

# DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL PARTIES

## On the Uneasy Relationships between Participation, Competition and Representation

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### ABSTRACT

If the quality of democracy incorporates values beyond simple majority choice, then is intra-party democracy likely to further or to impede the advancement of these other values? We address the relationship between internal party democracy, as indicated by the inclusiveness of parties' selectorates, and the realization of two associated democratic values – the extent of both competition in the nomination process and representation among the lists of candidates that emerge. Although we analyse these relationships within party, our interest in them is primarily for their system level impact. We find that the three democratic values of inclusive participation, competition and representativeness are unlikely to be simultaneously maximized. Rather, the relationships among these values may be non-linear, or even negative. In particular, the parties that are most internally democratic produce lists of candidates that are least representative and experience only medium levels of competition.

KEY WORDS ■ candidate selection ■ competition ■ Israel ■ participation ■ representation

### From Assumed Imperatives to Overlooked Relationships

Political democracy is a messy concept, implicating many values that are not always mutually compatible. Whether this messiness is ameliorated, exacerbated or merely reproduced when one moves from a single level, or a single institution, to consider the interactions either among multiple levels of government or among the various organizations that collectively institutionalize democracy at a single level, has long been a concern of both normative theorists and empirical researchers. In general terms, was John

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Stuart Mill (1876: 569, vol. 2) correct to claim that ‘a democratic constitution, not supported by democratic institutions in detail, but confined to the central government, not only is not political freedom, but often creates a spirit precisely the reverse’, or, alternatively, should we agree with Giovanni Sartori (1965: 124) that ‘democracy on a large scale is not the sum of many little democracies’?

The question of whether system level democracy requires the organizations that institutionalize democracy to be internally democratic themselves has been particularly prominent with respect to political parties. From the perspective of democratic theory, it recalls the debate over ‘democratic elitism’ (e.g. Bachrach, 1967), while from the perspective of party theory the obvious point of reference is Michels’ (1915) ‘iron law of oligarchy’. From the perspective of contemporary policy, it problematizes the commitment of ‘democracy promotion’ agencies, such as International IDEA, to internal party democracy. In each case, the fundamental question appears to be whether competition among parties, the inclusive participation of citizens in that inter-party competition, and the aggregate representativeness of the corps of elected officials are sufficient for effective democracy, or whether competition, widespread participation and inclusive representation within the individual parties are required as well. This, however, implicitly assumes that intra-party democracy is at best an asset and at worst neutral with regard to the achievement of democracy at the system level. It is possible that intra-party democracy might actually impede the advancement of system level democracy.

In this article, we address the relationship between internal party democracy as indicated by the inclusiveness of parties’ nomination selectorates and the realization of the values of competition in the nomination process and demographic (in our case, gender) representation among the lists of candidates that emerge. Although we analyse both of these relationships within party, our interest in them is primarily for their system level impact.<sup>1</sup>

For demographic representation, the translation from the intra-party level to the system level is straightforward. Particularly in systems that do not allow the electorate an intra-party choice among candidates, the demographic representation of the parliament is a direct consequence – indeed, it is basically the weighted average – of the demographic representation of the candidate lists put forward by the parties.

Although democratic theory gives great importance to electoral competition, it is less often recognized that this competition takes place in two arenas, not only between parties but also within them. Particularly for ordinary MPs elected by list PR, the democratic value of accountability is likely to be enforced primarily through competition in the intra-party realm; competition to gain and retain winnable places on their parties’ lists is likely to loom large with regard to their own chances of remaining in parliament. As a result, this kind of intra-party competitiveness will generally be significant in achieving the objectives of prospective direction and retrospective

accountability on the part of MPs that democratic theory commonly attributes to competition, even in the absence of substantial changes in the strength of their party taken as a whole. Thus, although the data that we present below are drawn only from the intra-party aspect of competition, from the perspective of democratic theory they represent what is arguably the more significant aspect of overall system level competitiveness. Moreover, although we have no data that directly address the question, we speculate, in accordance with various strains in democratic theory, that the character of competition, and not just its intensity, may differ with the nature of party selectorates, and that this in turn will help to explain our findings with regard to the representativeness of the resulting candidate lists.

### Hypotheses

A parliament that closely reflects the demographic distribution of the electorate has long been regarded as important to democracy. More than 200 years ago, John Adams wrote that a representative legislature ‘should be an exact portrait, in miniature, of the people at large’ (cited in Pitkin, 1967: 61). On the one hand, demographic representation is seen as embodying the inclusion in fully equal citizenship of groups that had previously been excluded. On the other, it is seen as bringing a diversity of ‘lived experiences’ to parliamentary deliberations (e.g. Phillips, 1995). While there is some disagreement about the relative importance of demographic representation, especially in comparison with other democratic values at the expense of which it might be achieved, there is little disagreement, even among its most avid supporters, that this kind of representation will not ‘just happen’ (see, for example, the literature reviewed in Krook, 2007). Rather, it has to be the result of deliberate choices, and the likelihood that such choices will be made should vary with the nature of the selectorate.

Although there is no reason to suppose that ambition for parliamentary office, and therefore competition for nomination in the abstract, would vary with inclusiveness of the selectorate, it is possible that the form of overt competition as captured by simple empirical measures might depend on the nature of the decision-making body. In particular, if we assume any (or, as we would argue, all) of the following – that most candidates who know they are not going to win nomination to a safe place on the party list would rather withdraw quietly (perhaps to try again next time) than push the question to an overt conflict (both advertising their defeat and potentially making stronger enemies); that party leaders would prefer to avoid overt conflict within the ranks; that, with regard to the construction of a national list, aspirants to nomination can be understood as members of demographic and/or ideological groups as well as being ambitious individuals, so that from the perspective of the leaders of these groups, and with regard to the list as a whole, competition over nominations need not be ‘all or nothing’

(as it must be for an individual), but ‘more or less’ – then we would expect the level of observed competition to vary with the institutional setting. In particular, we would expect less overt competition when institutions allow aspirants to assess their chances of success before they ‘cross the Rubicon’ of public contestation, and when conflicts can be resolved in private and/or by dividing the spoils rather than by pushing the competition to a public confrontation.

Initially, we emphasize two differences between decisions made by a small party committee and those made by a membership ballot, in some ways paralleling distinctions drawn by democratic theorists like Benjamin Barber (1984) in criticizing what he (and they) identifies as the ‘thin theory of [representative] democracy’. On the one hand, although there may be a vigorous intra-party campaign preceding a membership ballot, as with general election campaigns, the campaign necessarily takes the form of communication from would-be nominees (and their supporters, leaders, handlers) to the voters (members), but not of substantial or systematic communication among the members themselves. The ultimate decision is made by anonymous ballots. This has three consequences. First, because there is no regular communication among the members, there is no way in which they can reach compromises or other forms of ‘package deals’. Second, the anonymity of the ballot means that even if a majority of the members could strike a compromise, there would be no way to monitor compliance and hence there would be a strong temptation to defect – which fact, being generally recognized, would discourage attempts to forge a compromise in the first place. Third, although polling is in theory possible, the nature of a membership ballot means that there are few signals ‘as the process unfolds’ on the basis of which a candidate can reliably predict the outcome. Decisions by committees, however, are generally made in conjunction with discussion and the possibility of ‘horse-trades’ or other forms of compromise and consensus-building; the decisions are sometimes made by open votes, on the basis of which those who do not honour their undertakings can be readily identified and expect to be sanctioned, if only by loss of credibility in future negotiations; and advance soundings of the selectors can give candidates a moderately reliable basis for predicting their own prospects.

On the other hand, the fundamental nature of the task confronting the selectors also differs between party committees and membership ballots. In a membership ballot, the selectors are asked to choose the candidate(s) they individually prefer. Although there may be some members who base their decisions on an evaluation of the collective good of the party, there is no real expectation that they will do so. Indeed, as in the election of parliaments, the assumption is that the collective interest of the party can be advanced through the simple aggregation of the individual preferences of its members. Moreover, the form of the ballot may make it literally impossible for voters to express any preference at all regarding the overall shape of the party list, as, for example, if they are only allowed to express preferences for a limited

number of individuals, with the ultimate list order determined by the number of votes received by each aspirant.<sup>2</sup> To the contrary, although members of a small committee certainly may indulge their own preferences, the nature of the task set for them is to use their individual judgments of what is in the collective interests of the party. In general terms, even if they take the likely impact of individual nominees on the electoral chances of the party into account in forming their preferences, each party member is asked to vote for the individual(s) he or she would personally like to see nominated, whereas members of a party committee are asked to construct the overall list of candidates that they think have the best chance of maximizing the party's vote.

These observations lead to two hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1:* Competition will be greater with the all-inclusive selectorate of a membership ballot than with the selectorate of a small party committee.

*Hypothesis 2:* Party lists selected by a small committee will be more balanced with regard to gender than will lists chosen by a membership ballot.

What remains is competition in the intermediate case of selection by a large body of party delegates elected for the purpose of choosing the party's candidates. In this case, the determining factor might be expected to be the way in which the delegate assembly itself is organized, and in particular the degree to which delegates are expected to act independently or as disciplined adherents of intra-party slates. In the latter case, one might expect negotiations among leaders to take place very much as they would in a small committee, and then to be ratified by the delegates. In the former case, the situation would be more akin to a membership ballot – except that the voters (in this case, delegates) would include a high proportion of well-informed party activists, for whom the well-known bias in favour of incumbents based on familiarity (e.g. name recognition) might be less, and to whom (because of their smaller numbers) more effective campaigns by challengers might be directed. In this case, the expectation would be:

*Hypothesis 1':* Competition, as measured by our indicators, will be greater with the all-inclusive selectorate of a membership ballot than with the selectorate of a small party committee, but greatest of all if the selectorate is made up of elected party delegates.

*Hypothesis 2':* Party lists selected by a small committee will be more balanced with regard to gender than will lists chosen by a large body of elected party delegates, which in turn will be more balanced than lists chosen by a membership ballot.

The overall relationships expressed by the hypotheses are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Hypotheses concerning the relationship within parties between participation, representation and competitiveness in three kinds of selectorates

<i>Selectorate</i>	<i>Democratic dimension</i>		
	<i>Inclusiveness</i>	<i>Competition</i>	<i>Representation</i>
Nomination committee	Low	Low	High
Party delegates	Medium	High	Medium
Party members	High	Medium	Low

### Data: Methods and Measures

Israel uses a proportional electoral system with a single nationwide constituency and based on closed party lists; it thus completely separates the candidate selection process within the parties from the party-centred choice in the general elections. In this research, we examined every candidate selection process in almost all the parties that presented candidate lists in at least two consecutive elections for the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, through the election in 2003.<sup>3</sup> Our research population thus includes over 100 cases, comprising dozens of parties over more than five decades and using varying methods of candidate selection. Data on the selection methods were collected from party regulations, from studies of candidate selection in Israel (Brichta, 1977; Goldberg, 1994; Rahat and Sher-Hadar, 1999) and from newspaper reports. The official candidate lists submitted to the Central Election Committee and the results of the candidate selection contests, which were either supplied by the parties or found in their archives, were used for analysing the consequences of the selection processes in terms of competition and representation.

#### *The Independent Variable: Inclusiveness in Candidate Selection*

The opportunity to participate is measured by the inclusiveness of each party's candidate selection process. Although parties often have complex procedures for proposing names and approving those that have been proposed, deciding on the list of candidates and putting them in list order, and ratifying or otherwise approving the final list, it is generally possible to identify one individual or group that exercises decisive or predominant influence over the process. Candidate selection methods can be distinguished according to several criteria.<sup>4</sup> We have divided selection processes into three categories, based on the inclusiveness of the decisive selectorate: selection by a small group, or ultimately by a single party leader (nominating committee); selection by a larger group of elected party delegates (delegate ballot); selection by the entire party membership (membership ballot).

These three levels of inclusiveness might also be interpreted as representing three levels of ‘directness’ of participation. The more inclusive a system is, the more we are dealing with ‘direct’ participation. Selection by party members is direct; selection by a ballot of party delegates means that first this limited group has to be selected by the party members; selection by a nominating committee means two levels of indirection: candidate selection is conducted by a body whose composition was ratified by the members of a party congress, who in turn were selected by the party members.

### *Dependent Variables: Competitiveness*

Competitiveness, and even more the perception by aspirants to nomination that they are in a competitive situation, is probably impossible to measure in a fully satisfactory way – especially in an historical context. In this research, we have constructed three indices, each measuring a different aspect of the overall phenomenon. Only the first two can be used to compare selection in all three kinds of selectorate – nominating committees, party delegates and party members.<sup>5</sup> The other index can be used only for comparing selection by party delegates to direct selection by party members.

The three indices of competition incorporate a distinction between incumbents and non-incumbents. Although there may be significant competition among incumbents, and there is almost certainly competition among non-incumbents, the possibility that an incumbent will be displaced/replaced by a non-incumbent is often taken as an indicator of the degree to which incumbents are held accountable through competition (e.g. Katz, 1986).<sup>6</sup> Two indices assess the level of success of non-incumbents in relation to that of incumbents. The first (non-incumbents winning) weights the non-incumbents’ share of positions at the top of the list, while the second (non-incumbents ranking) weights their relative positions on the list.<sup>7</sup> A high share of top positions for non-incumbents along with a high ranking indicates a high level of competitiveness. The third index (aspirants) checks the supply side – how many candidates came forward and actually proposed themselves out of the potential pool of aspirants – assessing the ratio between the number of incumbents and non-incumbents competing; a higher ratio suggests that competition is more appealing to those who are ‘outsiders’, i.e. non-incumbents, which suggests that they estimate they have a chance to win a safe position.

### *Dependent Variables: Representation*

We constructed two indices of the representativeness of the final party lists. We concentrate on the representation of women because this is the best empirical proxy for representation overall. The representation of women is an aspect of representation that is potentially relevant for all parties, and it provides the most accessible, reliable and comprehensive data. The first

index (women winning) measures the proportion of candidates in safe positions on the party list who are women; that is, it measures the share of women out of the total number of the party's 'real' candidates, not those that appear on the list as a whole. The second measure (women ranking) also relates only to safe positions, but unlike the first it takes into account the relative position of women on the list, giving a higher value to higher positions.<sup>8</sup> The detailed specification of all of these indices is reported in the Appendix.

### Participation and Competition

Table 2 provides a first glance at the relationship between inclusiveness and competition by comparing the results of three kinds of selectorate, based on the candidate lists submitted to the Central Elections Committee in Israel. As expected, the nominating committee demonstrates the lowest level of competition expressed in the values of both the non-incumbents winning index (0.181) and the non-incumbents ranking index (0.131). Our expectations are not fulfilled regarding the comparison between competition in party congresses and in party primaries. The value of the non-incumbents winning index is only slightly higher in the case of party congresses (0.251 compared to 0.242), while the value of the non-incumbents ranking index for party primaries is actually higher than for party congresses (0.166 compared to 0.148).

Because the analysis in Table 2 is based on the candidate lists submitted to the Central Elections Committee, it is insensitive to important nuances in the selection methods that could result from the influence of elements that have nothing to do with the nature of the selectorate. For example, correction mechanisms to guarantee a position(s) on the list to a candidate, or candidates, belonging to a distinct sector or social group were used in all cases of party primaries, but only in a few cases of selection by party delegate ballot. Such mechanisms could bias the results because they sometimes allowed non-incumbents to 'win' safe positions based on their social profile

**Table 2.** Competition in three kinds of selectorates: an analysis of candidate lists

<i>Selectorate</i>	<i>No. of cases</i>	<i>No. of incumbents</i>	<i>Non-incumbents winning safe positions</i>	<i>Non-incumbents winning index</i>	<i>Non-incumbents ranking index</i>
Nominating committee	108	890	161	0.181	0.131
Party delegates	63	470	118	0.251	0.148
Party members	9	161	39	0.242	0.166

Calculated on the basis of data from Rashumot (Israeli government official records).



rather than on the number of votes they won. Table 3 gives results that are based on ‘clean’ data, which relate to the positions of candidates before the activation of any correction mechanisms. It also adds one index (the aspirants index) for the comparison of competition in party primaries and by party delegates.

The results of two of our three indices demonstrate that party delegate ballots are more competitive than party primaries: when party delegates are the selectorates, more non-incumbents win than in party primaries (non-incumbents winning index); and more new candidates take part in the competition than in party primaries (aspirants index).

The non-incumbents ranking index, however, indicates a slightly higher level of competition in party primaries. This partly reflects the fact that fewer, but more meteoric, successes of non-incumbents were found in the party primaries. But we should take into account that there are more non-incumbent competitors relative to the number of incumbent competitors in the case of party congresses. The higher number of non-incumbents actually helps incumbents in their bid for reselection, because the votes of those who vote ‘against’ incumbents, and those who vote for non-incumbents to ‘renew’ the candidate list, are spread among more competitors. This calls for a different reading of the non-incumbents winning index – it being higher in the case of party delegate ballots is now even more impressive. Given the higher number of non-incumbent competitors in the case of selection by party delegates, the value of the non-incumbents ranking index should have been much higher in party primaries than in selection by party delegates – which it is not – if it is to be used to refute the direction set by the other indices.

**Table 3.** Competition in two kinds of selectorates: an analysis of intra-party selection results

<i>Selectorate</i>	<i>Non-incumbents winning index*</i>	<i>Non-incumbents ranking index*</i>	<i>Aspirants index**</i>
Party delegates	0.236	0.171	4.291
Party members	0.205	0.175	2.737

\*The data relate to all primaries contests in which incumbents contested non-incumbents on safe positions on the list (Labor 1992–2003; Likud 1996; Mapam-Ratz-Shinui second round 1996). In the case of party congresses, it relates to the cases of Labor (1988, both rounds); Herut (first round, 1984, 1988); Liberal Party (1984); Likud (1992 first round, 1999, 2002); National Religious Party (1988–2002); Ratz (1992, 1996 first round); Hadash (1996, 1999); Mapam (first round 1996); Shinui (first round 1996, 2002); Meretz (1999, 2002); Tzomet (1996 second round); Yisrael Ba’aliya (1999). The calculations relate to the results before activation of the ‘reserve’ position mechanism.

\*\*The data relate to all primary contests in which incumbents contested non-incumbents on safe positions on the list and in which there was no ceiling on the number of competing candidates (Labor 1992–2002; Likud 1996). In the case of party delegates, it relates to the cases of Labor (1988); Herut (1977–1988); Liberal Party (1977–1988); Likud (1992, 1999, 2002); National Religious Party (1988–2002); Ratz (1992, 1996); Hadash (1996, 1999); Mapam (1996); Shinui (1996, 2002); Yisrael Ba’aliya (1999).

## Inclusiveness and Representation

The data in Table 4 reveal that women are indeed better represented in lists whose composition was determined by nomination committees.<sup>9</sup> But, contrary to expectations, party members produced more representative candidate lists than party delegates. Furthermore, the differences between the lists produced by the three different selectorates are far from being impressive: only 2 percent in the amount of women in safe positions and less than 3 percent in the overall representation ‘pie’ according to the women ranking index.

These simple comparisons assume that ‘everything else’ has been constant over time. In fact, however, we know that the period covered by our data included a worldwide revolution in the status of women in politics. If we take this into account, the data presented in Table 4 are far more consistent with the suggestion that the relationship between inclusiveness and representation is negative. That is, regardless of the candidate selection method, global trends would lead us to expect that the representation of women should increase over time, as evident from the data on women’s representation in proportional representation (PR) democracies, among which Israel is counted. Figure 1 shows that, compared to the other PR democracies, women’s representation in Israel’s large parties was relatively high in the 1950s through the 1970s, but has been relatively low since then. In early times, nomination committees were used in most cases; later, it was party delegates and party primaries. In other words, as the Israeli parties moved towards highly inclusive selectorates – more so than in other PR democracies (Bille, 2001; Caul-Kittilson and Scarrow, 2003; Scarrow et al., 2000) – their lists of candidates became less representative, both absolutely and even more so comparatively. The largest gap is the 1996 elections, the peak of the inclusiveness era in Israel (Hazan, 1997). Two of the more recent elections (1999 and 2003) show a significant closing of the gap between Israel and the other PR democracies, precisely when the extent of inclusiveness declined.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 4.** Representation of women in Knesset candidate lists according to three kinds of selectorates\*

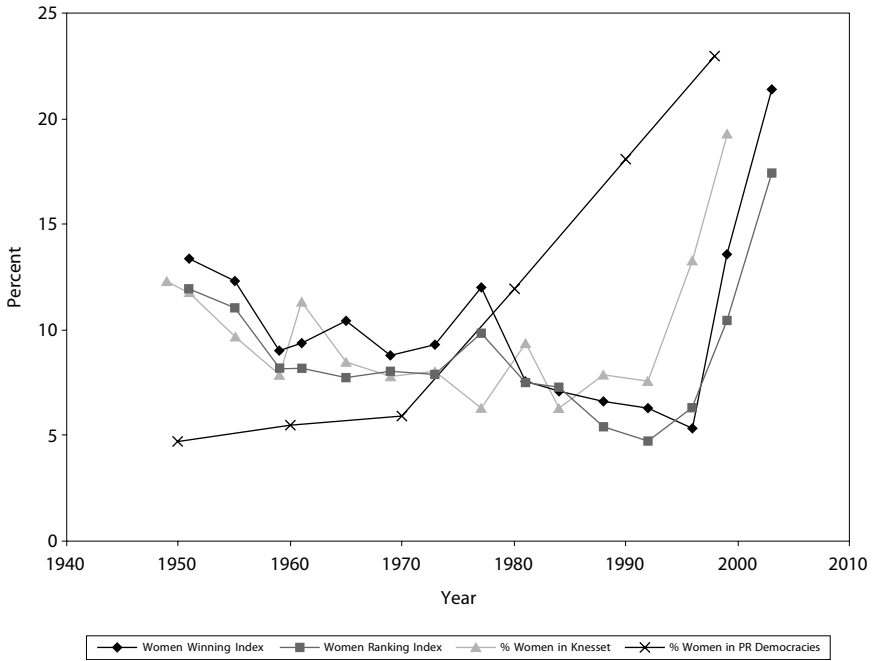
<i>Selectorate</i>	<i>Women winning index</i>	<i>Women ranking index</i>
Nominating committee	10.5% (64/612)	9.4%
Party delegates	8.5% (27/316)	6.8%
Party members	9.3% (16/172)	8.1%

Nominating committees: Herut (1951–1973); Mapai (1951–1973); Labor (1977–1984); General Zionists (1951–1959); Liberal Party (1961–1973); Achdut Ha’avoda (1959–1965).

Party delegates: Herut (1977–1988); Likud (1992, 1999, 2002), Labor (1988); Liberal Party (1977–1988); Achdut Ha’avoda (1969–1973); Rafi (1969–1973).

Party members: Labor (1992–2002), Likud (1996).

\*The data are ‘clean’, in other words, they do not include the influence of correction mechanisms.



**Figure 1.** Women’s representation in Israel and in PR democracies, 1950–2003

Source: PR democracies from Matland (1998).

Data on the representation of women in Israel include only the two large parties and their main components: Mapai (1949–1961), Herut (1949–1961), General Zionists (1949–1959), Liberals (1961), Alignment (1965–1988), Labor (1992–2003), Gahal (1965–1969), Likud (1973–2003).

## Discussion

The empirical analysis demonstrated that there are uneasy relationships among the three basic democratic dimensions addressed in this article. High inclusiveness results in medium levels of competition and low levels of representation; low inclusiveness results in low levels of competition but high levels of representation (see Table 1). These findings fit nicely with the logic of the cartel party, according to which democratization in one respect, intra-party participation, supports oligarchic tendencies in others, enhancing decision-making power at the top (Katz, 2001; Katz and Mair, 1995).

As long as we evaluate democracy separately at each level (state and intra-party), and thus require universal participation at both, the debate between those who claim that intra-party democracy is an integral part of a democratic polity and those who see no link between intra-party democracy and inter-party (state) democracy can continue forever. But, if we instead look at democracy as a multidimensional arrangement that relates to several

levels of a given political system (including the intra-party), while recognizing that ‘there is more to democracy than suffrage’ (Katz, 2001: 293), then we can arrive at a different conclusion. The relationship between democracy within states and democracy within parties is, from this perspective, not a separate issue, nor an identical one, but rather one of complementarity.

For a state to be called a democracy, it must supply its citizens with the conditions for political participation, i.e. for being electors and for being elected. As Katz (1997: 29) puts it: ‘A democratic “nation” must include everyone.’ Parties, however, are voluntary associations. As such, they may set up their own rules, and whoever is unhappy with these rules has the choice of ‘voice’ or ‘exit’ (Hirschman, 1970) to another party, to establish a new party, or altogether. As Schattschneider (1942: 60) stated: ‘Democracy is not to be found *in* the parties but *between* the parties’ (emphasis in original).

Our findings thus contradict those of Putnam (2000) concerning social capital. Putnam claims that the health of democracy requires citizens to perform public duties, and that the health of public institutions depends, at least in part, on ‘widespread participation’ in private voluntary groups, such as political parties. We argue that enhanced inclusiveness in a particular voluntary association – parties – can have a negative impact on competition and representation, and thus on the overall health of democracy.

Instead of investing further in inclusiveness, parties may enhance other democratic dimensions, such as competition and representation. The creation of a relatively balanced list, or the creation of higher levels of competition in order to offset incumbency, may thus require placing limits on the extent and impact of intra-party participatory democracy. It can also be argued that intra-party inclusiveness should strive for some balance between personal responsiveness, on the one hand, and party cohesion, on the other, in order to achieve what Shugart (2001) called ‘electoral efficiency’ – the translation of the will of a majority of voters into policies.

Furthermore, parties, as voluntary associations, not only have the right (which the state lacks) but also the imperative to sustain themselves as voluntary organizations. In order to do so, they must have the ability to use differential incentives to encourage higher, more sincere, levels of activism beyond the candidate selection event itself. Enhanced, and equivalent, inclusiveness in candidate selection damages the differential structure of rewards in parties when the privileges of long-time loyal activists are no greater than those of new, temporary and unfaithful registrants (Rahat and Hazan, 2007). Enhancing the quantity of participation by reducing its quality to the lowest common denominator is not necessarily the correct approach.

These findings tell us that the quality of democracy requires a ‘division of labour’ between the state and the political parties. The state should be the one that guarantees the right to participate, while parties should enhance competition and representation. Because political parties – like other important elements in modern democracies (courts are the most prominent examples)

– are not subject to the universal participatory prerequisite, they may be used to fine-tune other aspects of the democratic polity.

We thus suggest a more optimistic view than that of Lipset (1968) and the ‘elitist’ theory. That is, we do not merely argue that democracy is about competition between ‘oligarchic’ organizations, but that these organizations – as long as they are acting within the framework of a democratic state that abides by the participatory prerequisite – can contribute to enhancing democracy on other, not insignificant, dimensions, which require compensation due to the price extracted at the state level by the imperative of universal participation.

The logic of investing the parties’ efforts in enhancing representation and competition – rather than inclusiveness – is even more evident when relating to the contribution of the organizations of civil society to democracy. These voluntary associations supply an arena for various forms of political participation. That is, the state supplies some minimal yet universal opportunities for participation, while civil society is where the more interested and motivated may find expression in deeper forms of participation. Unlike parties, by definition, the organizations of civil society do not compete for public posts, and thus cannot provide for competition nor can they correctly claim that they represent the population.

Ware (2002) suggested that the relative weakness of American parties resulted from expectations that were too high. That is, because parties were expected to adhere to the participatory ideal they lost their capacity as intermediaries between state and society. Our study suggests that putting all the eggs in the inclusiveness basket is problematic from a wider democratic perspective. That is, the price of wider inclusiveness is paid in the United States in terms of relatively low levels of competition and representation. As Katz (1997) claims, it is likely that democratization in certain respects will lead to less democracy in others. Thus: ‘The problem is to determine the most desirable of the feasible combination of values’ (Katz, 1997: 6). We suggest that before turning to the normative realm to define the most desirable combination of values, it is important to clarify the uneasy relationship among those values, theoretically and empirically.

## Conclusions

Although *Who Governs?* (Dahl, 1961) is, on the face of it, a study of ‘democracy and power’ in a single American city, its significance lies in the hypothesized relationship between democracy at the local level and democracy in the system more generally. In this article, we have approached the relationship between democracy and the system and subsystem levels from a different angle. Rather than looking at democracy in a subsystem (a city) defined by geography and location in a ‘vertical hierarchy’ of governments, we have looked at subsystems (political parties) defined by function within a system

of ‘horizontal differentiation’ at the national level. Our conclusion, however, is fundamentally analogous: system level democracy may be the result of interactions, and in particular of competition, among groups, even if the internal organization of those groups themselves is hierarchical rather than democratic – the multiple hierarchies that together make for polyarchy.

We find that the three democratic values of inclusive participation, competition and representativeness are unlikely to be simultaneously maximized in a single institution. Rather, the relationships among these values may be non-linear, or even negative. In particular, those parties with the most inclusive candidate selection procedures – those that are most internally democratic – produce lists of candidates that are least representative and experience only medium levels of competition.

While our conclusions, like Michels’ ‘iron law’, could be interpreted pessimistically as limiting the potential for democratic party politics, we prefer a more optimistic interpretation. Effective democracy requires all three values – but it does not require that they all be maximized in the same venue. Rather, there can be an effective ‘division of labour’, with less-than-fully democratic features of one subsystem allowing that subsystem to compensate with regard to one value for the democratic deficiencies of others.

## Appendix: The Measurements

### *Competition*

#### *1. Non-Incumbents Winning Index*

The index measures the ‘success’ of new candidates according to whether they won ‘an incumbent’s position’. Thus, if 20 incumbent MPs competed for positions on the party list, the entrance of a new candidate in any of the top 20 positions would be considered a success. The definition of incumbent is any candidate who was elected to the previous legislature. The formula is:

$$\frac{\sum W_{ni}}{\sum C_i}$$

$W_{ni}$  is the number of winning non-incumbents who won a position on the list that is equal or higher in rank to the number of competing incumbents in each selection event.  $C_i$  is the number of incumbents competing in the selection event.

In the case of selection by party delegates or by party members, the incumbents that appeared on the intra-party ballot – from which either the members of the party delegates or the party members selected their candidates – were considered as trying to win a safe position. In the case of nomination committees there were no such ballots or formal lists of candidates. The task of distinguishing losers from those who willingly retired

required construction of a small biographical profile for each MP who either disappeared from the official candidate list or appeared in an unsafe position. Newspaper accounts from the time of the selection, biographies and autobiographies, intra-party material and historical studies helped to fulfil this complex task.

*Example: Non-Incumbents Winning Index.* Five MPs compete for a position on the list of candidates for the next parliament. They win the first, second, third, fifth and seventh positions on the candidate list. This means that one non-incumbent (the one that won the fourth position on the list) won. The non-incumbent winning index is therefore  $1/5 = 0.2$ .

### 2. Non-Incumbents Ranking Index

This index counts the number of non-incumbents who won ‘an incumbent’s position’, taking into consideration the relative position that they won, giving higher values to winning higher positions on the list. That is, each position on the list, up to the position that is equal to the number of competing incumbents, is given a value in descending order – the last position is given one point and each higher position is ‘worth’ an additional point. The formula is:

$$\frac{\sum \left[ \left( \frac{Vpni}{Vpi} \right) \times Ci \right]}{\sum Ci}$$

$Vpni$  stands for the value of the positions won by non-incumbents in the selection event.  $Vpi$  stands for the total value of the positions in the specific selection event.

The value of the victory in each selection event ( $Vpni/Vpi$ ) is then multiplied by the number of incumbents competing in the selection event ( $Ci$ ), and divided by the sum of the number of incumbents competing in all selection events.

*Example: Non-Incumbent Ranking Index.* Five MPs compete for a position on the list of candidates for the next parliament. They win positions 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7 on the list. The total value of the list is 5 (for 1st position) + 4 (for 2nd position) + 3 (for 3rd position) + 2 (for 4th position) + 1 (for 5th position) = 15. The single winning non-incumbent won position number 4 on the list that has the value of 2. The value of the index (for an example of a single selection event) would thus be  $2/15 = 0.133$ .

### 3. Aspirants Index

This index examines how many non-incumbents were motivated to challenge incumbents, by measuring the ratio between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ competing for safe positions. The higher the index, the more newcomers were motivated to challenge incumbents.

The formula is:

$$\frac{\Sigma Cni}{\Sigma Ci}$$

$Ci$  stands for the number of incumbents who contended for positions on the party list.  $Cni$  stands for the number of non-incumbents who contended for positions.

A higher value for this index reflects higher competition. It means that the number of non-incumbents who challenged incumbent candidates is relatively high. The sensitivity of this index to the relative size of the party (the number of its incumbents) enables us to sum the values on both sides of the equation for the entire population.

*Example: Aspirants Index.* In party A, five MPs and 10 non-incumbents are competing for positions on the list. In party B, 10 MPs and 50 non-incumbents are competing for positions on the list. The value of the aspirants index for party A is  $10/5 = 2$ , while the value of the aspirants index for party B is  $50/10 = 5$ . Party B is more competitive in this respect.

### *Representation*

#### *1. Women Winning Index*

This index simply calculates the percentage of women in safe positions on the party list by counting the number of women in safe positions divided by the number of safe positions, multiplied by 100. Safe positions are defined as the number of seats the party won in the previous elections. The formula is:

$$\frac{\Sigma Wsp}{\Sigma Sp} \times 100$$

$Wsp$  is the number of women in positions equal or higher in rank to the number of safe positions.  $Sp$  is the number of safe positions.

*Example: Women Winning Index.* Party A won five seats in the previous elections. Women appear in the third and fifth positions in the candidate list for the elections for the next parliament. The women winning index is thus  $2/5 \times 100 = 40$ .

#### *2. Women Ranking Index*

This index counts the number of women in safe positions, taking into consideration the relative position that they won, giving higher values to winning higher positions on the list. That is, each position on the list, up to the position that is equal to the number of safe positions, is given a value in descending order, i.e. the last position is given one point and each higher position is 'worth' an additional point. The formula is:



$$\frac{\sum \left[ \left( \frac{Wp}{Vpi} \right) \times Sp \right]}{\sum Sp} \times 100$$

$Wp$  stands for the value of the positions won by women in each selection event.  $Vpi$  stands for the total value of the positions in the specific selection event.  $Sp$  stands for the number of safe positions available in each selection event.

*Example: Women Ranking Index.* The example is based on the data given in the previous example. In order to calculate the women ranking index, the sum of values of the positions on the list is first calculated. The total value of the list is 5 (for 1st position) + 4 (for 2nd position) + 3 (for 3rd position) + 2 (for 4th position) + 1 (for 5th position) = 15. Women won position 3 on the list that has the value of 3, and number 5 on the list that has the value of 1. The sum of these values is 3 + 1 = 4. The value of the index would thus be  $4/15 \times 100 = 26.7$ .

## Notes

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- 1 Our question thus closely parallels that raised by Allern and Pedersen (2007), but our approach is based on the analysis of empirical data from one country rather than the review and synthesis of the existing literature.
- 2 Although it is theoretically possible that party members would be given a choice among alternative party lists, rather than among individual candidates, this has not been the case with Israeli parties, from which our data are drawn.
- 3 The cases that were not included are parties for which data could not be obtained. These were mainly tiny parties that did not survive beyond one or two elections.
- 4 Ranney (1981), Gallagher and Marsh (1998), Rahat and Hazan (2001), Ohman (2004).
- 5 These two measures (unlike the third measure) can be used to analyse selection by a nominating committee because they do not require data on the number of candidates, which is lacking in the case of nomination committees because of their informal nature.
- 6 Although it is common in the literature to interpret high rates of incumbent success, either in candidate selection processes or general elections, as indicating a lack of competition and a possible failure to enhance democracy (e.g. Maisel and Stone, 2001: 43), it should be noted that this conclusion can be challenged.

What interpretation would one make, for example, of high rates of incumbent defeat – healthy competition or something seriously wrong with the behaviour of those in office? Moreover, as Mayhew (1974) suggests for the US Congress, it is not frequent competition, but the ever-present possibility of competition, reinforced by the occasional scare, that keeps incumbents responsive.

- 7 While the first index simply tells us whether non-incumbents succeeded, they could be located on the list in a position that guarantees their status as backbenchers. The second index takes into account where the non-incumbents appear on the list, and distinguishes between those who simply made it onto the list, those who are somewhere in the middle of the list and those who have risen to its peak – and can potentially aspire to leadership roles.
- 8 See the previous note on the difference between the winning and ranking indices.
- 9 The data are based on the representation of women in only the two major parties in Israel, or their components, for two reasons. First, there are several smaller parties that, because of their religious or cultural nature – both Jewish and Muslim/Arab parties – tend not to include any women on their list of candidates. Second, the inclusion of the remaining parties (along with the two main ones but without the religious parties) does not change the outcome.
- 10 Although the numbers (both of cases and of women) are too small to allow much sophisticated analysis, some sense of the interaction of time with expansion and contraction of the major party selectorates and women's representation can be had from simple before and after comparisons. When Labor moved in 1988 from the nominating committee to delegate ballot, the percentage of women in safe positions hardly changed from 10.3 (4/39) to 10.5 (4/38). When Labor moved from delegate ballot to member ballot in 1992, the percentage of women in safe positions declined from 10.5 (4/38) to 7.7 (3/39). When Likud moved from the nominating committee to delegate ballot in 1977, the percentage of women in safe positions increased from 0 (0/26) to 6.5 (2/31). When Likud moved from delegate ballot to member ballot in 1996, the percentage of women in safe positions slightly increased from 5 (2/40) to 6.3 (2/32). When Likud moved from member ballot back to delegate ballot in 1999, the percentage of women in safe positions significantly increased from 6.5 (2/32) to 12.5 (4/32).

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