

Mandate election interpretations: Structural foundations and social construction

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Abstract

This paper studies mandate elections which occupy a place of honor in democratic theory. A mandate election is one construed as a public directive from the electorate to its newly elected leaders to assume a bold shift in policy. As such it is a social construction, and we study the processes of this social construction by the media and the political community, as well as the extent to which the mandate interpretation is nevertheless structurally determined. We test three models of mandate election interpretation. The first is strictly structural and posits structural identifiability and structural governability as necessary conditions for mandates (Powell 2000). The other two models add social construction: Grossback, Peterson and Stimson's model (2006) proposes surprise; Shamir, Shamir and Sheaffer's model (2008) incorporates campaign constructed identifiability as a necessary condition for mandate interpretation. Our data are based on an extensive content analysis of print media before and after elections, and cover the entire electoral history of Israel, 19 elections in all. We find support for the primary role of the structural foundations of mandate election interpretation, but not by themselves. The structural conditions specified by Powell (2000) mispredict many elections, but turnover in government salvages the predictive power of structural factors. Together, they do pretty well and only mispredict 1992 as a mandate election. Either of the two alternative models that add social construction can account for this miss, but based on in-depth analysis of the 1992 election, bolstered by similar analysis of 1977, we argue in favor of (our) political communication model, although we cannot rule out the surprise explanation.

Mandate election interpretations: Structural foundations and social construction¹

1. Introduction

What were the elections about? What message did the voters send, if at all? How are the elections interpreted and understood? These questions concerning the meaning of elections occupy the thoughts of political scientists, survey experts, journalists, political commentators, politicians and involved citizens during the course of election campaigns and thereafter.

Elections are a political institution, the prime instrument of democracy for citizen influence on decision makers and policy making (Powell 2000). Elections are also a special kind of public opinion expression. Individuals' voting choice has to be regarded as private opinion, but the inherent aggregation of the vote and the publicity of the results make their outcome public by definition. Both levels embody to some extent political and policy preferences of the electorate. Nevertheless, the correspondence with policy preferences is tenuous, due to the great number of factors affecting individual vote choices and election outcomes. Issues affect elections, especially when they are high on the national agenda, but the issues are usually numerous, and other effects come into play, such as the appeal of candidates, long-term party identification, political scandals, campaign events, or parties' electoral strategies. Thus elections as opinion expression may diverge from attitude distributions, and voting is a low-information form of participation (Verba and Nie 1972). This leaves much room for election interpretation, and since elections constitute a political institution of great consequence, election interpretation by the political elite, the media and citizens becomes important.

Election interpretation is the 'conventional wisdom' regarding the election, established in its aftermath. In terms of public opinion theory, it is the perceived opinion, the climate of opinion, and it is heavily loaded with social and normative meaning. Political science, communication and public opinion theories accredit this facet of public opinion with social and political force, functioning to impact public policy and to achieve cohesion and value consensus in society (Kingdon 1984; Noelle-Neumann 1993; Shamir & Shamir 2000; Stimson 1999).²

Election interpretation is thus part and parcel of democratic politics, with repercussions on policy making, the climate of opinion, the public discourse between elections, processes of representation and legitimacy. Both the decisiveness and the substance of the election interpretation matter. By decisiveness we mean whether the election produced a decisive, conclusive, assertive decision. The substance or the contents attributed to the election include whether the elections were about the policy directions the country should take, and if so, in which areas; whether the elections were about who should lead the country; or whether they were just campaign strategy and public relations, and no substance at all.

One particular election interpretation with special status in democratic theory is that of a mandate election (Dahl 1990; Powell 2000). Political scientists and commentators call "mandate" an election defined as decisive, with a prospective outlook, and whose substance is policy. Mandate elections are seen as compelling manifestations of public opinion, as having sent a loud and clear message about voter preferences, as a public directive from the electorate to its newly elected leaders to assume a bold shift in policy.

Mandates link the public and its elected representatives, and there are two perspectives in political science about how they do it. One is the perspective of election-based connections between citizens and policy makers: the public has spoken its word at the voting booth, instructing those elected as to its preferences, which they should heed (e.g. Powell, 2000). From a policymaking perspective, mandates are seen as windows of opportunity rather than commands, as providing an extraordinary policymaking opportunity for the newly elected and empowered government to seize upon (e.g. Keeler, 1993; Kingdon, 1984; Steger, 2000). From both perspectives mandates require identifiability of the message and ability and commitment to carry it out.

We view mandates as emanating from the electorate and expressed in the aggregate election outcome, and then going through a process of interpretation and assignment of meaning carried out by the media and the political community. The electorate empowers, and diffuse elites define meaning in an interactive manner played out primarily in the mass media, in a typical political communication process (Shamir et al. 2008). Our investigation thus revolves around the structural foundations of mandates and the processes of social construction of mandate election interpretations.

2. Theories of mandate election interpretations

We will test three theories of mandate election interpretation. The first regards mandates as well as their determinants in structural terms. The two other theories view mandates as social constructions and add political communication perspectives to the understanding of mandates.

a) Powell's mandate theory of elections

The first theory is purely structural. Powell provides a concise institutional analysis of mandates, and theorizes it in terms of identifiability and governability as two necessary structural conditions for a mandate (Powell, 2000, ch. 4):

“In terms of the achievement of conditions for control through mandates, then, we may think of two stages. First, the voter needs to be able to identify the prospective future governors and have some idea of what they will do if elected. This condition is necessary if the voters are to make good prospective choices. Second, the outcome of the elections should bring into office a coherent government committed to policies that correspond to the voters’ anticipations and capable of carrying them out. A mandate process requires, then, identifiable prospective governments at the time of the election and a responsively formed majority after the election” (2000, p. 71).

Both conditions are structurally determined, a function of constitutional design and political structure. The regime, the electoral system and the party system structure significantly the election results and interpretation. Powell (2000) distinguishes in this respect between majoritarian and proportional constitutional arrangements. Examples for majoritarian institutions are the single-member district plurality electoral system, the direct election of the Prime Minister, and a two-party system. Majoritarian systems have been designed to encourage the election of legislative majorities and concentrate political power in the hands of the winning party government. Proportional systems encourage equitable representation of multiple parties and disperse power in policy making. Powell finds a strong empirical correlation between the system of government and both structural identifiability and structural governability, where majoritarian systems are much more likely to produce both conditions.

Identifiability is most easily satisfied when only two parties compete; then two clear alternatives stand before the voter. In proportional multiparty systems, it may be fulfilled when electoral laws consistently create legislative majorities by over-representing large parties at the expense of small ones, when voters are offered explicit pre-election coalitions, or when strong expectations develop about post-election coalition governments (Powell, 2000, ch. 4).

Governability is also harder to achieve in multiparty systems than in majoritarian systems. Majoritarian systems are likely to produce unidimensional political spaces in which there is always a core (coinciding with the Nash equilibrium) defined at the median voter or party position. In contrast, in multidimensional spaces characteristic of proportional systems, the core is usually empty, with many Nash equilibria, which means that governability is impaired. Scholars in the spatial theory of elections tradition suggest the concept of a structurally stable core, where a party that is big enough in terms of seats and central in terms of political position creates the structurally stable core. In the absence of such a core (when the core is empty), the ruling party is vulnerable to policy pressures from within and outside its coalition, coalitions are unstable and the implementation of policy commitments impossible (Schofield and Sened 2006). Only a structurally stable core allows for governability which is necessary for mandates. Therefore the actual achievement of a majority and the margin of victory are clear-cut predictors of governability in two party systems.³ However in multiparty systems, straightforward election results by themselves are not enough, and the concept of a non-empty core is necessary. An election outcome where the largest party has a significant size advantage and it simultaneously occupies the central position in the policy space gives this central party considerable bargaining advantage in coalition formation, it always leads the government, and it has a good chance to carry through its preferred policy program.

The two structural conditions for mandates are thus structural identifiability, shaped by the party system, and structural governability, immediately affected by the election outcome.

b) The political communication of election interpretation

Election interpretation is a social construction, and so is mandate election interpretation.

Election interpretation is a typical political communication process. It is a joint venture carried out primarily by the media and political elites. Journalists have obviously a prominent role in it, as Kelley suggested: “No other interpretations of elections have the political significance that those of the news media do, at least in the short run: The press gets there first with the most publicity, and first impressions of elections tend to endure” (1983, p. 167). Political actors are just as involved in this endeavor of election interpretation as are journalists. Elected officials, public relations professionals and party strategists, on the winning and on the losing side, lead an active role in the construction of the post-election climate of opinion, in interpreting its meaning and in laying claims for (or disputing) mandate interpretations. They interact with the press, which relies heavily on them as news sources, and together they construct the meaning of the election in the days immediately following it. Several studies have outlined these processes in recent American politics (Conley, 2001; Entman & Paletz, 1980; Hale, 1993; Hershey, 1992; King & Schudson, 1995).

What needs to be interpreted in the aftermath of the election is the aggregate election outcome, in a forward-looking way. Therefore the electoral results are the starting point of the interpretation. They are of course the noticeable indicator for structural governability, but their overriding role in election interpretation needs also to be understood in political communication terms. The election results are the most salient information cues for interpretation. And while the election results are presumably objective, they are still subject to interpretation, in the sense that they can be evaluated with respect to different points of reference, thus opening the door wide to construction. According to Tversky and Kahneman's prospect theory (1981), people think more in terms of gains and losses than in terms of net wealth and welfare. Losses and gains are defined relative to a reference point which may shift with the description of the situation. Clearly numerous potential reference points exist and are used when election results are interpreted by the media, politicians and voters. What determines to a large extent the reference point which will gain most attention by the media and voters is salience and vividness.⁴ These factors have been long known as attention grabbers by cognitive psychologists (e.g. Fiske and Taylor 2008). These individual-level cognitive dynamics are further augmented by media practices that cater to audience needs. Journalism norms build upon what is assumed to be of interest to their audience, and commonly used yardsticks for newsworthiness include among others prominence, conflict, the unusual, the unexpected and the dramatic (e.g.

Shoemaker and Reese 1996). Journalists who are socialized into the norm that drama makes stories newsworthy will frame the election results and will use reference points that are surprising and prove dramatic.

Often the past election is used as the reference point. A big rise or gigantic plunge of the major contenders to lead the government is likely to demand attention. So is also a turnover in government: It indicates a change of guard, a change in the leadership and usually also in policy directions, and as such this indicator of real change catches our attention and creates drama.

Another common reference point is that of expectations created during the campaign by pollsters, analysts and political consultants of the candidates. Thus beyond the actual results, surprising results, that were not expected, catch the eye and become a focus for interpretation. A surprise may be the identity of the winner or the size of the victory or loss compared to expectations.

A particularly impressive electoral outcome may then be the signal for commentators and pundits to provide a mandate interpretation, as well as for the political contenders. Winners may be easily tempted to claim a mandate, however only a huge victory and colossal failure bring the losers not to rebut or even to concede such mandate claims. As much as they interpret the electoral message, they may be even more aware of the new power relations, the changed makeup of the imminent government and the policy window opened up by the election outcome (Grossback et al., 2006; Shamir et al., 2008).

Finally, from a political communication perspective, election interpretations are expected to be constructed upon the election campaign and its agenda, and not to build upon analyses of voters. This is due to several reasons. Even though election interpretations implicitly hinge upon voters' intentions, ascertaining those is difficult and disputable, and in any case serious analyses of voting behavior are not available at the time election interpretations are constructed. On the other hand, the election campaign agenda is salient and recent, and thus easily available to help decipher the electoral message. Moreover, the same actors doing the post-election interpretation were also primary actors in the construction of the election campaign, and their motivations and biases similar. Thus the election campaign should have an effect on election interpretation.

The next two theories build on the political communication perspective in their attempt to explain mandate election interpretation. Both regard mandates as social constructions and not only structurally determined.

c) Shamir et al.'s political communication model of mandates

The theory proposed by Shamir, Shamir and Sheaffer (2008), built explicitly on Powell's structural model but included the elements of social construction of mandates. This model incorporates Powell's two structural conditions in addition to a third necessary condition, which we called constructed identifiability. Structural identifiability requires clear government alternatives before the voter, but these may be based on vague image, performance or personality evaluations and need not be identifiable and distinguishable in terms of ideology and policy. There is a crucial element of construction operative primarily during the election campaign which may enhance or hide identifiability in terms of substance required for a mandate. Constructed identifiability requires that the election campaign is significantly issue-oriented and ideological, that it provides clear policy distinctions between the candidates, and when the system is multidimensional, that it be focused on one central cleavage dimension which dominates the agenda.

As discussed in the previous section, the campaign is salient and recent, and it is what there is to go by (in addition to the election results) in order to interpret the election outcome: the campaign is assumed to have been what the election was about. When an election campaign hides rather than exposes the issues, the party positions and the differences, mandate interpretations cannot come about. Only when the election campaign featured policy prominently enough, and the major candidates and party alternatives could be well identified on a major cleavage dimension which dominated the agenda is a mandate interpretation of the election possible. This is constructed identifiability.

Constructed identifiability varies significantly over elections in the same political system. Across regimes, the spatial theory of elections suggests that in majoritarian systems, in particular in two party systems, political parties tend to converge to the median voter, and thus hinder constructed identifiability. Proportional systems may be more likely to fulfill the constructed identifiability condition, given the lesser such tendency in multidimensional multiparty systems. Nevertheless the multiplicity of parties and the various coalitions that may be forged may work against

constructed identifiability of the government alternatives before the voter, even if such alternatives exist (i.e. even if there is structural identifiability). Thus while Powell's two structural conditions are more likely in majoritarian systems, this may not be the case with regard to constructed identifiability.

d) Grossback, Peterson and Stimson's Surprise model of mandates

A third theory of mandates has been proposed by Grossback et al., and it too combines structure and construction. Based on their analysis of American mandate elections, Grossback, Peterson and Stimson emphasize decisive and unexpected election results (2006, chapter 2). A surprising big win across the board (that is across institutions and/or levels of government) catches the commentators who construct the election interpretation unaware, and since a mandate is a simple idea, it is an easy way to make sense of the outcome (p.40). They present in those terms the three elections they identify as mandate elections, 1964, 1980 and 1994, on the basis of the election year horse race polls and the pre-election expectations, and contrast them to other election years with big wins that were however totally expected (e.g. 1984). If indeed surprise is a major factor in a mandate interpretation, it follows that in the American case, congressional (and even state) results may be more conducive to mandate assertions, since the contest for the presidency does not leave much room for surprises, being the focus of attention, and its outcome usually well predicted and covered ahead of time (pp. 41-43).

This model was specified on the basis of the American case. Structural governability is implicitly specified in the model, as it includes a large enough and across the board gap – producing indeed an outcome that brings into office a coherent government capable of carrying out the policies it committed to. We generalize the model to multiparty systems and therefore add Powell's second condition of structural identifiability, which must have been assumed to exist as it is a constant feature of the American two-party system.

3. Research context and methodology

a) The Israeli party system and electoral history⁵

Our empirical data are national elections in Israel, and we cover the whole electoral history of 19 elections since 1949 through the last election held in February 2009.

Israel was established in 1948, but its political institutions were forged in the pre-state era, under the British Mandate and in the Zionist Organization. Its constitutional design - with no Constitution - falls within the proportional, not the majoritarian mode (Lijphart, 1999; Powell, 2000). Pre-state and Israeli politics were always multiparty and multidimensional. The Israeli party system has a multitude of parties and has gone through significant changes over the years. It has changed from a dominant party system (1949-1977) to a competitive one; it has gone through both realignment (1977) and dealignment (since the 1990's); it has experienced several (marginal and significant) changes in its electoral system (in the 1990's); and it has seen the establishment of new parties and the disappearance of others. In addition to the common social and economic debates that politics thrive on, Israeli politics have been beset by the Israeli-Palestinian or Israeli-Arab conflict; war, terror and armed confrontations as well as peace initiatives and peace talks have always been on its political agenda. Since the 1967 Six Day War, the internal debate with regard to the territories captured in this war and the Palestinian population living in them defines the major cleavage of politics and the party system.

Mapai, later in Alignment with other left wing parties and then Labor, was the dominant party since the pre-Independence years, till the first turnover in 1977, when it was ousted from power by the right-wing Likud, led by Menachem Begin. Likud was established through an alliance of two parties in 1965 (then Gahal) and expanded in 1973 to the Likud. Labor and Likud were the two major parties since 1965 and through 2006, at the head of the left and right⁶ blocs respectively. In 2006 the Likud with Ariel Sharon at its head split and established the Kadima center party which became the biggest party in that election and formed the coalition government. Also in 2009 it got most votes and seats in the Knesset but the Likud, headed by Benjamin Netanyahu formed the government. In this election, for the first time, Labor which has been on the decline since the 1970's was not one of the three largest parties.

Since the establishment of the state,⁷ Israel's electoral system is a strict proportional representation (PR) system, with the whole country making up one constituency, and a low threshold for representation (now 2%). In 1992 the Knesset legislated a major change in the electoral system and the parliamentary regime in the form of the direct election of the Prime Minister, in addition to the election of the Knesset (the parliament) under the same PR system in effect since 1948. This reform brought about further fragmentation and instability and was revoked in 2001 after two

such elections in 1996 and 1999, and a special election only for the Prime Minister in 2001. Our data include thus 19 elections: 18 Knesset elections (of them two under the direct election of the Prime Minister electoral system) and one special election for the Prime Minister.

b) Data sources

Our study relies upon multiple data sources. The bulk of the data come from content analysis of print media.⁸ This is our source for the election interpretation variables, for surprise, as well as for the election agenda and campaign. We also use official election statistics as well as election polls.

Mandate election interpretation was measured through a systematic and exhaustive content analysis of all post-election reports in the two leading Israeli newspapers, *Ha'aretz* and *Yediot Ahronot*,⁹ in the three days following each of the elections. The data cover all news articles, editorials, and op-ed pieces with election interpretations.¹⁰

Campaign characteristics were also assessed on the basis of content analysis of the same two newspapers' agenda before the elections, the media coverage of the election campaigns and the major party advertisements.¹¹

The measurement of surprise was also based on content analysis of these two newspapers on the day following the election.¹²

The election results indicators are taken from official election statistics and political analyses of the election results and coalition constraints.¹³

c) Measurement

Mandate: The coding scheme identified mandate references, distinguishing between mandate claims and rebuttals. Mandate references were defined as statements explicitly or implicitly imputing (or denying) the election with the meaning of a message, a public directive, instruction, or authorization.¹⁴ Our major measure is the proportion of mandate acknowledgments in election interpretation articles in an election year. A second measure is the proportion of mandate denials in an election year. We further measured the definition of the winner in the statements imputing a mandate and distinguished between candidate, political party, political bloc, and policy direction.

The contents of the election interpretation were measured on the basis of content codes that referred to the major issue dimensions on the Israeli public agenda over the years, including peace and security, state-religion, the economy, social issues, governability, as well as campaign and candidate-related explanations. Most of the analysis here categorizes the policy issues into two broad areas of security and domestic affairs. From these data we built several measures of the proportion of a category in an election year. Our major measures are the proportions of domestic issue explanations, of security explanations, of issue explanations (combined), of campaign explanations and of candidate-related explanations in an election year. Based on these variables we also constructed ranking measures of issues versus other explanations, of issues versus campaign and leader explanations, and of security versus domestic issues.¹⁵

The major campaign variables were policy focus and issue focus. Our measure for policy focus is the proportion of news items covering the election campaign, dealing with policy positions of parties or candidates, ideology, platform, or plans for the future in the two months, one month and one week up to the election (see note 12). On the basis of these three variables we built in addition a dummy variable for which the value '1' was given to elections with such a proportion of at least .5 in at least one of the three periods examined. The issue focus measure was computed on the basis of the proportion of security and domestic issues in the media agenda in the two months, one month and one week leading to the election. We also computed a ranking measure of security vs. domestic explanations.¹⁶

Surprise was measured by surprise expressed in the post-election media discourse with respect to a potential ruling (large) party¹⁷. Our measure is a dummy variable, with '1' indicating surprise if such was indicated in our content analysis.

The magnitude of victory or gap and turnover are straightforward. The coding of a non-empty core is based on Nachmias and Sened (1999) and personal communication with Sened. All elections during the dominance period fall in this category (1949-1977), and the only other such election is 1992. The structural identifiability of prospective governments is ascertained based upon political analyses of the Israeli party system, according to the criteria specified by Powell (2000, pp. 71-76). The elections of 2006 and 2009 with the center party Kadima were coded as not identifiable structurally. All other elections were deemed as structurally identifiable. Between 1981 and 2003 the two bloc structure centered around the Likud and Labor

forged pretty clear pre-election implicit or even explicit expectations about post-election coalition governments. The elections during the period of Mapai dominance were also coded as structurally identifiable, as voters knew what the future government was likely to be, they could locate Mapai's general policy positions and could vote for or against that future government, much like the case of the LDP in Japan. The absence of a credible alternative government renders identifiability during this period only partial, but following Powell we also categorize these elections as providing for structural identifiability.

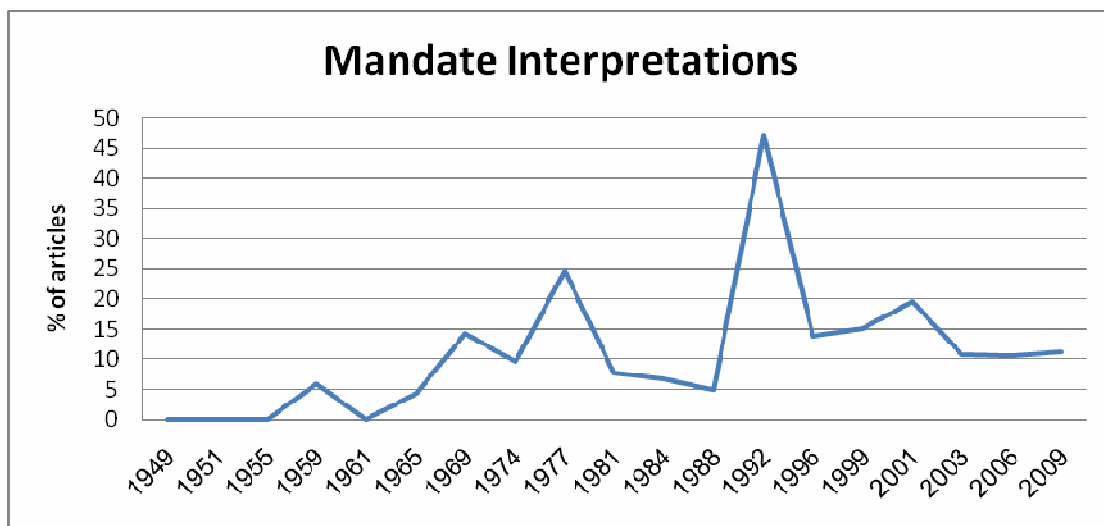
4. Analysis

A mandate election interpretation is a special case of election interpretation as a decisive election which carries a message of substance. It is the reading of an election as a public directive from the electorate to its newly elected leaders to assume a bold shift in policy. It is self-evident that elected leaders wish to define the election as a mandate, and that their competitors will want to deny it. Thus one may expect mandate statements in every election. Even George Bush in 2000 - with a doubtful victory decided by the Supreme Court along party lines and half a million votes short of his opponent, Al Gore - claimed a mandate for his conservative agenda (Grossback et al. 2006, p. 33). But a mandate election is one where a climate of opinion of a mandate is formed; it does not have to be by consensus, but this becomes the reigning view in the post-election media account, in the political community and in the electorate.

Mandates are rare. They are rare because of the difficulty of such a construal of the electorate; because the achievement of the structural conditions of mandates, in particular in multiparty systems, is difficult; and because the political communication characteristics of modern democracies hinder rather than foster such interpretations (Shamir et al. 2008). In our data set of 3298 election interpretation statements over the 19 elections, only 231 were mandate claims (7%). These appeared in 188 of the 1214 articles (15.5%).¹⁸ But of course the question is whether there were any elections that were defined as mandate elections, such that the bulk of commentaries proclaimed the election as a mandate and filled it with substance. Figure 1 presents mandate claims over the years, and one election stands out – 1992. Almost half of the articles interpreting this election in the first 3 days defined it as such. The 1977 election was so defined in 25% of the articles and the 2001 election in 20%. 1977 was the first

turnover ever in Israel's electoral history: The Likud party lead by Menachem Begin ousted the dominant Labor-Alignment which has been in power since independence and even before, during the Yishuv era. Labor-Alignment lost 19 seats of the 51 it had in the previous Knesset and trailed by 11 seats the winning party, Likud. 1992 was the second turnover, in which Labor under Yitzhak Rabin returned to power, with a lead of 12 Knesset seats over the Likud. The 2001 election was a special election for the Prime Minister, with no concurrent elections to the Knesset, the only one of its kind, in which Ariel Sharon of the Likud beat Ehud Barak (Labor) 62.4% to 37.6%, in what was declared the largest victory in Israel's electoral history.

Figure 1



Was the 1992 election a mandate election? There is first the question whether this proportion of mandate references (47%) is enough, but in addition we need to examine the subject and substance of the mandate. Figure 2 displays our coding of the subject of the mandate: personal, party, bloc or policy mandate, and Figure 3, its substance. We can see in Figure 2 that in 1992 this is most often a mandate for a party, and much less a mandate for policy, and in Figure 3, that it is overwhelmingly an empty mandate with no policy domain or direction specified. 1992 was furthermore among the lowest in terms of issue explanations of the election: Only 32% of the articles explained the election results with issues, and there were many more campaign strategy and candidate-related explanations (in 49% of the articles). Taking together the amount of mandate attributions, their lack of policy substance, and the overall interpretation of the election we conclude that 1992 was not a mandate

election, and that none of the Israeli national elections can be regarded as a mandate election.

Figure 2

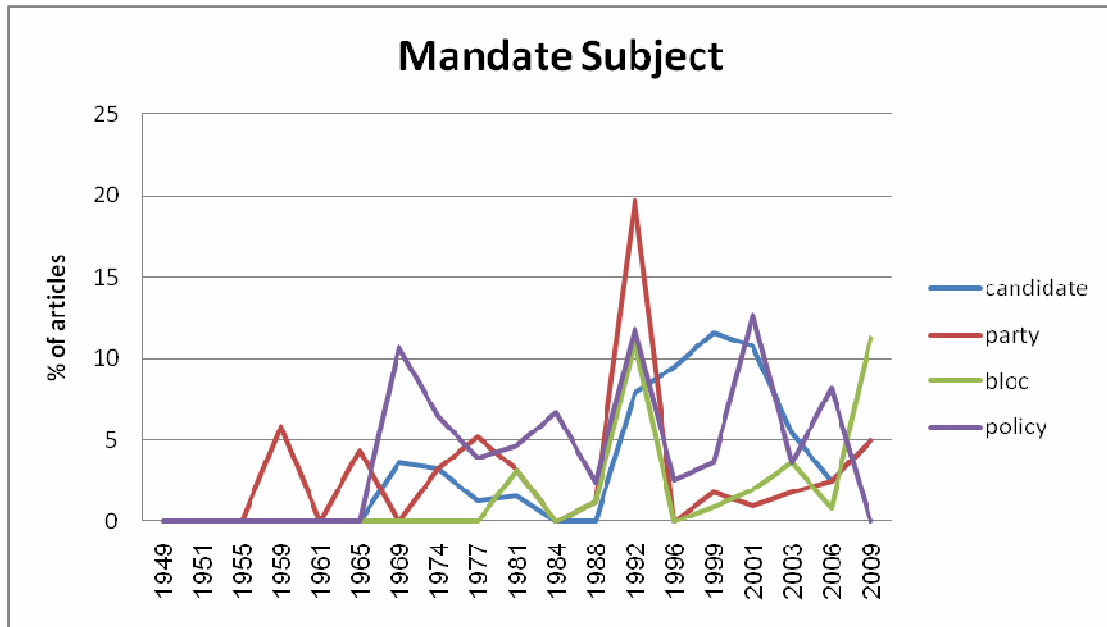
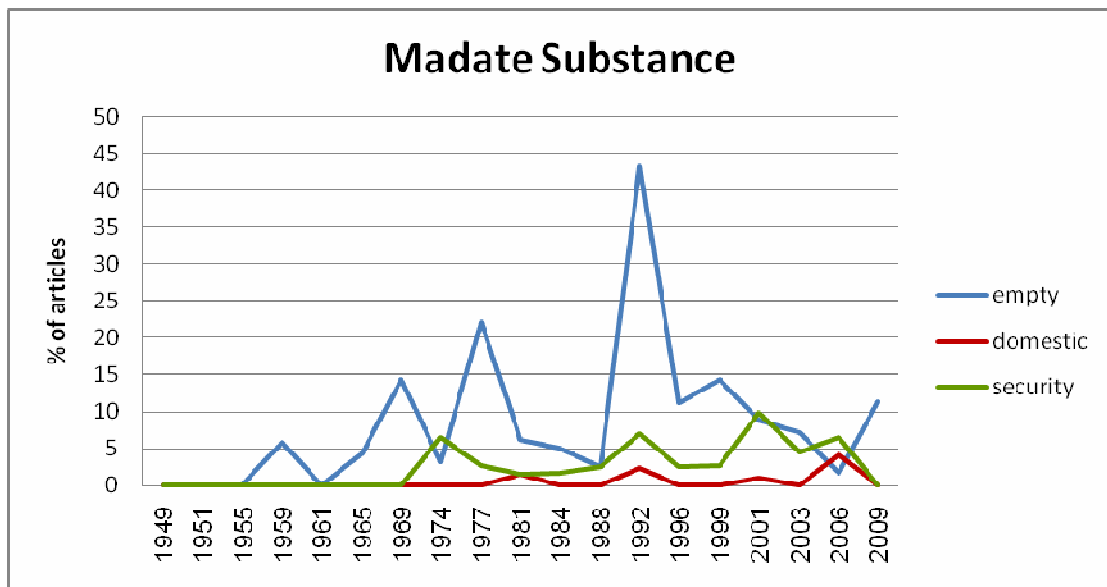


Figure 3



Having found no mandate election in the electoral history of Israel presents difficulties for the exploration of mandate interpretation conditions. We will proceed as follows. First we will check whether any election should have been interpreted as a mandate election given the theories of mandates we outlined above. Secondly we will

evaluate the mispredictions regarding mandate interpretation as a continuous phenomenon. Finally we will take a closer look at the 1992 election.

Table 1 lists our mandate predictions based on the three theories we outlined: first, the structural conditions only; second, the model with the campaign construction conditions added; and third, the model with surprise. The last 6 rows present the models with turnover added. As can be seen in the first and second rows, if we were to go only by the two structural conditions posed by Powell, structural identifiability and governability (the latter measured first by the gap indicator, and in the second row by the non-empty-core indicator), one would expect 13 and 9 elections (!) respectively to be mandate elections. This is of course way off our empirical results, and means that the basic structural model is not the whole story.

The next two rows present the predictions of the Shamir et al. model (2008), which combines the structural conditions with two additional necessary campaign construction conditions.¹⁹ This model still leaves in 5 and 4 of the previously predicted elections respectively (1949, 1965, 1969, 1974 with both gap and core indicators for structural governability, and also 2001 with the gap indicator).

The next two rows test the Grossback et al. (2006) model. This model was specified on the basis of the American case, and posits two conditions: a large enough gap and surprise. Applying it to the Israeli party system, we test it with respect to gap and the emergence of a non-empty core, since we regard the latter indicator as the more appropriate measure of structural governability in a multiparty system like Israel. We include in the model also the structural identification condition, which must have been assumed to exist and is a constant feature of the American two-party system, which is not the case in the Israeli multi-party system.²⁰ This model mispredicts 5 elections when we use the gap indicator and 3 elections with the non-empty core indicator. Notice that the two models misspecify different elections: The campaign construction model misspecifies 4 elections during the period of Mapai (Labor) dominance (1949, 1965, 1969, 1974) and the model with gap also 2001. Of the surprise model misspecifications during the dominance period, one is the same (1965), and two are different elections (1951 and 1959); and in addition the model with gap also mispredicts 1977 and 2001.

The next two rows combine all three models and specify as necessary conditions the structural conditions, surprise and campaign construction. We still predict 1965 as a mandate election, and the model with gap also 2001.

Table 1 – Mandate Prediction by Mandate Conditions

Necessary Conditions	Condition Type	Mandate Predictions	
		#	Elections
Gap Structural Identification	Structure only	13	1949-1974 1977 1992 1999 2001 2003
Non-Empty Core Structural Identification	Structure only	9	1949-1974 1992
Gap Structural Identification Ideological Focus Issue Concentration	Structure + Campaign Construction	5	1949 1965 1969 1974 2001
Non-Empty Core Structural Identification Ideological Focus Issue Concentration	Structure + Campaign Construction	4	1949 1965 1969 1974
Gap Structural Identification Surprise	Structure + Construction (surprise)	5	1951 1959 1965 1977 2001
Non-Empty Core Structural Identification Surprise	Structure + Construction (surprise)	3	1951 1959 1965
Gap Structural Identification Ideological Focus Issue Concentration Surprise	Structure + Construction (campaign and surprise)	2	1965 2001
Non-Empty Core Structural Identification Ideological Focus Issue Concentration Surprise	Structure + Construction (campaign and surprise)	1	1965
Gap Structural Identification Turnover	Structure incl. Turnover	4	1977 1992 1999 2001
Non-Empty Core Structural Identification Turnover	Structure incl. Turnover	1	1992
Gap Structural Identification Ideological Focus Issue Concentration Turnover	Structure incl. Turnover + Campaign Construction	1	2001
Non-Empty Core Structural Identification Ideological Focus Issue Concentration Turnover	Structure incl. Turnover + Campaign Construction	0	---
Gap Structural Identification Surprise Turnover	Structure incl. Turnover + Construction (surprise)	2	1977 2001
Non-Empty Core Structural Identification Surprise Turnover	Structure incl. Turnover + Construction (surprise)	0	---

In the next 6 rows we go beyond our stated hypotheses based on the three specified theories of mandate conditions and introduce another factor which may be relevant to mandate interpretation: turnover in government. We do not regard it as a necessary condition for mandate nor for mandate interpretation since conceptually one can visualize a mandate without turnover, when the ruling party receives a mandate to carry out old or new policy directions it advocates. But it may be a contributing factor to mandate election interpretation. Turnover is an important structural characteristic of elections and of democratic politics: It indicates a change in the ruling party and leadership and therefore usually also in policy. Not only from the institutional point of view, but also from a political communication perspective turnover is obviously a salient and dramatic reference point for election interpretation. The first two rows present the predictions of Powell's structural conditions plus turnover without consideration of surprise or the campaign characteristics. With the gap indicator of structural governability, we misspecify 4 elections: 1977, 1992, 1999 and 2001. With the non-empty-core indicator, the only election we expect to have been a mandate election is 1992 – the one election that comes closest to having been defined as such. Finally, when we either add the campaign conditions or surprise, and use the non-empty-core indicator of structural governability, no election is predicted as a mandate election.

Throughout the table, we see that the non-empty-core indicator of structural governability mispredicts less elections than the gap. The fact that it is the better indicator strengthens the structural perspective on mandate elections over the political communication constructive approach. The emergence of a non-empty core is the structurally important result for governability in a multiparty system like Israel, while the size of the gap is a much more superficial and lacking indicator for expected governability. On the other hand, the size of the gap between the major competitors is most salient when the election results are published, and if it were mainly political communication processes that matter for mandate election interpretation, it should have worked better than the structurally crucial non-empty core indicator. Thus the overall weakness of the gap versus the non-empty core supports the structural over the constructive approach.

Obviously this analysis of mandate conditions can only be considered as exploratory, not only because it is a one-country study, but primarily because we have no variation on the dependent variable, since none of the elections was defined as a

mandate election. The data allow for a relative assessment of the different theories, and found all three of them lacking. The data also seem to provide support for the role of turnover in government in mandate election interpretation. But clearly, our conclusions would be much stronger if we had additional cases falling into the category of both necessary conditions and the materialization of mandate interpretation (see Collier et al., 2004, pp. 214-216).

In order to further bolster our analysis based so far on the dichotomy of either existence or non-existence of a mandate interpretation, we proceed along two additional analyses. First, we build on the variation in mandate election interpretations over the 19 elections. In addition to this quantitative exploration, we will look in-depth into the 1992 election, the most interesting one from our perspective.

In Table 2 we bring the percentage of articles with mandate interpretation for the elections predicted as mandate elections by each of the models presented in Table 1. We can see that the models with Powell's two structural conditions (first and second rows) mispredict not only the most elections, but very often (8 and 7 elections respectively) elections that fall below the average of percentage of articles assigning a mandate per election (which is 11%). The models with campaign construction conditions and with the surprise condition mispredict less cases, and less cases below the mean (3). The two models with the structural conditions of governability and identifiability plus turnover without campaign characteristics mispredict (depending on the governability indicator) little: 4 and 1 elections, and all of these fall above the mean of mandate attributions.

Table 2 –Percent Mandate Interpretation by Mandate Conditions

<u>Structure+Construction</u>	1949	: 0
Gap	1965	: .04
Structural Identification	1969	: .14
Ideological Focus	1974	: .10
Issue Concentration	2001	: .20
3 predictions below the mean ; 2 above		
<u>Structure+Construction</u>	1949	: 0
Non-Empty Core	1965	: .04
Structural Identification	1969	: .14
Ideological Focus	1974	: .10
Issue Concentration		3 predictions below the mean ; 1 above
<u>Structure+Construction</u>	1951	: 0
Gap	1959	: .06
Structural Identification	1965	: .04
Surprise	1977	: .25
	2001	: .20
3 predictions below the mean ; 2 above		

<u>Structure+Construction</u>	1951	: 0
Non-Empty Core	1959	: .06
Structural Identification	1965	: .04
Surprise	3 predictions below the mean	
<u>Structure+Construction</u>	1965	: .04
Gap	2001	: .20
Structural Identification	1 prediction below the mean ; 1 above	
Ideological Focus		
Issue Concentration		
Surprise		
<u>Structure+Construction</u>	1965	: .04
Non-Empty Core	1 prediction below the mean	
Structural Identification		
Ideological Focus		
Issue Concentration		
Surprise		
<u>Structure</u>	1977	: .25
Gap	1992	: .47
Structural Identification	1999	: .15
Turnover	2001	: .20
	4 predictions above the mean	
<u>Structure</u>	1992	: .47
Non-Empty Core	1 prediction above the mean	
Structural Identification		
Turnover		
<u>Structure+Construction</u>		
Gap	2001	: .20
Structural Identification	1 prediction above the mean	
Ideological Focus		
Issue Concentration		
Turnover		
<u>Structure+Construction</u>		
Non-Empty Core	---	
Structural Identification		
Ideological Focus		
Issue Concentration		
Turnover		
<u>Structure+Construction</u>		
Gap	1977	: .25
Structural Identification	2001	: .20
Surprise	2 predictions above the mean	
Turnover		
<u>Structure+Construction</u>		
Non-Empty Core	---	
Structural Identification		
Surprise		
Turnover		

These results foster our conclusion based on Table 1, that the basic structural conditions of structural identifiability and governability are seriously lacking and that turnover seems to be an important contributing factor in mandate election interpretation. But what about the construction factors of the campaign and surprise? Do we need them at all?

A deeper look into the 1992 election which comes closest to having been a mandate election helps us answer this question and furthers our understanding of mandate determinants. Note that it is mispredicted by the models without any construction factors, either surprise or campaign conditions. We recall that almost half of the articles interpreting the 1992 election proclaimed it a mandate, but that it was not construed as a mandate of substance. When we go back and explore this election campaign we find the source of this lack of substance in the mandate interpretation. The coverage of the 1992 election campaign included little coverage of issues, policy, ideology, and platform. Only 21% of the articles covering the election in the two newspapers dealt (among other things) with issues in the month before the election. This was the second lowest percentage in the 19 elections.²¹ In addition, the print media agenda in the months before the election was quite split between security and domestic affairs. This characterization of the 1992 election campaign is further supported by another, more detailed and TV-based data set about election campaigns since 1992.²² It also identifies the 1992 election as one with especially little media coverage of the election campaign in terms of substance, a high proportion of campaign strategy over substance in the media coverage; little coverage during the campaign of peace and security issues and more of domestic issues; and in the two major parties' TV political spots, an uncharacteristic focus on domestic issues, whereas security and peace make up the major cleavage dimension in Israeli politics since the 1967 War. Notwithstanding the ex-post facto reality of the Oslo agreement with the PLO which the Rabin government signed about a year after it came into office, such a mandate attribution was hard to make because the campaign barely touched policy and was not focused on the issues of peace and security, territory and Palestinians. The campaign was non-ideological and was not focused on these issues, and thus prevented such a mandate definition. Indeed 1992 stood out with empty mandate interpretations, with no substance (see Figure 3).²³ The 1992 election thus may be taken to demonstrate the role of the election campaign in constructing the

election interpretation, in this case -- not allowing for a mandate interpretation of the election.

Our data are however underidentified: In 1992, the election results presented no surprise. Thus, just as good an explanation for why 1992 was not a mandate election after all is that there was no surprise in the results. Nevertheless, considering the detailed analysis of this election and the pattern of the election interpretation replete with mandate references but empty of policy substance, we tend to prefer the explanation of the lack of the campaign political communication necessary conditions.

The 1977 election further bolsters our conclusion. From a political scientist's perspective this was probably the most critical and the only realignment election in Israel's electoral history. 1977 exhibits a similar pattern to that of 1992 in terms of election interpretation, only less manifest. As we saw, 1977 was much less often proclaimed a mandate than 1992. Much like 1992, these mandate attributions were most often empty.²⁴ As to the target of the mandate, it was mostly the party, and then policy and very little personality. Unlike 1992, 1977 presented a surprise. Like 1992 there was a large gap between Likud and Labor, but unlike 1992, 1977 did not produce a non-empty core result. But just like in 1992, the election campaign was in the way of a policy substance interpretation of the election, which the campaign construction model deems necessary for a mandate definition. Also the coverage of the 1977 election campaign included little coverage of issues, policy, ideology, and platform. Only 21% of the articles in the two newspapers covering the election dealt (among other things) with issues in the month before the election, among the lowest percentage in the 19 elections.²⁵ The Labor-Alignment and Likud newspaper ads were similarly shying away from policy issues and ideology, with about a third of the ads dealing with ideology, platform, and policy issues, the second lowest rate between 1949 and 1988. The 1977 and 1992 elections thus display the role of the election campaign as an obstacle on the way to a mandate interpretation, corroborating, albeit only in negative terms, the role of campaign constructed identifiability in the making and unmaking mandates.

In summary, mandate election results seem to be primarily the function of structural prerequisites, but not by themselves. The structural conditions specified by Powell mispredict many elections; turnover in government adds another (mainly) structural contributing factor to election interpretation, and together these three

variables only mispredict 1992 as a mandate election. 1992 was not interpreted as a mandate election, and this could be due to either lack of surprise or to the fact that the campaign necessary conditions were not fulfilled. Both of these introduce construction in the definition of mandate election interpretation. We tend in favor of (our) political communication model, but the surprise explanation does hold as well.

5. Summary and conclusion

Election interpretations are a social construction of the media and political community: journalists, campaign professionals, winning and losing politicians construct it immediately following the election. This election interpretation becomes the "conventional wisdom" about the election, a climate of opinion with political informational and normative force to be reckoned with. Our exploration of election interpretations in Israeli national elections suggests that election interpretations are significantly constrained by the election outcome, by the institutional foundations of politics and by salient events (Shamir 2010). The social construction process has some degrees of freedom, but it is highly dependent upon the election outcome which is the aggregation of voters' individual preferences, and in this sense it is not divorced from the electorate from which it emanates.

This is also the overall conclusion from our investigation of mandate election interpretation. We focused on mandate elections despite their scarcity, given their place of honor in democratic theory. A mandate election is one construed as a public directive from the electorate to its newly elected leaders to assume a bold shift in policy, and as opening extraordinary policymaking opportunity for the newly elected and empowered government to seize upon. A mandate interpretation is thus an "extreme" case of a decisive election with a prospective outlook whose substance is policy. We find support for the primary role of the structural foundations of mandate election interpretation, although not by themselves. The structural conditions specified by Powell, structural identifiability and structural governability, mispredict many elections; thus something else is required for mandate election construction.

Turnover in government could be this something else, but as a contributing factor, not as a necessary condition (and definitely not as a sufficient condition), since mandates do not necessitate a reversal. But turnover as a change of guard is an important structural development in democratic politics. It brings in the point of reference of the previous election and outgoing government. It is a vital development

in democratic politics and from the perspective of democratic theory indeed makes the election and the electorate in this election meaningful and decisive, potentially mandating something. From a political communication perspective, a reversal is a salient and often dramatic aspect of an election that media practices will highlight. However we think that it is the institutional role of turnover and what it signals in terms of a mandate interpretation that is the important aspect. Together these three factors only mispredict 1992 as a mandate election. Despite the fact that in 1992 we find the most mandate claims, these were not enough, and they were furthermore void of policy content. 1992 was not interpreted as a mandate election, and this could be due to either lack of surprise in that election or lack of fulfillment of the campaign constructed identifiability condition. Both of these factors introduce construction in the definition of mandate election interpretation. Based on in-depth analysis of the 1992 election, bolstered by similar analysis of 1977, we argue in favor of (our) campaign construction model, but cannot rule out the surprise explanation. In any case, the structural foundations of mandate interpretations are essential, but political communication construction seems to be part of the story as well.

Our study of the structural foundations and the processes of social construction of mandate election interpretation is obviously exploratory. It is pioneering in its systematic investigation of the manifestations of mandate election interpretation over the entire electoral history of one country, Israel, spanning six decades with enormous variation under a dynamic political, social, economic, media, and international environment. It is thus a one-country study, and moreover with a small N (19), which severely limits our analysis. The major drawback of our study though is that we have no variation in mandate election interpretation, since none of the elections was defined as a mandate election. Additional studies are thus needed to better outline and explain mandate election interpretation. Given the strong support for structural foundations of this socially constructed phenomenon, cross-national studies, such as CSES²⁶ are in particular recommended.

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Notes

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² Note that most election studies do not investigate the climate of opinion, but commonly focus on individuals' voting behavior; they study how people voted, and why they voted the way they did. The vote and the election outcome are best understood as two facets of public opinion (or, in our case, of elections). Public opinion theory tells us that these two facets are related, but are not the same, and therefore may also differ (Shamir & Shamir, 2000).

³ Even when an actual majority is achieved (single party or coalition), governability can be hindered by structural political constraints, which diffuse power in policymaking. Weak cohesion of the majority party, divided government between houses or between executive and legislature, federal systems, or strong legislative committees are prime examples for such constraints (Powell, 2000, ch 4).

⁴ Salience is a property of stimuli in context; for example a turnover in government. Vividness is an inherent property of stimuli for example a female candidate for Prime Minister or Presidency.

⁵ For background on Israeli politics and elections see the books in the series *The Elections in Israel*, published since the 1969 election. Asher Arian edited the first 4 books; Asher Arian and Michal Shamir edited the series since 1984 to date (2009). For a useful introduction to Israeli politics, see Arian (2004).

⁶ The religious political parties are part of the right-wing bloc.

⁷ The same electoral system was in effect also in the pre-state institutions in Palestine under the British mandate and in the Zionist organization.

⁸ We use the print media because this is the medium most appropriate to cover the whole period since the late forties to date. Not only is this medium in use throughout the period we study, but it should also be noted that Israelis were always and are still today avid consumers of newspapers. We thus do not see any validity problems in using the print media as the basis for our measures of election interpretation, and of the campaign agenda and coverage. The only print media measures that need to be used cautiously are those of newspaper party ads. In 1969, TV broadcasts started, and over the years, culminating in the 1990's, the election campaign of the political parties moved to television. We therefore rely on the newspaper ads only through the late 80's. For the elections since 1992 we rely on the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) Election Study Project initiated in 1996 (which we expanded to the 1992 election; see Shamir et al. 2008). These data cover TV advertisements of major political parties and the TV coverage of the election campaigns. We supplement our analysis whenever needed with these data.

⁹ These two leading newspapers have existed since independence and enjoyed a significant share of the Israeli readership. *Yediot Ahronot* was established before independence and was the most widely circulated daily newspaper in Israel since the 1970s and through 2010 when the newly established (2007) *Israel Hayom* passed it in circulation; *Ha'aretz* was for most of the time the third largest newspaper (now the fourth). *Yediot Ahronot* is a popular tabloid newspaper while *Ha'aretz* is a broadsheet. The second (now third) largest newspaper, *Ma'ariv*, is also a popular newspaper very similar to *Yediot Ahronot*. Together *Ha'aretz* and *Yediot Ahronot* represent the mainstream media in Israel quite well.

Based on a previous study of election interpretation of 6 elections, we found that most election interpretations were given in the first 3 days following the elections. Thereafter their number (both utterances and articles) declines exponentially. About two thirds of the utterances (and articles) of the two weeks following these elections were from the first three days.

¹⁰ Two graduate students coded all election years, according to a predetermined codebook, after

obtaining detailed instructions from the researchers. They were instructed to locate all articles with election interpretation and code all utterances/statements/arguments about the election. Only utterances selected by the two coders were included in the analysis, and were coded separately by the two coders. Whenever their coding differed they discussed and agreed upon a common code. In the few cases they did not reach agreement, they consulted the first author and a final coding decision was reached together.

We coded all explanations of the election results and evaluations of the decisiveness of the election, as well as mandate references. Here we analyze primarily the latter. The coding included the year, newspaper, page, source, the nature of the item (news story or op-ed), empirical reference (if stated), the content of the election explanation, and the winner (personal, party, bloc or policy) in the mandate statements. Content codes referred primarily to the major issue dimensions on the public agenda, to campaign and to candidate-related explanations.

The unit of observation was the utterance, and all utterances that imputed an explanation or assessment of the election were coded. The data were analyzed at three levels. The first is that of utterances (N=3298). The number of utterances per article ranged between 1 and 21. The utterances were aggregated into articles, which make up our basic unit of analysis (N=1214). At this level of analysis, the variables measure the frequency of the different categories of interest in the article (for example whether there is and how many mandate denials appear in an article). The third level of analysis is that of election years (N=19), aggregated from the articles, and here the variables denote usually the proportion of articles with certain characteristics (for example, the proportion of articles with mandate denials, irrespective of their number in the article, in an election year).

¹¹ These campaign data were originally collected for other purposes by Tamir Sheafer (see Rahat and Sheafer 2007; Sheafer 2008) and adapted to our purposes. Sheafer's data covered the elections between 1949 and 2003, and we complemented them, using exactly the same coding procedures and rules, for 2006 and 2009. All campaign measures were constructed to measure the two months, one month and one week up to the elections. Two trained graduate students conducted these analyses for the original study and for our additions. The unit of analysis was the article, and we aggregated these data to the level of election years.

To measure policy focus in the campaign we relied on content analysis of all election-related articles that covered the two large parties (Alignment/Labor and Gahal/Likud or their components prior to the establishment of electoral alliances and later unified parties) and in 2006 and 2009 also Kadima in the news sections of *Yediot Aharonot* and *Ha'aretz* two months, one month and one week leading up to the elections. The articles were coded as to whether or not they dealt (among other things) with party and candidate policy positions, ideology, platform, plans for the future etc. Unfortunately this data collection effort did not code the content of the policy coverage, and for that part, we have to rely on the media agenda, and not on the election media coverage. These are obviously not necessarily the same thing, however the media agenda still provides a valid indication as to which issue areas were salient during the election campaign period. Measures for the agenda of the media before the elections are based on content analysis of front-page news articles in *Yediot Aharonot* and *Ha'aretz*. Their major topic was coded as "peace and security", "the economy" and "state-religion". Finally, a content analysis of the major parties' ads in *Yediot Aharonot* and *Ha'aretz*'s news sections provided another measure of the extent to which the election campaign was policy oriented – the percent of major party ads which deal with policy or ideology. Unfortunately these data, like the campaign media coverage data, did not cover the policy content of the party ads.

¹² The unit of observation for the measurement of surprise in the election was the election year, and we coded the election as denoting surprise if there was a statement of surprise on the front page of either *Ha'aretz* or *Yediot Aharonot* on the day following the election. We coded the existence of such surprise with respect to a potential ruling party (large party), and whether the surprise was of an unexpected gain, unexpected loss or unexpected government turnover. Two coders worked independently, and in the few cases of disagreement, reached a joint decision together with the first author. We also collected a second measure of surprise: the gap between the last election poll published in *Yediot Aharonot* (Dahaf poll, if there were more than one poll) before the election and the election results, also coded for gain and loss, referring to the largest gap among the large parties. Unfortunately this measure is available only since 1977 (before that election it was not customary to publish pre-election polls), and we do not use it in the analysis here. The correlation between the gap and discourse indicators for surprise for the 11 elections for which both measures are available is .39 (p=.121).

¹³ <http://www.knesset.gov.il/main/eng/home.asp>. See also the books in the series *The Elections in Israel* appearing since the 1969 election (<http://www.ines.tau.ac.il/bibliography.html>).

¹⁴ Many of the statements included such terms as 'mandate', 'the public has spoken', 'the electorate wants', 'the voter's decision', 'the people's will', or 'Mahapach' (a term in Hebrew denoting a dramatic shake-up, close to the term for revolution). The last term was introduced into the political discourse on election night of 1977, when the first turnover in government occurred terminating the era of Labor party dominance, by the anchorman of the only television channel at that time, Haim Yavin.

¹⁵ The ranking variables were coded as follows: 3 – most frequent; 2 – tied; 1 – least frequent.

¹⁶ We remind the reader that our data about the issues refers to the media agenda before the elections based on front-page news articles and not to the media coverage of the election campaign. These data were not available in Sheaffer's campaign database.

¹⁷ The large parties or potential ruling parties were Mapai through 1961; Mapai and Likud (Gahal) since 1965, and in 2006 and 2009 also Kadima. In 1996, 1999 and 2001 under the direct election of the Prime Minister electoral system, the coding referred to surprise with respect to the candidates for Prime Minister, instead of surprise with respect to one of the large parties, since they were the focus of attention in the election.

¹⁸ The number of mandate denials was miniscule: 22 mandate denial utterances (0.7%) in 19 articles (1.5%).

¹⁹ Our campaign constructed identifiability conditions include policy focus and issue focus. We assume that when these two conditions materialize, also policy differentiation among the party alternatives result, but unfortunately we have no independent measures of this in the electoral history campaign data.

²⁰ We obtain the same predictions if we specify the Grossback et al. model without the structural identification condition.

²¹ In the two months before the 1992 election, the percentage of articles covering the election which dealt (among other things) with issues was 17% (lowest among all elections); in the week before the election 30% of the articles referred also to issues, close to the median percentage across elections.

²² These data originate from the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) Election Study Project initiated in 1996, which we expanded to the 1992 election following the same coding rules. This project was directed over the years by Professors Gabi Weimann, Gadi Wolfsfeld, Tamir Sheaffer and Yariv Tsfati, and we are most grateful to them and to IDI for this ongoing data collection effort. These data cover the main news programs and the special election magazines on the first and second television channels throughout each election campaign (in 1992 there was only one channel). All items that mentioned the campaign, parties or candidates were coded. The data also include all advertisements broadcast by the two large parties, Likud and Labor, during special daily programs sponsored by the state on the two television channels (one in 1992). See Shamir et al., 2008 for a detailed description of these data and the results we build upon here.

²³ 2% were interpretations in the domestic area (about a more socialistic economic policy, about the rule of law and governability), and 7% on security, mostly laying the claim for a dovish mandate (no hawkish claim was made).

²⁴ There were very few security interpretations (in less than 3% of the articles), here all hawkish in direction.

²⁵ In the two months before the 1977 election, the percentage of articles covering the election which dealt (among other things) with issues was 22% (third lowest among all elections); in the week before the election 16% of the articles referred also to issues, the lowest percentage across elections.

²⁶ CSES: The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (<http://www.cses.org/>).