Voting for extreme right parties in Israel: Evidence from the 2009 elections

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, extreme right parties have received considerable electoral support in Europe. Accordingly, many scholars have examined the factors attracting voters in many Western democracies to extreme right parties. In this study, we sought to determine what factors are responsible for the support of extreme right parties in Israel. Using Israel National Election Studies micro-data for the 2009 elections, we found evidence that political dissatisfaction and security issues significantly contribute to support for extreme right parties. In contrast to other countries where economic issues are more salient, our results suggest that economic views do not significantly explain one's support for extreme right parties.

1. Introduction

Extreme right parties are no longer a marginal phenomenon in many democratic regimes with considerable electoral support in Europe. For instance, in 2012, in the first round of the French political elections Marine Le Pen received 18 percent of the French votes (Baume, 2012). As a result of this growing phenomenon, scholars have examined the factors attracting voters to extreme right parties (Knigge, 1998; Lubbers et al., 2002; Ignazi, 2003; Norris, 2005).

In this study, we identify the factors responsible for the support of extreme right parties in Israel. Based on the current literature, we propose three explanations. First, we posit that as one's level of dissatisfaction with the democratic political institutions and procedures increases, one become more likely to support extreme right parties. Second, we propose that Israeli citizens are more likely to support extreme right parties if their perceived economic conditions worsen. Finally, we hypothesize that one is more likely to support extreme right parties if one believes that peace with Palestinians and security are unlikely.

Utilizing the most recent Israel National Election Studies micro-data for the 2009 elections, we applied a probit regression model to evaluate our hypotheses. Our results present evidence that political dissatisfaction and security issues significantly contribute to support of extreme right parties. However, our results suggest that economic views do not explain one's support for extreme right parties.

2. Background

2.1. Extreme right parties

Extreme right parties are defined in various ways. While some scholars have used a more 'general' definition, others have identified more 'particular' streams. In terms of a general definition, the International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences explains that when political scientists use the term, they mean to designate parties that

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are characterized by attributes such as: (1) selective inclusion; (2) selective exclusion; (3) racism; (4) and anti-pluralist political perspectives (Husbands, 2001). Similarly, the Manifesto Project maps out political parties on a left–right continuum using a Rile score that combines a wide range of variables.[1]

Using a more particular definition, Ignazi (2003) identifies a 'new' type of extreme right. According to Ignazi (2003), the vote for the 'new' West European extreme right parties can be explained by several clusters of attitudinal positions: anti-immigrant attitudes, favorable in-group attitudes, authoritarian attitudes, and political dissatisfaction. In the Israeli context, we found this definition more helpful (and easier to operationalize) than the more 'general' explanations.

2.2. Extreme right parties in Israel

Traditionally, the definition of Israel's extreme right refers primarily to issues of land and security and the future of the territories occupied in the 1967 Six Day War (Sprinzak, 1991). For example, Norris (2005) identifies *Ichud Leumi* (The National Union) and *Mafdal* (National Religious Party) as extreme right parties due to their support for annexing the occupied territories. However, Pedahzur (2001) argues that the extreme right in Israel should not be defined primarily upon "territorial maximalist" issues, but upon definitions found in many European political systems as Ignazi (2003) claimed. Thus, Pedahzur (2001) defines two types of extreme right parties in Israel: 'old' and 'new'. The 'old' extreme right is based on hawkish positions on territorial issues. In contrast, Pedahzur (2001) defines the 'new' extreme right as parties that espouse views motivated by nationalism, racism, anti-democracy, and xenophobia.[2] On this basis, Pedahzur defines *Shas* (Sephardi Keepers of the Torah) and *Yisrael Beitenu* (Israel is our Home) as extreme right parties since these parties espouse nondemocratic values.[3] We utilize Pedahzur's definition in this paper and examine how this definition is applicable to reality in the contemporary State of Israel.

In Fig. 1, we demonstrate how extreme right parties have fared over the last 20 years in Israel. We define the 'new' extreme right as *Yisrael Beitenu* or *Shas*, and 'old' as
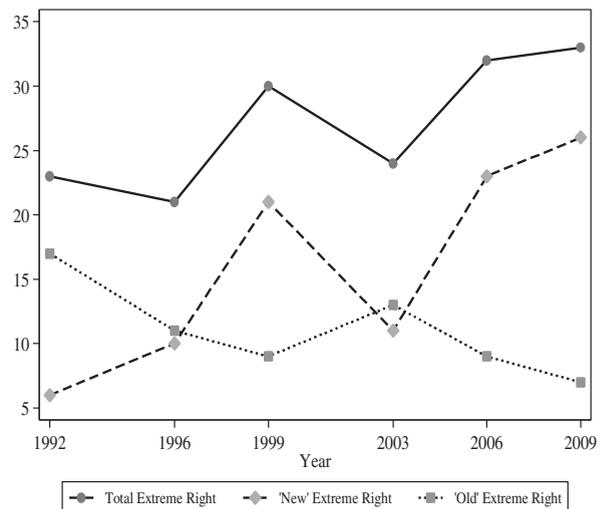

Fig. 1. Extreme right seats in Israel, 1992–2009. *Notes*: Total extreme right seats are the sum of the "new" and "old" extreme right. "New" extreme right refers electoral seats for *Yisrael Beiteinu* or *Shas*, while "Old" refers to seats for *Ichud Leumi*, *Mafdal*, *Moledet*, and *Tzomet*. (See also Pedahzur, 2001). Note that the seats for 2003, when *Ichud Leumi* and *Yisrael Beiteinu* ran together, are counted as seats for the "old" extreme right. *Source*: Knesset web site: http://knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res.htm.

seats for *Ichud Leumi*, *Mafdal*, *Moledet* (Homeland), and *Tzomet* (Crossroads).[4] The figure demonstrates that while the 'old' extreme right has declined in power over the last 20 years, the 'new' extreme right has grown and flourished as Ignazi (2003) demonstrated for Western European countries. According to the figure, the 'new' extreme right has grown from 6 electoral seats in the 1992 elections to 26 seats in the 2009 elections, while the 'old' extreme right has declined from 17 seats in the 1992 elections to 7 seats in the 2009 elections. In total, the figure indicates that extreme right parties enjoyed considerable success in Israel's most recent elections and that their combined electoral strength accounts for 33 seats—more than 25 percent of the total 120 parliamentary seats.

In our model, we consider several different definitions for extreme right parties: (a) the 'old' definition defined by its hawkish views on the occupied territories and the Arab–Israeli conflict; (b) a 'newer' definition similar to those of the European extreme right; (c) an 'expansive' definition that includes both the 'old' and 'new' extreme right parties.

2.3. Explanations for supporting extreme right parties

There are many explanations for why extreme right parties have become so popular in many Western countries. Several studies on Europe see the rise in extreme right voting as reflecting anti-immigration attitudes (Lubbers et al., 2002). Other studies emphasize economic factors (Knigge, 1998). Studies focusing on the USA emphasize the role of religious fundamentalism (Woodberry and Smith, 1998). Consequently, like other papers, we consider economic, political, and cultural explanations for extreme right voting (Knigge, 1998; Lubbers et al., 2002).

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[1] The Manifesto project codebook defines a Rile score as "a measure of party positions on the left–right axis. It ranges from −100 (extreme left) to 100 (extreme right) and is calculated by subtracting the added percentages of left scores from the added percentages of right scores." The measure is built out of seven marker variables (consisting of 28 items) that are factor analyzed together with all the remaining items, known as the 'standard' left to right scale (Volkens et al. 2012). See: https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/uploads/attach/file/4491/codebook_MPDataset_MPDS2012b.pdf.

[2] For definitions of the Israeli political parties mentioned in the paper, we have attached a short separate glossary at the end of the paper.

[3] For example, *Shas* conducted an incitement campaign against the Israeli High Court of Justice after one of its party's senior parliament members was accused and found guilty of bribery (Pedahzur, 2001).

[4] Definitions based upon Pedahzur (2001). It is interesting to note that all of the Israeli extreme right parties received high right wing Rile scores in the 1999 elections – a measurement for the party platform – in the Manifesto Project. See: https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/elections/515.

2.3.1. Economic factors

Support for an 'economic explanation' of extreme right voting is noted by many scholars (Kitschelt, 1995). As noted by Knigge (1998), while some scholars believe that regular economic interests or fears may cause extreme right voting (Lewis-Beck, 1988) others maintain that only a severe economic crisis will cause extreme right voting (Lipset and Raab, 1970). In fact, Knigge (1998) concludes that voters do not move toward the radical right due to a declining national economy. However, other papers have concluded that modest economic factors can explain support for extreme right parties (Anderson, 1996).

Other research has noted that economic voting has an effect in both directions – left and right – and that the directional shift is dependent on a country's political context (Powell and Whitten, 1993). In the Israeli political context, Shalev (1992) argues that due to Israel's socialist past, the public will move toward the right during an economic crisis.

2.3.2. Political dissatisfaction

A vote for an extreme right party is commonly viewed as a means of political protest and several scholars have found that these parties appeal to disaffected and alienated voters (Betz, 1994; Knigge, 1998). For instance, Dalton (1988) argues that many Western European voters have lost confidence in mainstream political parties and institutions due to political corruption and the new extreme right mobilized to attract these voters. According to Lipset and Raab (1970), in times of political instability extreme right voting tends to increase since people are motivated to change the status quo. Thus, extreme right voting could also be the product of a split in one of the major political parties or an escalation in the political conflict.

2.3.3. Security and peace

Many scholars have observed that security issues have the biggest influence over Israeli voting patterns. Shalev and Levy (2005) note that security, peace, and the use of force against threats is one of the most embedded reasons that cause Israeli voters to trust a specific political candidate. Similarly, Shamir and Arian (1999) note that both sides of the political map (left and right) claim to be "experts" on security issues.[5] However, Norris (2005) argues that attitudes toward national security play a particularly large role in extreme right politics.

To summarize, latent public support for extreme right parties in Israel is hypothesized to be a function of three major determinants. First, support is expected to be linked to one's economic perspective. Second, political dissatisfaction is expected to be positively related to support for extreme right parties. Finally, concerns for Israel's security situation are expected to be positively correlated with extreme right voting.

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[5] An example of Israel's security discourse during the 2009 elections is noted by Gedalya et al. (2010) regarding Tzipi Livni: a serious female candidate for prime minister. Toward the end of the political race, slogans emerged that the position was "too big for her". This phrase implied that the Prime Minister's office was not a job for a woman since women are perceived by the Israeli public as being unable to understand and control security threats.

3. Probit model

Since our outcome variable is dichotomous and measures the tendency for extreme right voting, we were unable to use an OLS regression model. Instead, we use a probit model. We posit that each respondent's probability for voting for an extreme right party is a function of one's attitudes toward political, economic and security issues.

It should be noted that we do not use the more standard logistic model since we do not consider voting to be a dichotomous choice between extreme right voting and non-extreme right voting. Rather, we believe the probit model, which is based on a normal distribution, better captures the choice facing voters who are presented with a range of political choices where support for extreme right parties represents one choice among many.

4. Data

4.1. Dataset and operative definitions

We utilized the 2009 Israel National Election Study whose principal investigators were Asher Arian and Michal Shamir (Arian and Shamir, 2009). These data enable us to operatively define our variables of interest as the election study addresses a wide range of attitudes toward various issues on the national agenda such as the peace process; social and economic policy; an evaluations of parties, candidates, and coalitions; vote intention and past electoral behavior; and detailed demographic information. The study employs a panel design. The pre-election survey was carried out in three weekly waves, where each wave consists of an independent representative sample of the electorate. The first wave was interviewed in 2009 between January 18 and 25 ($N = 386$); the second wave, between January 25 and 29 ($N = 411$), and the third wave between February 1 and 5, 2009 ($N = 413$), all prior to the February 10 elections. The post-election panel wave was carried out from February 11 to 24, 2009 and was returned by 878 respondents. Telephone interviews were conducted in Hebrew, Russian, and Arabic.

The overall sample has 1210 respondents and is a stratified sample of Jews and Arabs (1037 Jews, 173 Arabs). The Jewish sample is a random sample of individuals from the Ministry of Interior's listing of the population to which mobile and fixed-line telephone numbers were fitted. The Arab sample is stratified by geographical areas with random sampling within each stratum. We limit our analysis to non-Arabs since one would not expect the Arab community to support extreme right parties for the same reasons as the Jewish community.

Our dependent variable is individual support for extreme right parties in 2009. This measure is based on the post-election survey question: "Which list did you vote for in the last elections to Knesset?" As noted, we consider several different definitions: (a) the 'old' definition, defined by its hawkish views on the occupied territories and the Arab–Israeli conflict (*Ichud Leumi*); (b) a 'newer' definition, similar to those of the European extreme right (*Shas* and *Yisrael Beitenu*); (c) an 'expansive'

definition, which includes both the 'old' and 'new' extreme right parties.

Our independent variables measures are based on items found in the survey. Due to the format of the survey, we were unable to build measures built on several items but relied on individual survey items (See also Appendix Table A.1). Political dissatisfaction was determined based on the pre-election survey question: "What is your opinion on the way the government is handling the problems that exist in Israel today?" The item is on a 4 point scale (1–4), with higher scores representing a higher level of dissatisfaction. The pre-election survey question: "In your opinion, has Israel's economic situation in the past three years improved, not changed, or become worse?" determined the measure of economic satisfaction. This measure utilizes a 5 point scale (1–5), with higher scores indicating low levels of satisfaction with Israel's economic situation. Finally, of the measure Israel's security situation and the possibility of a future peace are based on the pre-election survey question: "In your opinion is it possible to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians?" This measure utilizes a 4 point scale (1–4), with higher scores indicating disbelief in the possibility for peace in the future.

The Israel National Election Studies also include the following demographic and social variables that impact extreme right voting: (1) age; (2) gender; (3) years of education; (4) religious observance; (5) social class; and (6) ethnicity. Education is defined as full-time years of education completed – including elementary school. Religious observance is defined as the extent to which one observes their religious tradition. This measure is on a 4 point scale (1–4), with higher scores representing a higher level of religious observance. Social class is a proxy for income, and respondents were asked to place themselves in one of four categories (1–4), with higher scores corresponding to a lower class. Belief in "Greater Israel" is on a 4 point scale (1–4), with higher scores representing greater importance attached to the belief in Greater Israel relative to other values.[6]

Ethnicity was determined using the birthplace of the respondent's father. The Israel National Election Studies uses six categories (1) Israel (native-born); (2) North Africa; (3) Asia; (4) Eastern Europe; (5) Western and Central Europe; (6) North America. We define Sephardim as being from North Africa and Asia (categories 2 and 3) and Ashkenazim as being from Europe and America (categories 4–6). The survey also identifies immigrants from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) as respondents who came to Israel from the FSU from 1989 and on.

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[6] While the survey does not directly define Greater Israel, this term is generally understood as territories captured by Israel in the 1967 Six Day War such as the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The pre-election survey question asks "If we think of the possible directions of development of the state of Israel, there are four important values that conflict with each other to a certain extent, and are important to different people at different levels: 1. A state with a Jewish majority; 2. Greater Israel; 3. Democratic state (equal political rights for all); 4. A state of peace (low chance for war). Of these four values, which is the most important one for you? And which is the second? And the third? And the fourth?".

4.2. Summary statistics

Table 1 presents our summary statistics ($N = 1037$). The table demonstrates that 20 percent of the sample voted for *Shas* or *Yisrael Beitenu* ('new' extreme right parties) and that 3 percent of the sample voted for *Ichud Leumi* ('old' extreme right parties). These results indicate that extreme right voters are well represented in the sample and their sample share is roughly proportional to the number of electoral seats which the extreme right parties received in the most recent Israeli elections (see Fig. 1). In terms of our independent variables, the table indicates a mean value of 2.99 for political dissatisfaction with a standard deviation of 0.73. The table also demonstrates a mean value of 3.61 for economic well-being with a standard deviation of 1.09. Finally, the table demonstrates a mean value of 3.03 for security and peace, with a standard deviation of 0.91.

Appendix Table A.1 displays the distribution of our main independent variables. The table indicates that 75 percent of the sample are dissatisfied with how the government handles problems. The table also indicates that only 17 percent of Israelis believe that Israel's economic situation has improved over the last three years while 56 percent of Israelis believe that Israel's economic situation has worsened over the last three years. Finally the table indicates

Table 1
Summary statistics.

Variable	Standard		
	Mean (1)	Deviation (2)	Observations (3)
Percentage of voters who voted for an extreme right party			
"New" extreme right (0–1)	20%	–	638
"Old" extreme right (0–1)	3%	–	638
Total extreme right (0–1)	24%	–	638
Independent variables			
Political dissatisfaction (1–4)	2.99	0.73	1013
Economic well-being (1–5)	3.61	1.09	1012
Security and peace (1–4)	3.02	0.91	1022
Control variables			
Percentage Ashkenazim	56%	–	786
Percentage Mizrahim	44%	–	786
Percentage FSU immigrants	15%	–	1037
Percentage female	53%	–	1037
Age	44.97	17.27	963
Belief in Greater Israel (1–4)	1.98	1.05	963
Religious observance (1–4)	2.23	0.91	1032
Social class (1–4)	2.23	0.69	997
Years of education	13.63	3.27	1037

Note: $N = 1037$. Israeli-Arabs are excluded from the analysis. Data for actual voting is only available in the post-election survey, resulting in fewer observations. "New" extreme right refers to voters who voted for *Yisrael Beitenu* or *Shas*, while "Old" refers to voters who voted for *Ichud Leumi* (See also Pedahzur, 2001).
Source: Israel's National Election Study Data (2009).

Table 2
Characteristics of party voters in 2009.

Variable	Meretz (1)	HaAvoda (2)	Kadima (3)	Likud (4)	Yisrael Beitenu (5)	Shas (6)	Ichud Leumi (7)
Panel A: extreme right attitudes (standard scores)							
Xenophobia and racism							
Trust in Arabs	1.37	0.42	0.25	−0.07	−0.36	−0.33	−0.11
Anti-democratic beliefs							
Security trumps law	−1.11	−0.24	−0.05	0.07	0.06	0.47	0.32
State should adopt Jewish law	−0.51	−0.36	−0.36	0.06	−0.11	1.11	0.46
Democracy as a form of government	0.74	0.32	0.18	0.00	−0.21	−0.53	−0.22
Panel B: independent variable attitudes (standard scores)							
Dissatisfied with the government	0.13	−0.50	−0.29	0.03	0.27	0.35	0.28
Dissatisfied with economic growth	0.20	−0.22	−0.08	−0.10	−0.06	0.28	−0.01
There will never be peace	−1.17	−0.45	−0.36	0.07	0.38	0.60	0.44
Panel C: socio-demographic characteristics (proportions)							
Proportion Ashkenazim	0.95	0.63	0.60	0.37	0.79	0.19	0.65
Proportion Mizrahim	0.05	0.37	0.40	0.63	0.21	0.81	0.35
Proportion FSU immigrants	0.04	0.06	0.11	0.11	0.57	0.03	0.10
Proportion female	0.61	0.43	0.58	0.50	0.43	0.48	0.48
Proportion 30 or under	0.04	0.11	0.17	0.19	0.21	0.36	0.33
Proportion 55 or over	0.39	0.52	0.41	0.34	0.47	0.12	0.24
Proportion with academic degree	0.82	0.47	0.44	0.34	0.46	0.27	0.44
Greater Israel (standard score)	−0.74	−0.67	−0.41	0.08	0.52	0.85	1.29
Religiosity (standard score)	−0.49	−0.32	−0.38	0.03	−0.45	1.25	0.64
Social class (standard score)	0.29	0.23	0.02	−0.09	−0.43	−0.24	0.03

Note: Parties are arranged on a left to right continuum. Panels A and B list standard scores. Panel C lists proportions, unless otherwise noted.
Source: See Table 1.

that 67 percent of the sample believes that it is not possible or definitely not possible to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

In terms of the demographic variables, Table 1 indicates that the survey sample was distributed mostly evenly among males and females, the average age was 45, and the average education of respondents was 13 years. In addition, the table indicates that Israel's different ethnic groups were well represented in the sample, and their sample share is roughly proportional to Israel's actual population distribution. Finally, it should be noted that there is only a moderate to weak correlation between our demographic, social, and independent variables.[7]

5. Results

In Table 2, we rank the political parties.[8] We characterize the parties of interest by the attributes of their actual voters as opposed to their declared platforms. The table sorts the parties along a coherent left–right dimension, and identifies the differences between the extreme right parties. Panel A assesses extreme right attitudes, Panel B measures our key independent variables, and Panel C demonstrates differences in the social and demographic composition of party constituencies.

Panel A refers to four attitudinal questions that illustrate the extreme right attitudes mentioned above: xenophobia, racism, and anti-democratic beliefs. The table

indicates that voters consistently adhere to a left–right spectrum that runs from *Meretz* (Energy) to *Yisrael Beitenu*, *Shas*, and *Ichud Leumi*, with *HaAvoda* (Labor), *Kadima* (Forward), and *Likud* (The Consolidation) occupying intermediate positions.

The table demonstrates that a substantial 1.73 standard deviation separates *Meretz* and *Yisrael Beitenu* voters on whether Arabs can be trusted. Additionally, the table indicates that the gaps between the extreme right parties are small, with the exception of whether the state should adopt Jewish Law. This implies that attitude gaps between the 'old' and 'new' extreme right voters may be smaller than previously claimed with the primary cleavage issue being attitudes toward Jewish Law. Interestingly, the table also indicates that *Shas* voters hold the most extreme right views among the parties. This result further supports our classification of *Shas* as an extreme right party.

Regarding our independent variables, the Panel B results are consistent with the existing literature in that extreme right party voters are more likely to be dissatisfied with government and more hawkish regarding peace. In contrast, the table indicates moderate differences among extreme right voters concerning one's satisfaction with economic growth as only *Shas* voters exhibited dissatisfaction with economic growth. These results suggest that only political dissatisfaction and one's outlook on security and peace are positively associated with extreme right voting.

Regarding the socio-demographic attributes of extreme right party supporters, our results demonstrate a distinct demographic profile. *Shas* voters in 2009 exhibited a strong Sephardi bias, *Yisrael Beitenu* a strong "Russian" bias, and *Ichud Leumi* a weak Ashkenazi bias. In addition, extreme right party voters were strongly differentiated by religious class with a substantial gap between *Yisrael Beitenu* and

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[7] Results for the inter-correlation matrix are available upon request from the authors.
[8] The inspiration for this table is taken from Shalev and Levy (2005), who conduct a similar analysis on the 2003 elections.

Shas. Extreme right party voters were also moderately differentiated by social class with *Yisrael Beitenu* voters exhibiting a 0.43 standard deviation from the mean. Overall, these results reinforce the importance of controlling for key demographic variables in our model.

In Table 3, we estimate the relationship between extreme right voting and the independent variables using a probit model. The model includes basic controls such as age, gender, social class, religious observance, belief in Greater Israel, and ethnicity categories. Our outcome variable is dichotomous and we consider three different definitions for extreme right voting. The first column examines the data concerning the all-inclusive definition of the extreme right, the second column relates to the 'new' definition of the extreme right, while the last column relates to the traditional 'old' definition of extreme right in Israel. Notably, rather than reporting the regular coefficients, the table reports the marginal effects for our independent variables.[9]

Column (1) indicates that an increase in political dissatisfaction or security concerns leads to an increase in the probability of extreme right voting and these results are both statistically significant. For example, the results indicate that if political dissatisfaction increases by one unit, the probability of voting for an extreme right party will increase by 5.9 percentage points if all other values are held constant at their mean value. Furthermore, the results indicate that if security concerns increase by one unit, the probability of voting for an extreme right party will increase by 6.8 percentage points if all other values remain constant at their mean value. In contrast, these results indicate that economic concerns do not significantly affect the predicted probability of extreme right voting. The results also indicate that a higher social class decreases the probability of voting for an extreme right party, while the belief in Greater Israel significantly increases the probability of extreme right voting.

In Fig. 2, we examine the predicted relationship between extreme right voting and our independent variables using Clarify Software which plots the relationship over the range of our independent variables (See Tomz et al., 2003). We plot separately the effects of a one unit change in each of our main independent variables on the probability of extreme right voting while holding all other variables constant at their mean value.

Fig. 2 indicates that if political dissatisfaction increases from a value of 1 to a value of 4, the probability of voting for an extreme right party will increase by 16 percentage points (from 8 percent to 24 percent) if all other measures remain constant at their mean value. Interestingly, the figure demonstrates that the marginal change in the probability of voting for an extreme right party is greater for higher levels of political dissatisfaction. For example, a

one unit increase in political dissatisfaction (from a value of three to four) is associated with a 7 percentage point increase (from a probability of 17 percent to 24 percent), while a one unit increase in political dissatisfaction (from a value of one to two) is associated with a smaller increase of 4 percentage points (from a probability of 8 percent to 12 percent). In contrast, the figure demonstrates an almost 'flat' line for economic concerns, indicating that a change in one's perceived economic well-being does not impact on one's probability to vote for an extreme right party.

Column (2) of Table 3 indicates that the model for the 'new extreme right' is quite similar to our general model of the 'extreme right'; most coefficients are similar to the inclusive model preserving the trends and relative magnitudes. In contrast, column (3) indicates that the only significant predictor for voting for an 'old' extreme right party is the belief in Greater Israel. These results suggest that voters for the 'old' extreme right hold relatively

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Table 3
Predictors of extreme right voting (probit model).

Variable	LHS: Extreme right voting (0–1)		
	All extreme right parties (1)	"New" extreme right (2)	"Old" extreme right (3)
Political dissatisfaction (1–4)	0.0591**	0.0566**	0.00043
	(0.0279)	(0.0272)	(0.00466)
Economic well-being (1–5)	0.000502	0.00544	0.000212
	(0.0185)	(0.0180)	(0.00333)
Security and peace (1–4)	0.0679***	0.0740***	−0.00184
	(0.0238)	(0.0236)	(0.00441)
Religious observance	−0.000205	−0.0136	−0.000385
	(0.0217)	(0.0210)	(0.000261)
Social class	−0.0615**	−0.0831***	0.00812
	(0.0309)	(0.0307)	(0.00596)
Belief in Greater Israel	0.124***	0.0818***	0.0168**
	(0.0192)	(0.0183)	(0.00659)
Age	−0.00310**	−0.00238*	−0.000385
	(0.00126)	(0.00122)	(0.000261)
Female	−0.0777**	−0.0662*	−0.00601
	(0.0387)	(0.0375)	(0.00720)
Years of education	0.00830	0.00876	−0.000529
	(0.00729)	(0.00709)	(0.00150)
Father born in North Africa	−0.0500	−0.0605	0.0210
	(0.0552)	(0.0514)	(0.0276)
Father born in Asia	0.0169	−0.00816	0.0293
	(0.0657)	(0.0598)	(0.0329)
Father born in Eastern Europe	0.125**	0.0735	0.0357
	(0.0630)	(0.0579)	(0.0272)
Father born in Western Europe	−0.147***	–	0.0688
	(0.0544)		(0.0971)
Father born in America	0.0628	−0.0100	0.0565
	(0.157)	(0.123)	(0.101)
Observations	495	469	495
Degrees of freedom	15	14	15
Chi-squared	140.14	96.89	40.40
Pseudo R^2	0.26	0.20	0.26

* Significant at 10%, ** significant at 5%, *** significant at 1%.
Notes: Probit regression model. Marginal effects are reported with standard errors listed in parentheses. The dependent variable in all regressions is voting for an extreme right party, and we consider 3 definitions: (1) all extreme right parties (column 1); (2) *Shas* and *Yisrael Beitenu* (column 2); (3) *Ichud Leumi* (column 3).
Source: See Table 1.

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[9] Ordinarily, it is difficult to interpret the coefficients of a probit model since the marginal effects of the independent variables are not fixed, but rather depend on where they are placed on the curve. In order to overcome this difficulty, we use a dprobit command in Stata which reports the marginal effects for each variable: the change in the probability for each independent variable while holding the other variables constant at their mean value. As well, we use Clarify Software to help interpret our results.
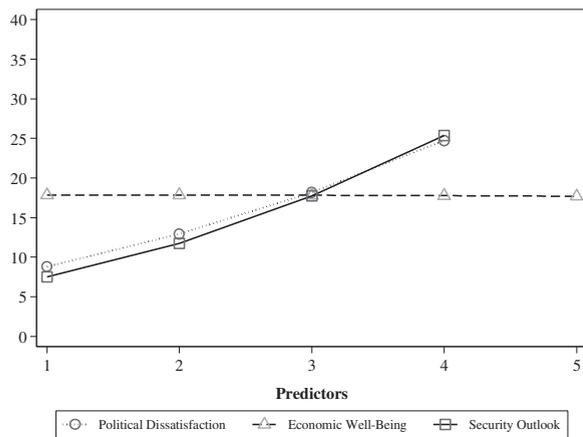
Fig. 2. Probability to vote for an extreme right party (%). *Notes*: This figure was produced using Clarify Software. The figure plots separately the effects of a one-unit change in each of our main independent variables over its entire range on the probability of extreme right voting, while holding all other variables constant at their mean value. The dependent variable is voting for any extreme right party. The figure controls for age, gender, years of education, religious observance, social class, one's belief in Greater Israel, and ethnicity dummies. *Source*: See Table 1.

heterogeneous views and are mostly unified by their shared belief in Greater Israel.[10]

6. Robustness checks

A possible concern with our probit results is that they are driven by our model choice or choice of dependent variable. In order to examine the robustness of our Table 3 findings, two robustness checks were conducted. The regressions of Table 3 were run on a more standard logit model and a modified dependent variable was considered.

In Table 4, we report odds ratios using a logit model. Overall, the results are qualitatively similar to the results of Table 3. For instance, the table indicates that the main factors which lead to extreme right voting are political dissatisfaction and security concerns and these results are both significant at the 1 percent level. For example, column (1) indicates that a one unit increase in political dissatisfaction is associated with a 50 percent increase in the odds of voting for an extreme right party. Similarly, column (1) indicates that a one unit increase in security concerns is associated with a 58 percent increase in the odds of voting for an extreme right party. This suggests that our choice of model does not significantly affect our conclusions.

In Table 5, in place of our dichotomous variable which measured extreme right voting on a (0–1) scale, we define a variable which captures the "left–right" continuum in Israeli politics, where "1" refers to left wing parties, "2" refers to center parties, "3" refers to right-wing parties, and "4" refers to all extreme right parties. Using a multinomial logit

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[10] Another possible explanation for why our political, economic, and security variables were not statistically significant, is due to the relatively small pool of voters who support *Ichud Leumi*.

Table 4
Predictors of extreme right voting (logit model).

Variable	LHS: Extreme right voting (0–1)		
	All extreme right parties (1)	"New" extreme right (2)	"Old" extreme right (3)
Political dissatisfaction (1–4)	1.502** (0.276)	1.495** (0.281)	1.107 (0.400)
Economic well-being (1–5)	1.015 (0.128)	1.052 (0.135)	0.989 (0.257)
Security and peace (1–4)	1.583*** (0.264)	1.716*** (0.303)	0.901 (0.324)
Religious observance	1.009 (0.146)	0.913 (0.135)	1.521 (0.434)
Social class	0.686* (0.142)	0.565*** (0.124)	1.870 (0.766)
Belief in Greater Israel	2.238*** (0.285)	1.727*** (0.221)	3.845*** (1.179)
Observations	495	469	495
Degrees of freedom	15	14	15
Chi-squared	138.6	95.54	39.98
Pseudo R^2	0.25	0.19	0.26
Demographic controls	Yes	Yes	Yes

* Significant at 10%, ** significant at 5%, *** significant at 1%.
Notes: See Table 3. Logit regression model. Odds ratios are reported with standard errors listed in parentheses. For space considerations, we only display the results of the more integral controls.
Source: See Table 1.

Table 5
Predictors of voting (multinomial logit model).

Variable	LHS: Left–right voting (1–4)		
	"Left" (1)	"Right-wing" (2)	"Extreme right" (3)
Political dissatisfaction (1–4)	0.0907 (0.229)	0.643*** (0.187)	0.799*** (0.205)
Economic well-being (1–5)	−0.181 (0.142)	−0.0987 (0.124)	−0.134 (0.136)
Security and peace (1–4)	−0.406** (0.176)	0.334** (0.149)	0.343** (0.170)
Religious observance	0.0648 (0.212)	0.762*** (0.165)	0.741*** (0.179)
Social class	−0.0590 (0.235)	−0.0911 (0.187)	−0.544** (0.218)
Belief in Greater Israel	−0.828*** (0.236)	0.410*** (0.130)	0.521*** (0.141)
Observations	564	564	564
Degrees of freedom	15	15	15
Chi-squared	288.3	288.3	288.3
Pseudo R^2	0.19	0.19	0.19
Demographic controls	Yes	Yes	Yes

* Significant at 10%, ** significant at 5%, *** significant at 1%.
Notes: See Table 3. Multinomial Logit model. Relative log odds are reported with standard errors listed in parentheses. The dependent variable is voting along a left–right continuum where "1" refers to left wing parties (*Meretz* and *HaAvoda*), "2" refers to center parties (*Kadima*), "3" refers to right-wing parties (*Likud*, *Agudat Israel*, and *Mafdal*), and "4" refers to all extreme right parties. For space considerations, we only display the results of the more integral controls.
Source: See Table 1.

model, the table is divided into three columns where voting for a center party is our base outcome. In column (1) our outcome variable is left-wing voting, in column (2) our outcome variable is right-wing voting, and in column (3) our outcome variable is extreme right voting.

As demonstrated in Table 5, the results using our modified variable are qualitatively similar to the results of Table 3. The table indicates that the main factors which lead to rightward movement among the left–right continuum are political dissatisfaction and security concerns. For example, the table indicates that a one unit increase in political dissatisfaction is associated with a 0.79 increase in the relative log odds of voting for an extreme right party relative to other parties and this result is significant at the 1 percent level. This suggests that our choice of outcome variable does not significantly affect our conclusions. More generally, these results indicate that the factors which motivate extreme right voting also help explain movement along the left–right continuum in Israeli politics.

7. Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that political dissatisfaction and security views regarding war and peace are primarily responsible for extreme right voting in Israel, in contrast to other countries where economic issues are more salient. Our results also indicate that while Israel's 'new' extreme right voters are motivated by political dissatisfaction, Israel's 'old' extreme right voters are motivated by the unique, semi-religious notion of Greater Israel which has become less central to Israel's main political discourse. This suggests that extreme right voters in Israel are motivated by different factors: some possess a belief in Greater Israel while others are experiencing political dissatisfaction. While the Israeli social protests of 2011 may indicate that in future elections economic factors will play a larger role, voting for extreme right parties in 2009 was dictated primarily by people's views on national security and their level of political dissatisfaction.[11]

Appendix

Table A.1

Result frequencies for main independent variables.

Variable label	Value	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative
Political dissatisfaction measure: government handles problems in a ….				
Very good way	1	24	2.31	2.31
A good way	2	203	19.58	21.89
Not so good way	3	546	52.65	74.54
Not at all a	4	240	23.14	97.69
good way	–	24	2.31	100
Economic well-being measure: Israel' economic situation in the past three years has…				
Improved a lot	1	29	2.8	2.8
Improved a bit	2	154	14.85	17.65
Has not changed	3	238	22.95	40.6
Became a bit worse	4	356	34.33	74.93
Became much worse	5	235	22.66	97.59
	–	25	2.41	100
Security and peace measure: is it possible to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians				
Definitely it is	1	49	4.73	4.73
I think it is	2	269	25.94	30.67
I think not	3	314	30.28	60.95
Definitely not	4	390	37.61	98.55
	–	15	1.45	100

Note: N = 1037. Israeli-Arabs are excluded from the analysis.
Source: Israel's National Election Study Data (2009).

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[11] The social protests were a series of protests and demonstrations that were held across Israel in the summer of 2011. As a result of the protests, the Israeli government announced a series of steps including a committee whose task was to examine and propose solutions to economic and social demands of the protesters, especially the plight of the cost of living in Israel and the social gaps. See for example Sherwood (2011).

Left

Center

Right

Extreme Right
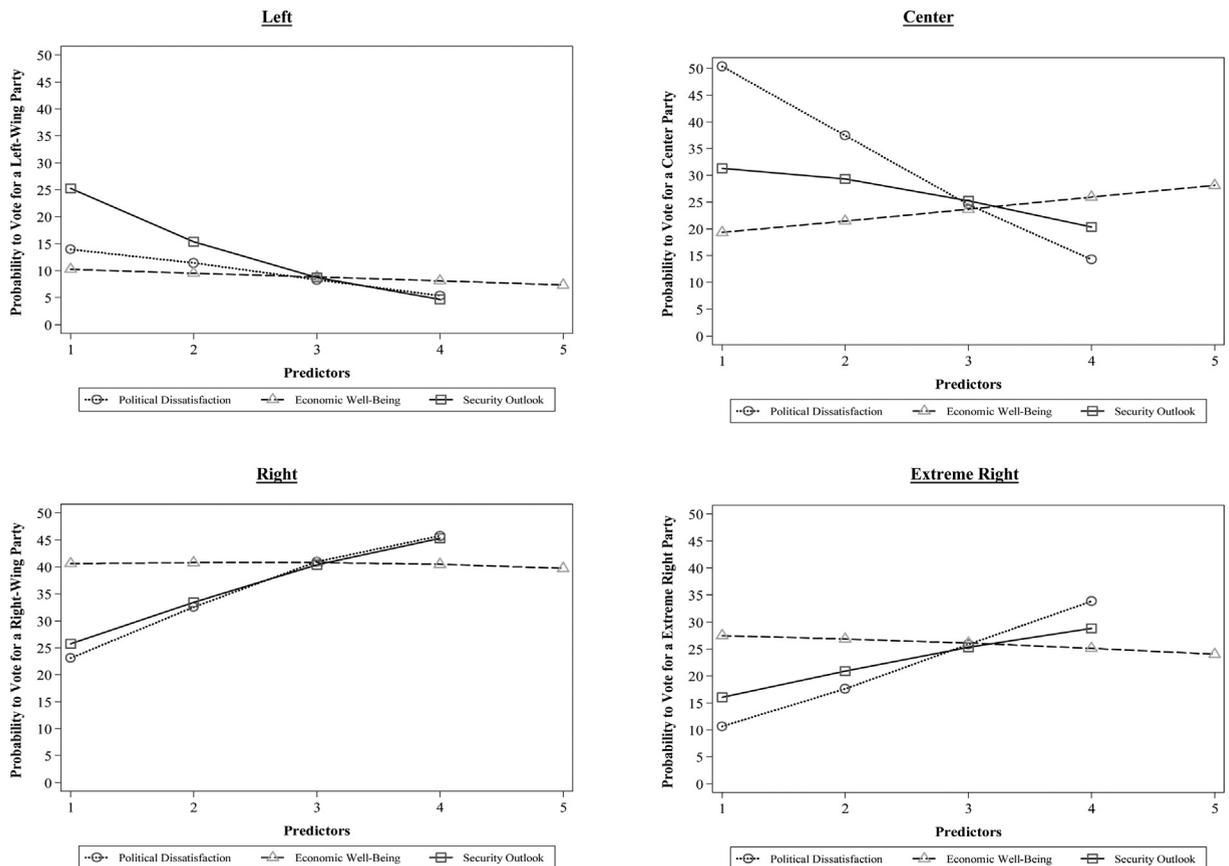
Auxiliary Fig. 1. Predictors of voting (%).

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Glossary of Israeli Political Parties

The party definitions are based on information provided by the Israeli Knesset website. See: http://www.knesset.gov.il/faction/eng/FactionListAll_eng.asp.

HaAvoda (Labor): Israel's social-democratic party that was established in 1968. Also known as Israel's Labor party.

Ichud Leumi (The National Union): An alliance of right-wing and nationalist political parties in Israel.

Kadima (Forward): A centrist and liberal political party in Israel. In the 2009 elections, the party won the most seats.

Likud (The Consolidation): Israel's current ruling party. The orientation of the party is moderate right in political areas and a promoter of the free market in the economic sphere.

Mafdal (National Religious Party): A political party that represents Israel's religious Zionist movement.

Meretz (Energy): A left-wing party that advocates for an agreement with the Palestinians on the basis of a territorial compromise and the establishment of a Palestinian state, civil and human rights, and the separation of religion and state.

Moledet (Homeland): A nationalist party established by Rehavam Ze'evi that openly supported the idea of a voluntary transfer of the Palestinian population.

Shas (Sephardi Keepers of the Torah): A Sephardic-Haredi party, whose spiritual leader is Rabbi Ovadia Yosef. The stated goal of the party is to repair the alleged continued economic and social discrimination against the Sephardic population of Israel.

Tzomet (Crossroads): A nationalist party established by MK Rafael Eitan in 1983.

Yisrael Beitenu (Israel is our Home): A nationalist list that is made up mostly of new immigrants and headed by MK Avigdor Lieberman.