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Abstract

Religious political parties have been mainstays of the Dutch and Israeli political scenes throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While each nation possesses exceptionally open and proportional party systems with high degrees of electoral volatility, the Netherlands' remaining orthodox Protestant parties and Israel's Haredi parties have weathered this volatility better than other parties have.

Using the Dutch Christian Union, the Dutch Reformed Political Party, the Israeli Shas, and the Israeli United Torah Judaism as examples, this paper examines sociological and political dimensions on which religious parties of different political alignments and faiths and can be compared, with potential avenues for future research being outlined.

Introduction: Electoral volatility, its consequences, and its causes

As a result of the breakdown and reconfiguration of older multi-party systems in the post-1945 Western European democracies, as well as Israel and other non-European democracies as well as the post-1990 party systems of Central and Eastern Europe, electoral instability, defined here as the net transfer of votes between parties between elections, e.g., Party A losing twenty percent of their previous vote share whilst Parties B and C gain that lost vote share, has grown, particularly in the previous twenty years (Tavits 2008). A high degree of electoral volatility in a multi-party setting can prevent the formation of an institutionalized party system by disrupting any predictable pattern of

interparty competition (Mainwaring and Zoco 2007). In stable and institutionalized arrangements of party competition, parties can serve the role of signaling the ideology of the officeholders who hold party membership, providing a useful heuristic for voters which does not require seeking out knowledge on every policy question nor of the positions of every individual on one's ballot (Mainwaring et al. 1995) (Mainwaring and Zoco 2007) (Downs 1957). In systems with constantly shifting arrangements of party competition, especially when those social and ideological cleavages which structure such competition are also undergoing change, the strength of the heuristic of party label might not give one all necessary information to understand programs nor to vote strategically (Mainwaring and Zoco 2007).

Under the circumstances of heightened electoral volatility, the Netherlands and Israel, both being exceptionally proportional and open party systems with low electoral thresholds of 0.67% and 3.25% of the total vote, respectively, have seen parties fall, rise, fall again, and rise again from and to their positions as major parties (Knesset a). The Netherlands in particular has seen the center-left Labour Party (PvdA) fall from being one of the two largest parties to fourth place, back to being one of two to four large parties, then to an abysmal seventh place. In the same country, the right-wing Pim Fortuyn List (LPF) entered parliament in second place, only to fall to fifth in less than a year and to disappear from the political scene by the following election. Israel has similarly seen its Israeli Labor Party descend from a its position as one of two major parties to fourth place, back up to second, and then to be the twelfth largest parliamentary group in the Knesset in March 2021, with various centrist factions oscillating in and out of the top two positions in the last fifteen years (Knesset a) (Knesset b). In these types of environments, almost no

parties, especially the ones which initially held the greatest relative strength, have maintained stable vote shares between elections for long periods (Drummond 2006).

Causes of electoral volatility

Perhaps the most straightforward cause of short-term, non-continuous spikes in electoral volatility is retrospective voting in response to stagnant or declining economies (Mainwaring and Zoco 2007) (Tavits 2005). Of special note is that within-system volatility, i.e., vote switching between established parliamentary parties, is not as prominent as extra-system volatility, e.g., vote switching from systemic parties to insurgent non-parliamentary parties, when total volatility increases in response to poor economic outcomes (Mainwaring et al. 2017). For example, Greece saw the temporary fragmentation of its party system in response to the country's severe recession and sovereign debt crisis, with both major parties losing large portions of their vote shares between the 2009 and June 2012 parliamentary elections, and with new parties entering the parliament and the center-left PASOK later being replaced by the left-wing Syriza as the primary left-of-center party (Tsatsanis 2019). Causes not of a directly economic nature can cause similar effects, as in the case of when the Italian party system was all but entirely replaced between 1990 and 1996, with the dominant Christian Democracy and Socialist Party collapsing following their implication in systemic corruption by the *mani pulite* investigation (D'alimonte and Bartolini 1997). These types of backlashes against parties and governments can also occur on a smaller scale in response to specific issues of policy, rather than solely as responses to negative changes in the health of an economy at-large events (Söderlund 2008).

The other primary factor behind party system changes and, consequently, in increases in electoral volatility is that of change in the metaphorical playing field upon which parties compete (Lisi 2019). On the demand side of system change, there can be alterations in the ideological and social-structural cleavages which determine patterns of political conflict among voters and, consequently, between parties and politicians (Bornschier 2009) (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, new cleavages have emerged from the growing salience of climate change, European integration, immigration and ethnic diversification, the increasingly interdependent nature of national economies and financial systems, and new cultural issues such as LGBTQ liberation, among other processes, whereas older cleavages have often weakened (Lisi 2019). Given a large enough decrease in the salience of old issues in favor of new ones or given drastic enough change in the relative strength of the social groups which pre-existing cleavages are structured around, dealignment and/or realignment of the party system can occur, with the latter process only occurring once political parties can conform to the new lines of competition on the demand side (Bornschier 2009) (Lisi 2019).

One broad category of party, those which are rooted in specific religious traditions and sects, in these cases the orthodox Protestant parties in the Netherlands and the Haredi Jewish parties in Israel, have seemingly managed to better withstand the heightened electoral volatility of the systems within which they are represented than any of their secular counterparts in the previous two decades. Understanding how the differences between these parties affect the degree of electoral volatility which they

experience might provide greater knowledge of how religious parties and other non-catch-all parties may fare in the near future.

Christian democracy and contemporary Christian parties in Europe

Unsecular politics, to borrow a term from van Kersbergen (2008), has been defined first and foremost in post-war Western European party systems by Christian democracy. Originating in Catholic political movements which rose in the nineteenth century as a response to the ascendency of liberalism, modern Christian politics was initially distinguished by religious homogeneity within parties of specific confessional bases, while forming a big tent over adherents of differing socioeconomic classes with similar moral and religious values (Kalyvas and van Kersbergen 2010) (van Kersbergen 2008). In the post-war period, however, the confessional parties evolved into what can better be described as contemporary Christian democratic ones, particularly by adopting non-denominational identities in which religion in liberal democratic politics represented a 'humanitarian and moral concept' from which Christian democratic policies are inspired (Kalyvas and van Kersbergen 2010). In becoming more secular, less sectarian, and more appealing to non-Christian or nonreligious voters, mainstream Christian democratic parties had the opportunity to expand their electorates beyond the movements from which they were borne (Kalyvas and van Kersbergen 2010). However, this left behind a niche category of voters who might prefer to vote for a party which is of a specific denominational nature, or which espouses what they see as more explicitly faith-based rhetoric and policies, despite that such parties may be more limited in their abilities to attain votes or office, given their smaller size (Brocker and Künkler 2013). Such parties are present in the Netherlands, as I will next explore.

The Netherlands: Christian Union and Reformed Political Party

The Dutch party system displayed relatively low and stable levels of electoral volatility from the end of the Second World War to the end of Christian democratic dominance in 1994. In the first five post-war elections, there was an average score of 6.8 on the Pedersen index, signifying that, on average, 6.8% of the vote share from a previous election was transferred to other parties in a following election (Pedersen 1979). In the period 1967-1977, during which the primary Christian-democratic parties saw sustained losses until they unified as the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) for the 1977 election, the average Pedersen index score was 10.6. From 1994 through the 2017 election, however, the average Pedersen index score has been 21.4, demonstrating a massive increase in electoral volatility from elections past. It was the 1994 election, in which the CDA lost 20 of its 54 seats and the conservative-liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) rose to become one of the then-three major parties, which signaled the beginning of recurring party system change and, consequently, exceptional electoral volatility (Wolinetz 1995).

Underlying the decline of the CDA's and its predecessors' vote shares from 51.55% in 1946 to 22.23% in 1994 and to 8.51% in 2012, as well as behind the massive fluctuations in the vote shares received by secular parties of the center-left and center-right were the processes of depillarization and party system fractionalization. Depillarization involved the breakdown of societal 'pillars' which organized Dutch social life into ideologically- and religiously-based webs of organizations, including labor unions, newspapers, workplaces, schools, places of leisure, and political parties (Dekker and Ester 1996) (Blom 2000). Pillarization had roughly reflected the layout of the Dutch party system for most of the

twentieth century, at which time there existed: 1) a somewhat less-consolidated "orthodox Protestant" pillar, represented by the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP), the Christian Historical Union (CHU), the Reformed Political Party (SGP), the Reformed Political League (GPV), and the Reformatory Political Federation (RPF); 2) a Catholic pillar, represented by the pre-war Roman Catholic State Party (RKSP) and the post-war Catholic People's Party (KVP); 3) a working-class and social democratic pillar, represented by the pre-war Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDAP) and the post-war PvdA; and 4) a "'neutral' or liberal section', represented by the pre-war Liberal State Party (LSP) and Free-thinking Democratic League (VDB) and by the post-war People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) (Blom 2000). Through their presence in every major aspect of voters' lives, whether it be at work, in class, or among the pews, each of these party blocs could roughly maintain the same level of support, provided that their respective social bases remained motivated to turn out to vote for them (Dekker and Ester 1996).

Depillarization occurred through the erosion of the ties between political parties and other pillarized institutions, e.g., churches became less tied to specific parties, as well as through the spilling out of the Catholic and orthodox Protestant pillars into secular society via secularization of public life and the decreasing importance to voters of religion and of belonging to specific Christian confessions (Dekker and Ester 1996). The consolidation of the KVP, ARP, and CHU into the CDA resulted from secularization and the decreasing vote shares which each experienced, while also resulting in the decoupling of denominational membership from vote patterns (van Kersbergen 2008). The CDA, in the form in which it experienced temporary revivals in the 1980s and 2000s, was no longer a 'religious' party, but what van Kersbergen (2008) called "unsecular", appealing

to a religious heritage to mobilize its supporters. In the religious-secular cleavage's stead rose economic cleavages, including between those who have benefitted and suffered from the weakening of the welfare state, with the new groups separated by these cleavages being more difficult to organize into pillars than religious denominations had been (Bax 1995).

The other process behind party system changes in the Netherlands in the 21st century, fractionalization, in which the effective number of parties has increased whilst the relative strength of the largest parties has also declined, has been defined by the rise of radical anti-establishment parties such as the Party for Freedom and the Socialist Party, as well as by the entrance of niche parties such as Denk, 50PLUS, and the Party for the Animals. This particular process has also previously occurred in the Israeli party system, with the Labor dominance of the early decades of the country not being repeated by the present-day major parties (Knesset a).

In the midst of these dramatic changes to the Dutch party system, the vestiges of the bloc of confessional political parties which thrived in the twentieth century, namely the Christian Union (CU) and the Reformed Political Party (SGP), have remained relatively steady in their electoral performances, usually avoiding the heightened volatility of post-1994 Dutch parliamentary elections. The CU was formed in 2000 from the merger of two smaller Calvinist parties, the Reformed Political League (GPV) and the Reformatory Political Federation (RPF), both of which had originally seceded from the primary Calvinist-supported confessional party, the ARP (ChristenUnie). The CU mostly appeals to Protestant Christian voters and holds centrist to center-left positions on socioeconomic and "new cultural" issues, e.g., immigration, and center-right positions on

"old cultural" issues, e.g., abortion and euthanasia (Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2019) (Otjes 2019). The SGP was formed in 1918 by Rev. Gerrit Kersten and has been represented in the Tweede Kamer since the 1922 election. The party claims the Bible as the *ankerpunt*, or anchor point, of their political stances and holds center-right views on socioeconomic issues and new cultural issues and has right-wing positions on old cultural issues (Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2019). The SGP, unlike the far younger CU, has never entered a national government.

Haredi political parties in contemporary Israel

Whereas Western Europe has seen most of its formerly confessional parties transform into non-structural and catch-all Christian democratic parties, the religious parties present in Israel, the Haredi parties, also known as Ultra-Orthodox parties, have been less susceptible to the influence of secularization, In part, as a consequence of the origin of many Haredi communities as countercultural and separate from the quite secular project of Zionism in the twentieth century (Leon 2016a), as well as of the disconnect between religious and secular notions of Jewish nationhood and, therefore, of the ideal nature of the Israeli state (Finkelman 2014). While the party Shas has adopted a form of Zionism in the 2010s, the initial estrangement of Haredim and Haredi parties, particularly those who were Ashkenazi (Ravitsky 1989), from the foundational ideology of the secular sector and the Israeli state served to put up greater ideological barriers than were present between secular and Christian democratic parties in Europe in the same period (Finkelman 2014) (Ravitsky 1989). The Haredi parties are not to be confused with the right-wing 'Religious-Zionist' parties such as the former National Religious Party and its successor, The Jewish Home, which, while certainly not secular in nature, are not built

to serve Haredi interests and have always supported a form of Zionism (Katsman 2020) (Don-Yehiya 1992).

The Haredi parties, as they exist in the twenty-first century, while still representing a culturally and religiously distinct minority, are not at all wholly separate from secular Israeli politics. This is best illustrated by the fact that the present Haredi parties, Shas and United Torah Judaism (UTJ) have together been in five of the eight Israeli governments of the twenty-first century, serving in the last Labor-led government of 1999-2001 and in each Likud-led government, except those of 2003-2005 and 2013-2015 (Knesset c). Throughout the 2019-2021 four-election cluster, the two Haredi parties have been the most reliable members of the pro-Likud bloc, whereas the religious-Zionist and secular nationalist parties have swapped between opposing and supporting Benjamin Netanyahu's continued premiership (The Times of Israel, 23 Feb 2021). Despite this deep involvement in national politics, particularly inside the 'national-religious bloc' led by Likud, the UTJ has paid lip service to their ideological issues with the present Israeli state, normally taking on deputy ministerial, rather than ministerial, positions in the cabinet, with little practical difference (Finkelman 2014).

Israel: Shas and United Torah Judaism

In the late 1940s, at the time of independence, the Israeli party system was structured around the pre-existing strands of Zionism as embodied by factions of the World Zionist Organization. The foremost of these parties, until 1977, was the center-left Mapai, which has since become the Israeli Labor Party, with the right-wing and centrist predecessors of Likud, namely Herut, the General Zionists, and the Progressive Party, playing second fiddle (Knesset a) (Likud). By the 1980s, however, this arrangement had

broken down, with the then-consolidated Likud surpassing the list led by Labor. By the early 2000s, both major parties' shares of the vote, but particularly that of Labor, had deteriorated significantly. 2006 was the first year to see a party other than Labor or Likud to place in first, with the centrist Likud break-away party Kadima all but wiping out Likud (Hazan 2007). While Kadima has since disappeared, and Likud has recovered and has consistently placed first in parliamentary elections, the Israeli center-left has all but disappeared, receiving only 5.83% of the vote in 2020, whereas the current centrist parties, Blue and White and Yesh Atid, have filled the void left by Labor. Hazan (2007) describes this occurrence as a breakdown which had pulled Israeli politics further away from 'dichotomous terms'. Throughout these changes, there has always remained a high and typically increasing degree of electoral volatility (see Figure 2). However, the current groups which serve the interests of Haredi, also known as Ultra-Orthodox, Jewish voters, namely the party Shas and the alliance United Torah Judaism (UTJ), have always maintained their representation in the Knesset, appearing to better withstand, in the twenty-first century, the tides of electoral volatility and party system change than have the non-Haredi parties (Knesset a).

The component parties of UTJ, Agudat Yisrael (AY, eng. Union of Israel) and Degel HaTorah (DT, eng. Flag of the Torah) predate the alliance. Founded in Poland in 1912 to organized Orthodox Jews in Eastern Europe against the growth of political Zionism and other non-Orthodox initiatives, Agudat Yisrael is primarily Ashkenazi in its origin and its leadership represents the Hasidic dynasty, Ger, which also is of Polish origin (Bacon, YIVO Encyclopedia) (Leon 2015). Degel HaTorah was founded in 1988 to serve as a distinct party representing the 'Lithuanian', non-Hasidic Haredi population and

possesses, like AY, a "guiding council" of rabbis at the top of its internal political hierarchy (Leon 2015). Leon (2015) describes UTJ as taking a "sectarian" approach to politics wherein voters who are not Ashkenazi Haredim are not the target of its vote-seeking strategies. Shas, on the other hand, having been founded in 1984 to represent non-Ashkenazi Haredim in response to perceived discrimination against Middle Eastern and North African Jews within the existing Haredi parties, while originally committed to elevating a specific religious tradition above other priorities, has since appealed to less-religious Sephardim and Mizrahim by combining their religious identity with an ethnic one, dropping anti-Zionism and pressing grievances against a socioeconomic disadvantage and a perceived cultural disadvantage at which such Jews are placed (Feldman 2013) (Weissbrod 2003). The UTJ has at times taken a similar strategy of appealing to the economic and geographic peripheries of Israeli society through the reallocation of state resources in their favor (Leon 2015).

Potential factors for variance in electoral volatility

Homogeneity and the social distinctiveness of parties' voters

Kook et al. (1998) describe Shas as a "political machine" because of its historical reach into the lives of its target population via the provision of social services, combined with a shared identity of a religious and underprivileged sector, which have not always been provided by the state. The ability of Shas to provide these services, as well as the ability of both Haredi parties to electioneer through the influence of allied rabbis (Kook et al. 1998), can be attributed in part to both the religious homogeneity of their bases and the distinctiveness of their bases from the general population. The former characteristic is likely both a result of and an assisting factor in these parties' strong focus on building

support among specific groups of Haredi voters, while the latter characteristic might be instrumental in helping these parties corner these demographics in the electoral market while leaving non-Haredi parties out in the cold, given the strong differences in Haredi voters' issue priorities and ideological beliefs from those of other voters (Leon 2015) (Finkelman 2014).

H1: Possessing a more religiously homogeneous electorate contributes to greater stability in the performances of religious political parties.

H2: Possessing an electorate which is more distinct from the general population in geographic distribution, in education, in perceiving itself as being discriminated against by the majority, and in their ideological attitudes toward the state contributes to greater stability in the performances of religious political parties.

Hypothesis 3

One of the major factors in the occurrences of large gains or losses in votes between elections, that being the factor of participation or non-participation in government, falls into the category of retrospective voting. Understanding that Fortunato and Stevenson (2013) describe coalition participation as a heuristic used by voters to discern policy stances, I would assume that the change in this heuristic across governments would change the incentives to vote for a given party. The framework of coalition-targeted Duvergerian voting, in which voters strategically vote for parties which are likely to participate in governments, is also relevant, as changes in coalition status might cause voters' perceptions of the likelihood of a party's future participation to change (Hobolt and Karp 2010). With the assumption that breaking with its voters' expectations of a

party's pattern of government participation would lead to, on average, greater changes in vote share election-over-election, I hypothesize that:

> H3: Maintaining a consistent relationship with coalition government formation, specifically regarding whether or not a party participates in coalitions and in which parties it partners with, contributes to stability in the performances of religious parties.

Methods and data

Dependent variable

The dependent variable I will be measuring is the average electoral volatility of each relevant party, measured against the average overall electoral volatility of the party system as measured by the Pedersen index, which is calculated below using the formula outlined by Pedersen (1977).

$$Volatility = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n}|\Delta p_{i,t}|}{2}$$

Let $p_{i,t}$ stand for the percentage of the vote received by party i in election t.
Let n stand for the total number of parties competing.
Volatility is on a scale between the values 0 and 100, inclusive.

I will be examining the changes in vote share between elections within the periods 2002-2017 for the SGP and CU and 2003-2020 for the UTJ and Shas. I have selected the lower bounds of these periods to reflect the founding of the CU in 2002 and the end of Israel's direct prime ministerial elections by 2003, respectively. To measure the volatility of a party, I will calculate the percentage change in vote share from a previous result for each performance in an election, then find the average thereof. To measure the overall volatility of a party system, I calculate the average Pedersen index score of the elections

Figure 1: Dutch parliamentary elections: turnout (%), electoral volatility (Pedersen index scores), and vote shares (%) with election-over-election proportional changes for turnout and vote shares (%) in parentheses.

Year	Turnout	Volatility	SGP	CU (GPV/RPF)
1946	93.1%	N/A	2.14%	N/A
1948	93.7% (+0.6%)	6.6	2.37% (+10.7%)	N/A
1952	95.0% (+1.4%)	7.8	2.42% (+2.1%)	0.67%
1956	95.5% (+0.5%)	7.6	2.26% (-6.6%)	0.65% (-3.0%)
1959	95.6% (+0.1%)	6.6	2.16% (-4.4%)	0.67% (+3.1%)
1963	95.1% (-0.5%)	5.6	2.29% (+6.0%)	0.74% (+10.4%)
1967	94.9% (-0.2%)	12.1	2.01% (-7.9%)	0.86% (+16.2%)
1971	79.1% (-16.6%)	15.6	2.35% (+16.9%)	1.61% (+87.2%)
1972	83.5% (+5.6%)	13.2	2.21% (-6.0%)	1.77% (+9.9%)
1977	88.1% (+5.5%)	13.4	2.13% (-3.5%)	1.59% (-10.2%)
1981	87.0% (-1.2%)	8.9	1.97% (-7.5%)	2.07% (+30.2%)
1982	81.0% (-6.9%)	9.4	1.90% (-3.6%)	2.33% (+12.6%)
1986	85.8% (+5.9%)	11.0	1.74% (-8.4%)	1.87% (-19.7%)
1989	80.3% (-5.2%)	5.2	1.87% (+4.0%)	2.19% (+17.1%)
1994	78.8% (-1.9%)	22.3	1.73% (-7.5%)	3.10% (+41.6%)
1998	73.4% (-6.9%)	17.5	1.78% (+2.9%)	3.29% (+6.1%)
2002	79.4% (+8.2%)	31.2	1.72% (-3.4%)	2.54% (-22.8%)
2003	80.0% (+0.8%)	16.5	1.56% (-9.3%)	2.12% (-12.6%)
2006	80.4% (+0.5%)	20.4	1.56% (0.0%)	3.97% (+87.3%)
2010	75.4% (-6.2%)	21.5	1.74% (+11.5%)	3.24% (-18.9%)
2012	74.6% (-1.1%)	15.9	2.09% (+20.1%)	3.13% (-3.4%)
2017	81.9% (+9.8%)	25.5	2.08% (-0.5%)	3.39% (+8.3%)

Notes: Figures for CU before 1977 utilize those of GPV, and for the period 1977-1998, those of GPV and RPF. Underlined vote shares reflect the election-over-election proportional change thereof being in excess of the Pedersen index score for the relevant election.

within the allotted time period. The formula for the relative volatility of a particular party is denoted below. By representing a party's volatility as a percentage of the overall volatility of a party system, I will be able to control for the latter figure between countries.

$$Vol_{party_n} = \frac{Vote_{n-1} - Vote_n}{Vote_{n-1}} \qquad Vol_{avg} = \sum_{n=2}^{t} Vol_{party_n}$$

$$Vol_{relative} = \frac{Vol_{avg}}{P_{avg}} \qquad\qquad P_{avg} = \sum_{n=2}^{t} P_n$$

Let Vol_{party_n} stand for % vote change for a party from previous election.

Let Vol_{avg} stand for average election-over-election % vote change for a party.

Let $Vol_{relative}$ stand for Vol_{avg} as a percentage of the overall electoral volatility of a party system.

Let $Vote_n$ stand for vote share received in an election, with $n = 1$ representing the first case in the population (i.e., 1 for Shas and UTJ, 2002 for SGP and CU), $n = 2$ representing the second case, and t representing the final case.

Let P_n stand for the Pedersen index score for a given election and its predecessor, with $n = 1$ representing the first case in the population (i.e., 2003 for Shas and UTJ, 2002 for SGP and CU), $n = 2$ representing the second case, and so on.

Let P_{avg} stand for average Pedersen index score for a party system.

Figure 2: Israeli parliamentary elections: turnout (%), electoral volatility (Pedersen index scores), and vote shares (%) with election-over-election proportional changes for turnout and vote shares (%) in parentheses.

Year	Turnout	Volatility	UTJ (AY/PAI/DT)	Shas
1951	75.1%	18.5	3.64%	N/A
1955	82.8% (+10.3%)	18.9	4.67% (+28.3%)	N/A
1959	81.6% (-1.4%)	12.5	4.70% (+0.6%)	N/A
1961	81.6% (0.0%)	7.4	5.62% (+19.6%)	N/A
1965	85.9% (+5.3%)	17.2	5.13% (-8.7%)	N/A
1969	81.7% (-4.9%)	6.9	5.05% (-1.6%)	N/A
1973	78.6% (-3.8%)	11.8	3.83% (-24.2%)	N/A
1977	79.2% (+0.8%)	22.9	4.71% (+23.0%)	N/A
1981	78.5% (-0.9%)	20.0	4.61% (-2.1%)	N/A
1984	78.8% (+0.4%)	14.5	1.74% (-62.3%)	3.07%
1988	79.7% (+1.1%)	12.3	6.00% (+244.8%)	4.72% (+53.7%)
1992	77.4% (-2.9%)	15.1	3.29% (-45.2%)	4.94% (+4.7%)
1996	79.3% (+2.2%)	20.3	3.23% (-1.8%)	8.51% (+72.3%)
1999	78.7% (-0.8%)	25.4	3.80% (+17.6%)	13.01% (+52.9%)
2003	67.8% (-11.3%)	22.7	4.29% (+12.9%)	8.22% (-36.8%)
2006	63.6% (-6.2%)	39.8	4.69% (+9.3%)	9.53% (+15.9%)
2009	64.7% (+1.7%)	17.7	4.39% (-6.4%)	8.49% (-10.9%)
2013	67.8% (+4.8%)	33.3	5.16% (+17.5%)	8.75% (+3.1%)
2015	72.0% (+6.2%)	19.5	4.99% (-3.3%)	5.74% (-34.4%)
4/2019	68.4% (-5.0%)	33.7	5.78% (+15.8%)	5.99% (+4.4%)
9/2019	69.8% (+2.0%)	10.8	6.06% (+4.8%)	7.44% (+24.2%)
2020	71.5% (+2.4%)	7.5	5.98% (-1.3%)	7.69% (+3.4%)

Notes: Figures for UTJ's results before 1992 utilize the combined vote shares of AY, PAI, DT, or any electoral coalitions between AY and PAI. Underlined vote shares reflect the election-over-election proportional change thereof being in excess of the Pedersen index score for the relevant election.

Figure 3: Relative electoral volatility experienced by parties within the allotted time periods.

Party	$Vol_{relative}$
Reformed Political Party	0.415
Christian Union	1.308
United Torah Judaism	0.360
Shas	0.593

Independent variables

For Hypothesis 1, the independent variable will be the degree to which a party possesses a religiously and culturally homogeneous base of voters. I will represent this by measuring the proportion of those who identify with a given party, in the Dutch cases, or who intended to vote for given a party shortly before the 2020 election, in the Israeli cases, who belong to the original religious demographic of a party, being the Reformed and Old Reformed Congregations for the SGP, the Reformed Church (Liberated) for the CU, and Haredi voters for the UTJ and Shas, out of all those who identify with any given religion, in the Dutch cases, or who are Jewish, in the Israeli cases, relative to the proportion of all respondents who belong to the same religious demographics. Given the differences in variables, comparisons across the Dutch and Israeli cases might not be valid, but differences between the parties within a country category should remain valid, given that the number of respondents in the datasets who identified with a given party or with a given religious category, originally being not proportional to the actual religious demographics or vote patterns of the Netherlands or Israel, are controlled for. The formulas are marked below.

$$R_{CU} = \frac{\frac{Liberated_{CU}}{Religious_{CU}}}{\frac{Liberated}{Religious}} \qquad R_{SGP} = \frac{\frac{Congregations_{SGP}}{Religious_{SGP}}}{\frac{Congregations}{Religious}}$$

$$R_{UTJ} = \frac{\frac{Haredi_{UTJ}}{Jewish_{UTJ}}}{\frac{Haredi}{Jewish}} \qquad R_{Sh} = \frac{\frac{Haredi_{Sh}}{Jewish_{Sh}}}{\frac{Haredi}{Jewish}}$$

- Wherein R_{CU} represents the proportion of CU-identifying respondents who identify with any particular religion who belong to the Reformed Church (Liberated), relative to the proportion of respondents who identify with any particular party and any particular religion who belong to the same.
- Wherein R_{SGP} represents the proportion of SGP-identifying respondents who identify with any particular religion who belong to the Reformed or Old Reformed Congregations, relative to the proportion of respondents who identify with any particular party and any particular religion who belong to the same.
- Wherein R_{UTJ} represents the proportion of Jewish respondents who intend to vote for UTJ who identify as Haredi, relative to the proportion of all Jewish respondents who identify as Haredi.
- Wherein R_{Sh} represents the proportion of Jewish respondents who intend to vote for Shas who identify as Haredi, relative to the proportion of all Jewish respondents who identify as Haredi.
- Wherein *Liberated*, *Congregations*, and *Haredi* each represent the number of respondents who identified as belonging to the Reformed Church (Liberated), as belonging to Reformed or Old Reformed Congregations, or as Haredi, respectively, with the subscripts *CU*, *SGP*, *UTJ*, and *Sh* denoting that the variable is of those respondents who identify with or intend to vote for that particular party.
- Wherein *Religious* represents the number of Dutch respondents who identify with any particular religion or denomination, and wherein *Jewish* represents the number of Israeli respondents who identify as Jewish, with the subscripts again representing those who identify with or intend to vote for a particular party.

Figure 4: Figures for Hypothesis 1 for each party within the allotted time periods.

Party	Group as proportion of party supporters	Group as proportion identifiers of all parties	R_{party}
Christian Union	Reformed (Liberated): 11.1%	1.9%	5.84
Reformed Political Party	Ref. Congregations: 48.0%	4.4%	10.91
United Torah Judaism	Haredi: 96.6%	9.1%	10.62
Shas	Haredi: 65.0%	9.1%	7.14

For Hypothesis 2, the independent variable will be the extent to which a party's base of voters is distinct and/or socially separated from the population at-large. I will measure this on a scale of 0 to 4, with one point added for the presence of each of the following characteristics for a particular party, or a half point for the partial presence for a characteristic: 1) geographic separation, i.e., a party's voters being concentrated in specific regions or localities; 2) educational segmentation, i.e., children of a party's voters generally belonging to schools separate from those of the general population; 3) a sense of being the target of discrimination, i.e., a party's voters feel they are targets of discrimination more often than other voters do; 4) objection to the secular framework of the state, i.e., the party holds views far removed from those of the general population on the basic nature of the Dutch or Israeli government.

While the CU and SGP excel in rural areas in the Netherlands' 'Bible Belt', placing quite high or even winning a plurality of the vote in a number of municipalities, on a provincial level, neither achieved even 10% of the vote in any province in the 2017 parliamentary election, with only the SGP's performance in Zeeland surpassing the 6% mark (NOS.nl) (NL Verkiezingen). While there are many villages that are heavily orthodox Protestant and which vote for the SGP and CU, they are never far removed from municipalities with secular majorities, nor is there a shortage of supporters of other parties in the same locations (NL Verkiezingen). I will assign values of 0 for social segmentation based on geography to the CU and SGP.

UTJ and Shas do demonstrate more particular territorial bases, with each being of overwhelming strength in majority-Haredi municipalities such as Bnei Brak and in certain neighborhoods in Jerusalem, among other cities (ynet.co.il). While there are no

large subdivisions of Israel with UTJ or Shas pluralities, many of these communities vote almost exclusively for Shas, for UTJ, or for both (ynet.co.il). Hence, I will assign values of 0.5 for social segmentation based on geography for UTJ and Shas.

In the Netherlands, practicing Reformed Christians, such as those who vote for the SGP and, to a lesser extent, the CU, often attend Christian primary and secondary schools rather than secular public schools (Maussen and Vermeulen 2015) (De Wolff et al. 2003). However, Maussen and Vermeulen (2015) point out that only a small portion of these schools possess strongly religious identities and instruct their pupils according to a particular lifestyle understanding of their faith, whereas most, while inspired by religion, place a relatively secular understanding of education at the forefront, as outlined by De Wolff et al. (2003). Those which fit into the more religious framework are largely located in the Bible Belt, including in the SGP strongholds in Zeeland, and serve more orthodox Reformed Christians. Given the relative religious diversity of CU supporters, I will assign a value of 0 based on educational segmentation, whereas I will assign a value of 0.5 to the SGP, since a greater portion of its supporters belong to more orthodox denominations which more commonly have their children attend the more religious schools.

Haredi communities in Israel, much more so than any other Jewish demographic in the country, and more than orthodox Reformed Christians in the Netherlands, possess their own system of schools. These schools, unlike Dutch Christian schools, are not built around a secular education taught in a religious milieu, with religiously-derived answers to more controversial pedagogical questions, but rather are centered on Torah studies and intracommunal Haredi life, with secular studies playing second fiddle (Kingsbury 2020) (Krakowski 2008). What amounts to rejection of secular education by many Haredim is

in fact a policy issue which is disputed by the pro-status quo Shas and UTJ and many anti-status quo secular and traditional Jews (Kingsbury 2020). While participation in secular education has grown in the 2000s and 2010s, it still remains quite low among Haredim compared to other Jews in the country (Kingsbury 2020). As such, I will be assigning values of 1 to the UTJ and Shas regarding educational segmentation.

The 2019 European Social Survey includes a question regarding feeling discriminated against, with one option being that of a religious basis. Respondents who said they felt particularly close to the SGP were far more likely to claim a feeling of discrimination based on their faith, with 29.6% saying so, while only 6.1% of those who identified with the CU and only 3.2% of Socialist Party identifiers, who were the most likely of major party supporters to say so, claiming the same (European Social Survey 2019). Given that almost no CU identifiers claim a sense of discrimination, I will assign the party a value of 0 on the subject, while given that about a third of SGP identifiers claim such, I will assign the party a value of 0.5.

UTJ, being a party which appeals chiefly to Ashkenazi Haredim, might have its supporters be generally sensitive to the moves of secular politicians against the exemptions which Haredim enjoy regarding military service, among other policies (Bergman et al. 2017). Interestingly, Bergman et al. (2017) find that Haredim's perception of discrimination reinforces their group identity, potentially lending credence to the tendency of Haredim who support UTJ or Shas to remain loyal to their chosen party as a community representative. Further, as previously discussed, much of Shas' appeal to Sephardim and Mizrahim is based on a communal ethnic appeal, wherein they seek to remedy a disadvantage which such communities face among other Haredim and in Israeli

society at large (Feldman 2013) (Weissbrod 2003). Therefore, I will assign UTJ a value of 0.5, whereas Shas will be assigned a value of 1 regarding a self-perception of being discriminated against, since Shas supporters' experience of discrimination is multidimensional and takes place within the Haredi community, unlike that experienced by Ashkenazi UTJ supporters.

Regarding ideology, the CU does not stand counter to the current of secular politics in the Netherlands, but rather intends to add a Christian perspective to a pluralist project where there is "room to differ from each other, but also a joint responsibility for [Dutch] democracy and the rule of law" (ChristenUnie b; trans. with Google Translate). This is further evidenced by the willingness of the main historical governing parties (VVD, PvdA, CDA, and D66) to include the CU in governing coalitions. The SGP, while it is more focused on instituting Christian-inspired policies, e.g., minimizing commerce and work on Sundays (SGP b), and while it is more Eurosceptic (SGP c) and less friendly with the established secular parties than is the CU, does not overtly nor (very) implicitly run counter to the secular nature of the Dutch state. Therefore, I will assign each party a value of 0 on this matter.

UTJ and Shas, on the other hand, existing within the heritage of twentieth century Haredi non-Zionist politics and Israel's historical anti-sectionalism, do not fit so clearly into Israel's secular milieu (Finkelman 2014). This especially remains the case for UTJ, which has not officially accepted Zionism as an ideology, and which still distances itself from Israeli institutions by taking the positions of deputy prime ministers (Israel Policy Forum). Shas too is quite ideologically distinct. While the party does take up ministerial positions and participates in most governing coalitions, its founder and spiritual leader,

Ovadia Yosef, formulated a form of what Leon (2016b) described as "counter-nationalism", wherein the mission of Haredim is to create a devout Jewish society in Israel, thereby rejecting, in theory, the current framework of the Israeli state as UTJ does. I assign both parties a value of 1 for these reasons.

Figure 5: Figures for Hypothesis 2 for each party within the allotted time periods.

Party	Geography	Education	Discrimination	Ideology	Total
Christian Union	0	0	0	0	0/4
Reformed Political Party	0	0.5	0.5	0	1/4
United Torah Judaism	0.5	1	0.5	1	3/4
Shas	0.5	1	1	1	3.5/4

For Hypothesis 3, the independent variable will be the consistency of a party's relationship to coalition formation, specifically whether a party follows a pattern thereof which is predictable for its voters and which would avoid any unwelcome surprises in terms of partnering with parties which said voters would disapprove of. I will measure this by assigning scores to each party based on different factors. The first factor will be the frequency of participation in government, for which a value of 50 would represent always or never being included in government at any time between two elections, and for which a 0 would represent being included in government in precisely half of parliamentary terms. The formula for such is marked below, wherein F represents the consistency of (non)participation in government, p represents the number of

parliamentary terms in which a party participated in government, and n represents the number of parliamentary terms a party has been in the Tweede Kamer or Knesset.

$$F = 100|0.5 - \frac{p}{n}|$$

The second factor will be the consistency of which coalition partners a party joins up with, for which a value of 50 would represent never partnering with anyone, only participating in one coalition, or partnering with the same party or group of parties in every instance, and for which a value of 0 would represent, given participation in more than one governing coalition, not having any overlap in partners between different coalitions. The formula for the Israeli cases is marked below, wherein C represents the consistency of coalition partners, k represents the number of governments which included Likud, except the national unity government of 2020-2021, and t represents the total number of governments a party has been in, again excluding that of 2020-2021 wherein Likud and Blue & White were both in government. I chose to focus on the presence of Likud as the Israeli party system has been, in the long term, bipolar in nature for the previous three decades, with Likud being in opposition to one or more major centrist or center-left parties (Labor until 2006; Kadima and Labor 2006-2013; Yesh Atid, Hatnuah, and Labor 2013-2019; Blue & White 2019-2021). I excluded the national unity governments from the formula, as they were not formed under normal political conditions, e.g., the coronavirus pandemic, and did not represent the typical patterns of coalition formation for the parties involved.

$$C = 100\left|0.5 - \frac{k}{t}\right|, \text{ for when t > 0}$$

The formula used for C for the Dutch cases is marked below, with q representing the total number of coalition partners a party has had, excluding repeats, and m representing the total number of coalition partners a party has had, *including* repeats, e.g., the CDA being counted twice for both its terms in government alongside the CU. I selected this formula because the Dutch party system is not as bipolar as the Israeli one, with governments regularly overlapping between the main governing parties of the center-left (PvdA, D66) and of the center-right (VVD, CDA). Given a less bipolar pattern of coalition formation, all participating parties had to be recognized to give a better sense of the variation of a party's range of coalition partners.

$$C = 50(1 - \frac{q}{m}), \text{ for when m > 0}$$

To calculate overall consistency in a party's pattern of participation in governing coalitions, one must find the sum of the values C and F for a particular party, with consistency being represented on a scale of 0 to 100, with higher values representing greater consistency.

Figure 6: Dutch government compositions since 2002: Prime Ministers and participating parties

Party/PM	Balkenende (2002)	Balkenende (2003)	Balkenende (2006)	Rutte (2010)	Rutte (2012)	Rutte (2017)
First	CDA	CDA	CDA	VVD	VVD	VVD
Second	LPF	VVD	PvdA	CDA	PvdA	CDA
Third	VVD	D66	CU			D66
Fourth						CU

Source: Rijksoverheid

Figure 7: Israeli government compositions since 2003: Senior parties and participation by Shas and United Torah Judaism

	30th	31st	32nd	33rd	34th	35th
Senior partner	Likud	Kadima, Labor	Likud	Likud	Likud	Natl. unity
Shas included?	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
UTJ included?	YES*	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES

* Agudat Yisrael participated in the 30th Government, but Degel HaTorah did not.

Figure 8: Figures for Hypothesis 3 for each party within the allotted time periods.

Party	F	C	C + F
Christian Union	21.43	10	31.43
Reformed Political Party	50	50	100
Shas	30	30	60
United Torah Judaism	30	50	80

Analysis and Conclusion

While the sample I am using here is too small to make strong inferences about religious parties in other time periods or countries, I hope use can still be found in setting an agenda for future research regarding this subject. Three of these parties fell under the average Pedersen index score for the allotted time periods in the volatility which they experienced. CU was the only which did not, experiencing an average volatility 30% higher than that of the Dutch party system at large since 2003 thanks to its performance in the 2006 election (see Figure 3).

With that in mind, SGP and UTJ, being the parties which have experienced less volatility since the 2003 Israeli election and the 2002 Dutch election, best fit the

archetype of the religious political party which has a homogeneous base of supporters. Shas, which occupies a middle position in this sense, as it appeals primarily to Haredi voters but also to non-Haredi religious Sephardim, likewise holds a middle position in the volatility it experiences. It is of note that Shas was the party which experienced quite extreme volatility in the era of direct prime ministerial elections since it had been able to draw away a significantly more diverse electorate from the major parties in that period. CU, being considerably less insular and more approximate to the mainstream Christian democratic parties in these characteristics, experienced more trading of votes between itself and less-religious parties in the 2000s than did the other examined parties (see Figure 4). Alienation from mainstream secular society does not track as well with electoral volatility as homogeneity does, with Shas, despite being distinguished in an ethnic sense and through being socially disadvantaged, having experienced more volatility than did UTJ, whereas such a possible pattern runs in the reverse between the Dutch parties (see Figure 5).

The concept of less-consistent approaches toward coalition formation being associated with greater volatility among religious parties is also apparently evidenced in the Dutch and Israeli cases (see Figure 8). SGP, being by far the most consistent, experienced some of the least volatility. UTJ, which experienced the least volatility, was notably consistent in that it allied itself almost exclusively with Likud, staying out of government when Likud did. While Shas was the least consistent in whether it followed Likud or Likud's rivals into government, it was consistent in whether it entered government at all, with the affirmative being the case in all but one instance, as was true

of UTJ. As such, Shas placed between UTJ and CU in its consistency, with CU ranking lowest and being the least consistent regarding its participation in governing coalitions.

I believe that there is more knowledge to be gained regarding the factors associated with electoral volatility by comparing religious parties of a wider range of party systems, and by comparing them to secular parties on these attributes. This, alongside segmenting cases temporally, rather than using averages for particular periods, would likely solve the issue of an extremely small sample size. To compare between only strongly religious parties in institutionalized party systems within a narrow stretch of time might be less revealing than a wider examination would be. Also of potential interest is the degree to which CU's predecessor parties, as well as UTJ and Shas, experienced greater volatility relative to the average for their party systems in the twentieth century than they did in the twenty-first century. Such a phenomenon, at first glance, appears surprising, given that these parties have, by their nature, evolved at a different pace than did the mainstream Christian democratic parties of Western Europe, among other presently secular parties. This descriptive analysis of Dutch and Israeli religious parties and the volatility experienced by such parties shall hopefully be of use for those who wish to follow the paths laid out herein.

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