide three assessments that sum up to one. Similarly, although the coalition scenarios described in Table 1 are the ones which were considered most likely, given the plethora of parties in the seventeenth Knesset, overall, dozens of scenarios were at least theoretically possible, and thus, here, too, it would have been empirically inappropriate (and impractical) to ask respondents to have their assessments of the different scenario likelihoods sum up to one.

Nonetheless, following Abramson et al. (1992), we constructed an after-the-fact normalized measure of expectations based on the original three questions of chances of participation in the government.[20] For each respondent we calculated the fraction

$$\frac{Pr(Likud)}{Pr(Labor) + Pr(Kadima) + Pr(Likud)} - \frac{Pr(Labor)}{Pr(Labor) + Pr(Kadima) + Pr(Likud)}$$

such that high (and positive) values represent high likelihood of a right-leaning coalition and low (and negative) values represent high likelihood of a left-leaning coalition. This expectation measure is evenly distributed with a mean of -0.04 and a mode of zero. Similar to results based on the original measure, here, too, support for the two main ideological parties depends on coalition expectations. Furthermore, the effect is qualitatively similar although slightly weaker when the denominator excludes Kadima.

Model specification. In addition to the model shown in Table 2, we estimated various alternative specifications. We estimated a somewhat lighter model which includes all ideological measures but the three policy-specific issues reported above. Results of this model are almost identical to the results reported here.[21]

We also refined our ethnicity categorization, drawing a distinction among Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, and Sabra veterans.[22] Among sociodemographic variables, we tested for household income (instead of housing density). Overall, the effect of coalition expectations on the probability of voting for either Labor or Likud (compared to Kadima) is robust to various specifications. While the coefficient for Likud maintains its significance under different model specifications, the coefficient for Labor shows a consistent effect but decreases somewhat when specific policy preferences are included in the model (although it does remain close to standard levels of significance).

Strategic Voting: Too Costly for Some Voters? So far, we have assumed that a voter's tendency to engage in strategic coalition voting depends on her expectations regarding the coalition that will evolve after the elections. However, one might wonder whether all voters are equally susceptible to strategic voting, and in particular, whether all are equally affected by their expectations or some resist or discard their expectations while others are more easily guided by them. In the analyses below, we focus on three characteristics of voters that might affect the impact of coalition expectations on the vote.

Voter extremity. One might suspect that vote choice of extreme voters is less sensitive to coalition considerations. When the lesser of evils among viable partners is ideologically remote from the voter, she might stick with her sincere preference, ignoring coalition considerations; the lesser of evils might be just too evil in the eyes of an extremist contemplating a strategic compromise. Above,

[20] For details about these questions, see materials on the web address noted above. Specifically, see questions c75, c78, and c81.

[21] Estimates from the reduced model can be found on our website. We also present an additional model with slightly different coding of coalition preferences. Although the number of respondents varies across models, substantive results are unchanged. In all models, the potential number of cases is 848 (1276 − 428 who did not vote, voted for a party other than the seven parties for which we have ideological placement, or did not report their vote choice).

[22] Veterans (those who did not immigrate in the recent wave from the FSU) are categorized as Ashkenazi Jews if either the respondent or his or her father were born in eastern Europe, west and central Europe, America, Australia, or South Africa (52.8%), Mizrahi Jews if either the respondent or his or her father were born in north Africa or Asia (25.4%), and Sabra if the respondent and his or her father were born in Israel (21.8%).

we already engage this hypothesis to some degree (see in particular the first and last rows of Figure 3 and parallel analysis of small parties) and find no particular resistance to strategic considerations by extremists in comparison to their moderate counterparts. To examine this hypothesis more systematically, we constructed an extremity variable and interacted it with coalition expectations.[23] Results of this analysis do not differ from the results in Figure 3. We did not detect a systematic effect of extremity on strategic voting.

Partisanship. One might argue that the weight individuals assign to their expectations varies according to their level of attachment to a party. We thus included in the analysis partisanship, as well as an interaction of partisanship with coalition expectations.[24] Partisanship did not have a systematic effect on strategic coalition voting. It was found to have some modifying effect, albeit results were unstable.[25] We suspect that the insignificance of partisanship is related to the specific context of the 2006 Israeli elections. These elections took place in a highly dealigned party system (Shamir et al. 2008). Accordingly, usual cognitive heuristics such as partisanship were probably less useful for voters as they were unable to lean standard political assumptions and considerations against a stable referent.

Political knowledge. Is the effect of coalition expectations on the vote stronger among the more knowledgeable? We examined the effect of political knowledge as a potential mediating factor.[26] Our results were mixed, with, contrary to our intuition, negative interactive effects for Likud, Israel Beitenu, and IL-Mafdal approaching standard levels of statistical significance. However, as with partisanship, these results were sensitive to different specifications and combinations of control variables and should be considered with caution.

In sum, then, we found partial evidence for a mediating effect of political information, and to a lesser degree, of partisanship. This evidence, however, was empirically unstable and not systematic.

[23]To construct this measure, we folded the left-right ideological scale such that the resulting extremity scale varied from 1 to 5.

[24]Strength of party attachment was measured as an ordinal variable that gradually differentiated those who felt close to a party from those who did not. The level of closeness to parties was captured by a 10-point love/hate scale asked for each of the major political parties.

[25]We only found a marginally significant result for Labor voters which led to an increase of the effect of coalition expectations among those with weaker attachment to a party.

[26]To measure political knowledge, we constructed an additive index of three factual knowledge questions.

Comparative Perspective: An Exploration

How far do our findings travel? Unfortunately, data on voter expectations regarding postelectoral bargaining, such as the ones on which we draw here, are rarely available. What we can do, however, is compare the proportion of 2006 Israeli voters who deviate from the party ideologically most proximate to them to the equivalent proportion in other polities. In particular, we seek to find out whether polities which present voters with similar institutional conditions of postelectoral negotiations are characterized by similar rates of proximity and nonproximity voting.

Obviously, such comparison should be conducted with much caution. A large proportion of voters deviating from the party ideologically most similar to them is not necessarily evidence for strategic coalition voting, but it is an initial indication that something pulls voters away from the party most proximate to them. Likewise, similar rates of proximity voting in two polities do not necessarily indicate similar rates of strategic coalition voting. Nonetheless, low rates of proximity voting in polities with coalition governments compared to high rates in ones with single-party governments will be an encouraging first step in a comparative analysis.

To conduct this comparison, we draw on data collected by the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. Respondents placed themselves and each of the main parties in their political system on an 11-point left-right ideological scale. Crossing voter choice with the party she perceives as ideologically closest to her, Table 3 presents the proportion of voters who supported the party ideologically closest to them in 18 recent elections in parliamentary democracies. The rate varies from 50% in Belgium (Flanders) up to 80% in Italy. Notice that all five cases of single-party government are among those with the highest rates of proximity voting. The average rate of proximity voting for the coalition cases is 0.59 and for the single-party government cases is 0.69 ($t = 3.02$, p-value $= 0.01$). In particular, four of the cases in the latter group have a strong norm of single-party governments. Whether majoritarian systems as in Canada and the UK or proportional representation as in Spain and Portugal, the first three had only single-party governments in the five electoral cycles preceding the elections (and in some cases since the war), and Portugal had an abundant experience with single-party government.[27] Italy, an

[27]Between 1977 and 2004 Portugal experienced 18 years of single-party government and nine years of multiparty government (DPI database, Beck et al. 2001).

TABLE 3 Vote Choice and Ideological Distance, Cross-Sectional Comparison

Country/Election	Rate of Proximity Voting	Coalition Government
Italy 2006	0.80	Yes*
Spain 2004	0.75	No
Great Britain 2005	0.74	No
Canada 2004	0.66	No
Portugal 2005	0.65	No
Iceland 2003	0.64	Yes
Sweden 2002	0.63	No
Denmark 2001	0.62	Yes
Switzerland 2003	0.60	Yes
Australia 2004	0.60	Yes
New Zealand 2002	0.58	Yes
Netherlands 2002	0.57	Yes
Ireland 2002	0.57	Yes
Israel 2006	0.57	Yes
Finland 2003	0.54	Yes
Norway 2001	0.54	Yes
Germany 2002	0.53	Yes
Belgium (Flanders) 1999	0.50	Yes

Note: Data for calculation of figures in the table are taken from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. For each voter, we examined whether she supported the party she declared as ideologically most proximate to her. When a respondent noted more than one party, we employed a conservative approach, counting her as a proximity voter if she supported any of the parties mentioned.
*Italy's two coalitions, the Union of the left and House of Freedom of the right, are announced ahead of the elections and appear on the ballot. Parties on the ballot are organized by coalition.

exception, has its party system organized by coalitions, with the Union tying together parties on the left and the House of Freedom parties on the right. Importantly, Italian coalitions are normally announced before the elections, and in the 2006 Italian elections *parties were grouped by the two coalitions on the ballot itself.* In most cases at the bottom of the list, on the other hand, a coalition government is a commonplace (e.g., Germany, Finland, Ireland) and some are even consociational by design (Belgium and Switzerland).[28]

The skeptic might wonder whether the difference in rates of proximity voting is merely about the number of parties, which could potentially artificially deflate our measured degree of proximity voting in systems with a plethora of parties (parties might be measured with greater error in systems that have many of them). Two factors mitigate this concern. The first is that the number of parties varies greatly within either group of countries. Second, we measure party placement as perceived by the individual voter. In other words, for each voter, we examine whether or not she voted for the party she perceives as ideologically most similar to her, regardless of the accuracy of such a perception.[29]

How does Israel compare to polities institutionally similar to it? With 57% of respondents supporting the party ideologically most similar to them, Israel is placed right around the average of its group. This is reassuring, especially given the fact that the 2006 elections were characterized by voter dealignment. Put differently, the overall rate of nonproximity vote in Israel, then, does not differ from that of other institutionally similar democracies. And although, as we mention above, these data do not allow us to empirically establish that these low rates of proximity voting are about strategic coalition voting—indeed, there are many potential reasons for voters to endorse other parties (religious affiliation in Ireland is an immediate suspect)—rates similar to the ones in Israel are prevalent in polities that, like Israel, have a long tradition of coalition governments.

Conclusion and New Questions

While transformation of votes to seats is crucial in majoritarian systems, transformation of seats to policy, usually via coalition government, is at the heart of consensual democracies. Analyzing voter behavior in the 2006 Israeli elections, we established that coalition considerations affect voter choice. When voters perceive membership in the coalition to be out of reach for their preferred party, they often desert it and instead support the lesser of evils among those parties they perceive as potential coalition members. The effect we detect does not peak at 50% as might be expected by some threshold predictions. Instead, it is monotonic with one's expectations about the prospects of a coalition leaning in one direction or another. However, our results suggest that while the effect holds for voters of Likud and Labor—the two competitors and essential partners in any left- or right-leaning coalition—it does not hold for smaller or otherwise optional coalition partners. Beyond the Israeli case, our exploration suggests that the rate of proximity voting is

[28]Taking a different measurement approach, Abramson et al. (2010) compare the United States, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Israel, and the Netherlands. The authors conclude that the rate of strategic voting is as high or even higher in some of the PR cases compared to FPTP.

[29]As above, we took a conservative approach in the way we calculated proximity voting. If a voter noted more than one party as ideologically closest to her, we considered her as proximity voter as long as she endorsed either of the parties she noted.

lower in polities in which coalitions are prevalent compared to polities normally governed by a single party. This is in tension with the relationship expected according to strategic voting targeted at party viability alone.

The framework we propose opens the door to numerous research questions. Beginning with the last point, not all parties encourage strategic coalition voting to the same degree. The uncertainty of the 2006 Israeli elections, along with the dealigned party system and the expectation that the elections would result in a multiparty government, provided us with an excellent testing ground for our theory. Our interpretation of the results notwithstanding, the Israeli case alone does not allow us to untangle what it is about those we identified here as optional parties: extremity, size, history of occupying the opposition benches, or some other factor. The combination of observational data (Duch et al. 2008) and laboratory experiments (Meffert and Gchwend 2008b) can be helpful in further theorizing party-specific effects.

Strategic voting might also vary by type of coalition. In particular, when parties announce the prospective coalition it will join before the elections (Golder 2006), voters cast their ballot in a richer information environment, which might allow them to better target a strategic vote and thus might increase the rate of strategic voting.

Beyond a particular race, institutional mechanisms might also make a difference. If, in order to make their votes count, voters indeed vote with coalition considerations in mind, one might expect to find the degree to which an opposition is granted with nonnegligible authorities associated with the prevalence of strategic coalition voting. In other words, perhaps the presence of institutional arrangements that make the opposition benches colder in some systems but warmer in others makes voters more or less likely to desert their most preferred party and engage in coalition considerations.[30]

The incentive for strategic behavior we identify in this study, party entry into government, is institutionally based. That government formation is defined via postelectoral coalition negotiations facilitates such coalition-oriented strategic behavior. Our study calls students of comparative politics to examine what, in our mind, is a crucial step in the considerations in which voters in consensual systems engage. We offer a framework of analysis of strategic coalition voting and test it on one case where data are available, finding evidence in support of our argument. What is now needed is availability of comparative data leveraging on cross-country variation to allow for further investigation and to feed back into theorizing about the coalition-targeted Duvergerian logic under proportional representation.

[30]The degree of opposition power may also depend on consensual norms and the issue at hand.

References

Abramson, Paul R., John H. Aldrich, André Blais, Matthew Diamond, Abraham Diskin, Indridi Indridason, Daniel Lee, and Renan Levine. 2010. "Comparing Strategic Voting under FPTP and PR." *Comparative Political Studies*. Forthcoming.

Abramson, Paul R., John H. Aldrich, André Blais, Daniel Lee, and Renan Levine. 2006. "Coalition Considerations and the Vote." In *Elections in Israel 2006*, ed. Asher Arian and M. Shamir. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 45–66.

Abramson, Paul R., John H. Aldrich, Phil Paolino, and David W. Rohde. 1992. "Sophisticated Voting in the 1988 Presidential Primaries." *American Political Science Review* 86(1): 55–69.

Aldrich, John H., André Blais, Indridi Indridason, and Renan Levine. 2005. "Coalition Considerations and the Vote." In *Elections in Israel 2003*, ed. Asher Arian and M. Shamir. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 143–66.

Alvarez, R. Michael, and Jonathan Nagler. 2000. "A New Approach for Modelling Strategic Voting in Multiparty Elections." *British Journal of Political Science* 30(1): 57–75.

Austen-Smith, David, and Jeffrey Banks. 1988. "Elections, Coalitions, and Legislative Outcomes." *American Political Science Review* 82(2): 405–22.

Bartels, Larry M. 1985. "Expectations and Preferences in Presidential Nominating Campaigns." *American Political Science Review* 79(3): 804–15.

Beck, Thorsten, George Clarke, Alberto Groff, Philip Keefer, and Patrick Walsh. 2001. "New Tools in Comparative Political Economy: The Database of Political Institutions." *World Bank Economic Review* 15(1): 165–76.

Blais, André, John H. Aldrich, Indridi Indridason, and Renan Levine. 2006. "Do Voters Vote for Government Coalitions? Testing Downs' Pessimistic Conclusion." *Party Politics* 12(6): 691–705.

Blais, André, Richard Nadeau, Elisabeth Gidengil, and Neil Nevitte. 2001. "Measuring Strategic Voting in Multiparty Plurality Elections." *Electoral Studies* 20(3): 343–52.

Bowler, Shaun, Todd Donovan, and Jeffrey Karp. 2008. "Incentives for Strategic Voting in a PR System." Prepared for the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association.

Bueno de Mesquita, Ethan. 2000. "Strategic and Nonpolicy Voting: A Coalitional Analysis of Israeli Electoral Reform." *Comparative Politics* 33(1): 63–80.

CSES. 2003. CSES Module 1, 1996–2001 (August 4, 2003 Version). Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan [producer and distributor]. (Available at www.cses.org.)

CSES. 2007. CSES Module 2, 2001–2005 (June 27, 2006 Version). Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan [producer and distributor]. (Available at www.cses.org.)

Cox, Gary W. 1997. *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cox, Gary W., and Matthew Soberg Shugart. 1996. "Strategic Voting under Proportional Representation." *Journal of Law Economics and Organization* 12(2): 299–324.

Diskin, Abraham, and Reuven Y. Hazan. 2007. "The Knesset Election in Israel, March 2006." *Electoral Studies* 26(3): 707–11.

Duch, Raymond M., Jeff May, and David A. Armstrong II. 2008. "A Strategic Ideological Vote." Presented at the Political Science and Political Economy Conference, Designing Democratic Institutions, London School of Economics.

Duverger, Maurice. 1955. *Political Parties*. New York: Wiley.

Eckstein, Harry. 1975. "Case Study and Theory in Political Science." In *Handbook of Political Science: Strategies of Inquiry*, ed. Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 79–138.

Felsenthal, Dan S. 1990. *Topics in Social Choice*. New York: Praeger.

Felsenthal, Dan S., and Avraham Brichta. 1985. "Sincere and Strategic Voters: An Israeli Study." *Political Behavior* 7(4): 311–24.

Golder, Sona N. 2006. "Pre-Electoral Coalition Formation in Parliamentary Democracies." *British Journal of Political Science* 36(2): 193–212.

Grofman, Bernard. 1985. "The Neglected Role of the Status Quo in Models of Issue Voting." *Journal of Politics* 47(1): 230–37.

Gschwend, Thomas. 2007. "Ticket-Splitting and Strategic Voting under Mixed Electoral Rules: Evidence from Germany." *European Journal of Political Research* 46(1): 1–23.

Hazan, Reuven Y. 2006. "Israel's 'Big Bang': The Parliamentary Elections of 2006." *Representation* 42(3): 243–52.

Irwin, Galen A., and Joop J. M. van Holsteyn. 2003. "They Say It Can't Be Done? Strategic Voting in Multi-Party Proportional Systems: The Case of the Netherlands." Presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, PA.

Israel National Election Studies. 2006. Available at http://www.ines.tau.ac.il.

Jackson, Christopher. 2008. "msm: Multi-state Modeling with R: The msm Package." R Foundation for Statistical Computing. http://cran.rproject.org/web/packages/msm/index.html.

Kedar, Orit. 2005. "When Moderate Voters Prefer Extreme Parties: Policy Balancing in Parliamentary Elections." *American Political Science Review* 99(2): 185–99.

Lijphart, Arend. 1971. "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method." *American Political Science Review* 65(3): 682–93.

Lijphart, Arend. 1999. *Patterns of Democracy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Meffert, Michael F., and Thomas Gschwend. 2008a. "Strategic Coalition Voting: Evidence from Austria." Prepared for the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston.

Meffert, Michael F., and Thomas Gschwend. 2008b. "Strategic Voting under Proportional Representation and Coalition Governments: A Laboratory Experiment." Prepared for the annual meeting of the International Society for Political Psychology, Paris, France.

Nixon, David, Dganit Olomoki, Norman Schofield, and Itai Sened. 1995. "Multiparty Probabilistic Voting: An Application to the Knesset." Political Economy Working Paper, Washington University in St. Louis.

Riker, William H. 1982. "The Two-Party System and Duverger's Law: An Essay on the History of Political Science." *The American Political Science Review* 76(4): 753–66.

Ross, Lee, and Richard E. Nisbett. 1991. *The Person and the Situation*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Shamir, Michal, Raphael Ventura, Asher Arian, and Orit Kedar. 2008. "Kadima—Forward in a Dealigned Party System." In *Elections in Israel, 2006*, ed. A. Arian and M. Shamir. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 15–43.

Tversky, Amos, and Daniel Kahneman. 1974. "Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases." *Science* 27(4157): 1124–31.

Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.