Municipal government and politics in Israel

Frederick A. Lazin

INTRODUCTION

For many years scholars have viewed municipal authorities in Israel as a dependent level of government in a formally unitary and centralized political system. Like the English system of enumerated powers local governments are empowered to do only that which Parliament or the government have authorized them to do (Friedrich 1950, p. 244). In addition the Minister of Interior approves all municipal ordinances including taxes and the budget and can remove elected municipal officials he declares to be incompetent or incapable of governing.

The national electoral and party systems similarly provide a minimal role for local governments and interests. In parliamentary (Knesset) elections the entire country serves as a single electoral district and seats are divided amongst parties according to the percentage of votes received. In deciding who is to represent the party in parliament, party leaders favor ideological, economic, cultural and ethnic concerns; until very recently they took little if any notice of geographical or local interests. Consequently, local interests and municipalities have no representation in national legislative and executive branches of government.

Finally, with independence in 1948, the national government assumed sole responsibility for nation building and socio-economic development with no substantial role given to municipalities. In education, health, welfare, housing and economic development, the national government and its ministries held exclusive policy making authority.

More recently, however, several scholars have emphasized a significant gap between the formal standing of local government and its actual role and influence. They portray a more powerful municipal role than provided for in the formally hierarchical intergovernmental, party and policy systems of Israel. They point out, for example, that Israeli municipalities have considerable influence in certain policies administered within their jurisdiction (Elazar 1977,

1981; Lazin 1980, 1982, 1987).

This paper presents an analysis of the formal as well as the actual standing of local municipal authorities in the Israeli intergovernmental, political party and public policy systems.[1] Formally each of these systems restricts the independence, authority and power of the municipalities and makes them dependent on the national party and state institutions. In practice, however, elements of fragmentation in national institutions as well as local roles in the delivery of national services enhance the standing of municipalities.

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

Israel is a modern and developed unitary political system with authority vested exclusively in national institutions (Elazar 1988: 18; Friedrich 1950: 244). It has a parliamentary system of government with 120 member single house, the Knesset. A single party or parties having at least 61 Knesset seats forms the government.[2] The idea of checks and balances between the legislative and executive branches of government is a myth as the government controls a majority of Knesset members (Arian 1985). Moreover, unlike the United States Congress (Arian 1985:172ff.) Knesset members and committees seek cooperation with government agencies and avoid conflicts. The Knesset has virtually no oversight powers over the government except for the budget (Caiden (1970:71).[3] Knesset members lack staff and resources of their own and many must hold additional jobs to support themselves. Most importantly, all Knesset members owe their seats and political futures to their party leaders who, in the case of coalition partners, are usually members of the government.

Israel's President, elected by the Knesset, serves as the ceremonial head of state. There is an independent judiciary which exercises the power of judicial review over Knesset laws and government decisions.

THE PARTY SYSTEM

Clearly political parties are the mainstay of the entire political system. In Arian's view most are mass parties (Duverger 1963), highly central-ized and hierarchically controlled by an elite or elites who determine the party's candidates for Knesset, its representatives in the government, its position on major issues and municipal can-didates (1985:102—4). They employ a rigid sys-tem of party discipline enforced by the threat of removal from the party list in the next elec-tion or from a ministry post. A counter-threat to resign from the party and to retain their Knes-set seats until the next election enhances the limited independence of some Knesset mem-bers. Parties are not monoliths. Most, includ-ing the Labor Alignment and the Likud have im-portant elite factions, based on previous affili-ations, personal loyalties or ideology, who com-pete for influence over party policy and resources.

Historical reasons partially explain the type and importance of the party system. From the beginning of the Zionist movement and until 1917 the present area of Israel belonged to the Ottoman empire which employed a millet sys-tem which granted religious communities cul-tural, religious, and educational autonomy provided they remained loyal to the state (Ela-zar 1971:4).[4] Thereafter, the British similarly al-lowed the Jews to establish their own com-munal institutions in what became known as the Yishuv or Jewish national settlement in the Mandate of Palestine.

The political organization of the Yishuv reflected the presence of many diverse ideolog-ical groups in the Zionist movement, each with a vision for the future Jewish state. In Elazar's view, these parties sought to "create (in Pales-tine) as comprehensive a range of institutions it could, a kind of non-territorial state of its own" (1977:55). They provided their members with education, health, and welfare services, cultural and sports activities and in some cases military militia for defense. With the establish-ment of the State of Israel, an ideology of statism, "which necessitated the establishment of a strong central government with absolute control over all areas of life" (Kuberski 1988: xxiii) resulted in the new government providing many services previously provided by the par-ties (See Arian 1985:226; Caiden 1970:43; Ela-zar 1977:48 & 1988:34).[5] Nevertheless, parties continued to dominate Israel's new political system through their control of the government, Knesset and some policy areas. For example, the party controlled sick funds and not the Ministry of Health provided curative health care (see Arian 1985:209—231). In education in-dependent party systems continued until the School Reform Act of 1953. The new law failed, however, to establish a single integrated state system (see Akzin and Dror 1966:46—8). Sheffer notes (1978:79) that the state religious educa-tion system retained operating autonomy un-der religious parties within a unified Ministry of Education (see Lazin 1987).

Contributing to the persistance of party domination is the electoral system (see Mill, ch. 7.). Parliamentary elections are conducted in a single district encompassing the entire coun-try with each party compiling a list of up 120 ranked candidates. Ever since the first elec-tions in 1949, party leaders have controlled the choice and ranking of candidates. The Israeli electorate in turn votes for a party and not for an individual candidate. The voter cannot change the rank order of the lists. Seats are al-located according to the percentages of votes the party receives with a minimum of one per-cent required for representation.[6] The Presi-dent asks the largest party to form a coalition govemment and party leaders select their mem-bers who will be ministers. As Arian notes (1985:9, 60—70) Israeli politicians depend on party and party institutions for their influence and livelihood. Many supplement their Knesset salaries with party jobs and positions. In terms of the Huntington/Brezinski (1964) model most Israeli politicians are Apparachniks and not Cin-cinnatis. All elected officials as well as persons wanting to hold public office are responsible to the party organizations and not to the general electorate (Elazar 1988c).

Since the Yom Kippur War of October 1973 some parties have democratized the candidate selection process. In 1977 the newly formed Democratic Movement for Change (DMC) con-ducted party primaries involving over 30,000 participants. No party since has repeated this type of election. The two major parties — Labor/ Alignment and the Likud — however, allow their central committees, consisting of hundreds of members to participate in the choosing and ranking of candidates for the Knesset. While the leadership controls the final choice and or-dering (Arian 1985:126), it cannot disregard en-tirely the decisions of the central committee.

In choosing candidates most party leaders

and activists traditionally gave consideration to ideological, economic, cultural, ethnic and personal interests (Gradus n.d.:11—18). Thus, in a manner parallel to a federal system which Friedrich (1968:6) argues protects minority interests, the Israeli electoral system insured representation of diverse ideological elements often at the expense of territorial representation. Most parties took little notice of geographical or local interests. Since the late 1970's however the two major party blocs have allowed for a degree of geographical representation and input in choosing Knesset candidates.[7]

The electoral system which allows representation for any party with at least one percent of the vote nationwide encourages many small parties (Peretz and Smooha 1989:404).[8] The need for smaller parties to form a coalition government also enhanced their power. The single dominant party, however, traditionally limited and controlled their demands. This situation changed after the 1977 elections which established two nearly equal large parties each of which could form a coalition government. This increased the options and power of the smaller parties until 1984 when the two largest parties joined together to form a government of national unity. The second national unity government lasted until the late spring of 1990 when the Likud set up a coalition government without the Labor Alignment.

Despite coalition governments the system has been relatively stable for at least two reasons. First, the prime minister's party controls the government and Knesset and second, for the periof from 1949 through 1977 Mapai, the Labor Alignment predecessor, served as a dominant party in the system (Arian 1985:126; Grose 1985:17). It won a plurality of votes for an extended period of time, formed each coalition, became identified with crucial events in the nation's history (the creation of the State) and kept the opposition from "positions of control and from spheres of legitimacy" (97).

Sheffer uses the term "elite cartel" to describe the dominance of parties (led by Mapai) over the Israeli political system and institutions (1978:89). According to Sheffer, the elite cartel existing prior to 1948, organized the new state to preserve its own power and influence. For example, they absorbed a massive wave of immigrants which doubled the country's population in three years and tripled it in twelve in such way as to prevent the "emergence of any

significant political or social movement directly representative of the political interests of post development immigrant groups" (Sheffer 1978: 70; Arian 1985:18—21). They divided up responsibility and control of new immigrants, new settlements and almost all government resources according to a party key which gave each party, including the opposition, a percentage of resources according to its political strength (Sheffer 1978:70—9; see Caiden 1970:20ff; Elazar 1977:55ff). Begin's 1977 election victory symbolized its demise.[9]

Another characteristic of the party system is the trend since the 1960s toward consolidation of several smaller parties (Arian 1985:70—72). Historically, the left labor parties (Mapal, Mapam, Achdut Avoda) have had a series of splits and divisions, the last being when Ben Gurion left Mapai in the 1960s to set up Rafi. In 1968 Rafi and Achdut Avodah returned to Mapai and formed the Labor party. Later in 1977 Mapam joined this group to form the Alignment bloc.[10] Similarly, the Herut party merged in 1965 with the liberals to form Gahal and then with La-am, another liberal faction, to form Likud in 1977. Since 1977 the two blocks account for an overwhelming majority of Knesset members: 75 in 1977, 95 in 1981, 85 in 1984; and 79 in 1988. Nevertheless, Peretz and Smooha (1989:404) emphasize the rise of small parties: "Since the 1970s and mid-1980s there has been a gradual and consistent decline In support for Israel's two dominant parties, but they still control the political system. Support lost by Labor and Likud has been divided among a dozen or more small factions. Although the religious bloc gained significantly in the 1988 elections, its 18 seats are not a new phenomenon; in the fourth, fifth, and seventh Knessets, they also held 18 seats. Now, however, the religious bloc is fractionalized among four parties."

HORIZONTAL FRAGMENTATION

Despite the stability of the system, the dominant party phenomenon and the strength of the two major party blocks, coalition governments have always been the norm since the first election as no single party every one a majority of seats. This reflected the absence of consensus among the major political groups and parties of the Jewish communities of Israel of 1948 and ever since as to the preferred character of the new state. Although most favored a Jewish

state salient cleavages existed in matters of religion, economic order, Israel-Arab conflict and East-West relations. There existed different ideological positions from one extreme of a theocracy based on Jewish law to a secular socialist state allied with the Soviet bloc. In between were various religious and secular political movements each with its own prescription for the identity and character of the new independent Jewish state. Today Israeli Jewish society lacks consensus on basic issues of peace, religion and Palestinians which prevents a single party from speaking for a majority of citizens and establishing a non-coalition government.

Consequently horizontal fragmentation characterizes the governmental system. In forming coalition governments the partners agree on mutually acceptable principles and policies and divide up ministries with the most important taken by the major party. What Akzin and Dror concluded in 1966 remains true for the Israeli political system today: "It is a basic, though unwritten, rule of the coalition agreement that a department allocated to a given political party should be conducted more or less as the minister and his party wish without much interference by the cabinet" (1966:10). This "federation of ministries whose coordinating mechanisms are extremely weak" (Kalchheim 1988:41) limits the collective authority of the government and the prime minister over individual ministers and ministries (See Arian 1985:159—64). It also allows municipalities to bargain with individual ministries rather than with a monolithic central government.

In policy making coalition governments can be effective provided the coalition parties are in agreement, the policy area lies exclusively within one ministry or ministries controlled by a single party, and sufficient resources exist to fund implementation. Moreover, the major party in the coalition may be reluctant to support and fund certain policies and programs of a ministry controlled by a minor coalition partner with whom they will compete in the next election.

Also contributing to fragmentation of national governmental institutions is the delegation of certain state functions to non-governmental bodies. Of particular importance is the role of the Jewish Agency in Israeli politics. Established in 1929 under international public law under the provisions of the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine (King et al. 1987:10) the Jewish Agency represented the interest of world Jewry and the World Zionist Organization in the establishment of a Jewish State. During the British mandate, the Jewish Agency served as an unofficial government — a regime without sovereignty for most of the Jews of the Yishuv (Ibid.: 3; Arian 1985:21—30). In 1952, the government of Israel signed a formal agreement with the Agency, giving it primary responsibility for the care of new immigrants, agricultural development and certain educational functions (King 1987:11). Although controlled by the government's coalition parties the Agency can be independent in policy making and has acted contrary to the wishes of the government.

DEMOGRAPHY

Demography has always been a factor in Israeli politics and intergovernmental relations (see Abramson 1989:546ff). During the first century of Zionist settlement and Israeli statehood Jews of European origin (Ashkenazim) and their descendants constituted the majority of the Jewish population. They dominated the leadership of the Zionist movement and led and controlled the political, social, economic, and cultural institutions of the Yishuv and later of Israel. Under-represented were the Jews from Arab countries in North Africa and the Middle East (Sepharadim or Orientals). A relatively small Sephardi community living in the holy land for generations remained outside the Zionist movement while other Oriental Jews, small in number, participated. Also outside the Zionist framework were the ultra-orthodox Jews of European origin. Due to mass immigration following independence, by the late 1960s Oriental Jews and their offspring had become the most numerous Jewish group in Israel. They failed, however, to achieve economic and political power commensurate with their numbers. They formed the majority of the poor and of the residents of the underdeveloped peripheral areas; did relatively poorly in the educational system, and did not occupy key leadership positions in the economic and political systems.

One view held by Eisenstadt (1967) et al. suggests that the more traditional Oriental Jews arrived later (after 1948), with fewer resources, skills, abilities and lesser education than the more modern European immigrants. In Dahrendorf's (1959) terms, the former adapted less successfully to the dominant norms and values of a modern western achievement oriented soci-

ety. Another view held by Smooha, Sheffer and others cite intentional discrimination against Oriental Jews and preferential treatment for Europeans (Segev n.d.; Hasen 1986:8,9).

Oriental Jews made their first inroads into Israeli politics via the local level where by the late 1960s they won, often running as independents, most mayorships and seats on local councils. Over the years many Oriental Jews saw Mapai as the symbol of the state which made them second class citizens. Since 1969 more and more Oriental Israelis voted for the Likud. Their children did so to an even greater extent. By 1984 2/3 of Orientals and 2/3 of Ashkenazim voted for the Likud and Labor Alignment respectively (Arian 1985:145—6).

Following the election of Begin in 1977 the Oriental Jewish community made considerable gains in the economy, education, politics, labor and the army. While many of these advances began before 1977 they became more evident after Begin's election. Most importantly the Israeli public perceived of Begin as initiating them in order to achieve greater social equality amongst Israeli Jews.[11] Several younger Jews of Oriental origin, many with previous experience as mayors in development towns gained important positions within the Likud party, Knesset and government. While "these politicians have counterparts in the Alignment,... those in the Alignment have not reached the levels of visibility and power enjoyed by those in the Likud" (Arian 1985:240).

Not all Oriental Jews dissatisfied with the Labor party joined or voted for the Likud. Many voted for religious parties. In 1981 for example, some joined the newly formed TAMI (Tradition of Israel Movement) party, set up by former National Religious Party (NRP) member Aharon Abuhatzeira, to foster the interests of North African Jews in Israel. Others voted for SHAAS, the Sephardi Torah Guardians Party, formed also in 1981 by dissatisfied Oriental Jews in Agudat Yisrael (see Freedman 1989).

In contrast Israeli society did not absorb Arab Israelis living within the 1967 borders. In the tradition of a middle east minority they sought to "preserve their corporate identity (Elazar 1977: 52). The roots of the arrangements for cultural and social autonomy lay in the millet system of the mandatory period which allowed ethnoreligious communities to determine their own public infrastructures (Elazar 1977:52 & Grose 1985:74—80). "While Arabs within the borders of the state of Israel were granted citizenship

and ostensible political equality, there was never any attempt nor much demand (save by members of the small Communist party and the Mapam party) to fully integrate and equalize their position in the Israeli economy (Hasen:7)." The continuing state of war between Israel and most of her Arab neighbors as well as the failure to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict make it difficult for the Israeli political system and society to achieve greater equality for its Arab citizens. Arian (1985:185) notes that although the Israeli Arabs have rights of citizens they cannot (and do not want) serve in the army which denies them benefits and access to decision making and power and to "psychological satisfaction that goes along with the identification of country, religion and nation."

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

In looking at the role of municipal government in the context of Israel's system of intergovernmental relations the gap between the legal and formal situation and actual practices makes for confusion (Kalchheim 1988:70).

According to Elazar and Kalchheim (1988:34) "From 1948 until the early 1960's, the trend was predominantly one of centralization. The state, animated by David Ben Gurion's "statist" philosophy, absorbed functions which in the pre-state Yishuv had been in the hands of local, voluntary or party bodies." Kuberski (1988:xxiii) credits political considerations as well as the Mapai government did not want to give powers to local governments controlled by other parties. The new government also disbanded the British colonial system of regional administrative units.

Municipal governments are a legal creation of the state in the English tradition of Ultra Vires having only powers that are specifically granted; when in conflict with the state they are interpreted narrowly (Elazar 1977:60ff & 1988:18: Friedrich 1950:244). Similarly, the national government and/or parliament) can withdraw unilaterally delegated powers.

The Minister of the Interior is responsible for municipal government in Israel. Peled (1988: 171) writes "... the council and mayor are subordinate, according to the law, to the instructions of the Ministry of Interior and other central organs, to such an extent that their independence is often denied them." The ministry must approve all municipal by-laws includ-

ing taxes, planning and the budget. Other ministries can also exert veto over by-laws which fall within their policy jurisdiction (Peled 1988:180). The Ministry of Interior can consolidate or abolish local authorities which it rarely does. It can also remove from office mayors and the city council members on grounds of incompetence and replace them with appointed officials. It also has the authority to determine whether to allow a particular municipality to participate in municipal elections.

Similarly national party elites control municipal level party organizations and activities. The national party elites retain the authority to control the appointment of party candidates for municipal office. Since the 1960s, the practice of local activists to run as independents and the direct election of mayors in 1978 (Arian 1985:238; Goldberg 1988:38) reduced the influence of national parties in municipal elections. Yet Elazar believes (1988:28) that there has been a reassertion of national party influence in local elections since 1983.

In the public policy sphere the national government assumed sole responsibility for nation building and the socio-economic development of society with little if any meaningful input intended for municipal governments (Elazar 1988). In education, health, welfare, housing and economic development, the national government and its ministries held exclusive policy making authority. The national government, for example, chose the location of new towns, their industries, the form of housing and which immigrants would live there. In the existing cities and towns the Ministry of Housing unilaterally decided on construction of new neighborhoods without prior consultation with municipal authorities. The Planning and Building Laws 5725-1965 required that the ministry present its plans for approval to the municipal planning board. In some communities, however, formal approval occurred only after the start or even completion of the project (see Kalchheim 1988:66).

In other less important areas including garbage collection, maintenance of streets and public parks and the operation of public libraries the Knesset allowed municipalities to determine policies with minimal governmental interference (Kalchheim 1988:51ff and Hecht 1988:66).

Nevertheless, vertical decentralization which delegates authority from a higher to a lower level of government is also evident in this formal-ly highly centralized hierarchical intergovernmental system. As in other welfare states there is an overlap of functions rather than exclusive sole spheres of national and local governments (Kjellberg and Teune 1980:139).

In practice the relationship between the national and local governments is not entirely one sided provided the municipality is given a role in the provision of the ministry's service as is the case in welfare and education (Lazin 1982). Bargaining rather than hierarchical decision making characterize the interaction between the municipalities and local interests and the respective ministry responsible for the national service (Smith 1982:7; Torgovnik 1988:93).

In several of the national services in Israel the respective ministries set policies, provide programs, guidelines, supervision, most of the operating budgets and certify, employ and/or approve the appointments of most professionals at the municipal level. Gradus (n.d.) argues that increased ministry funding of municipal activities grants the former more influence on the municipal level than elected mayors and councils. Arian agrees citing that the ministries fund between one half and two thirds of municipal operating budgets (1985:240—251) and that the state monitors. A careful analysis by Kalchheim (1988:71), however, shows that "there is no significant correlation of greater dependence on the state government due to the growth in non-local generated income." The municipalities and their agencies, in turn, provide the ministry services to residents within their jurisdiction. As in federal systems this function grants the municipalities the potential to influence what and how the ministry does or does not do within its jurisdiction.

The following factors contribute to greater municipal influence when, and only if, the municipality minimally provides the national service. First, in many service areas the statutory prescription obligates municipalities to fulfill general functions while the provision of specific programs is normally optional and at their discretion. Many resemble the grant-in-aid programs of the United States as described by Heidenheimer, Heclo and Adams (1975:99): "most federal grant programs are entirely voluntary so that state and local governments must be persuaded to participate . . . (once they agree to participate) . . . the recipient jurisdictions in most grant in aid programs can exercise considerable discretion: the guidelines for many such programs fix only very broad parameters

within which state and local authorities must operate." Second, ministry subsidies for national services provided by municipal agencies are insufficient to provide the services to all eligible persons (see Hecht 1988). This grants local authorities discretionary powers to determine to whom and how much (see Tarrow 1978:2). Third, the absence or shortage of trained professionals may prevent provision of certain services and affect the quality of what is provided. Finally, ministry supervision of municipal operations is marked by inadequate financial and human resources, a lack of administrative unity and explicit regulations which allow for maximum local discretion (Lazin 1982 and see Tarrow 1978:12). In practice the giving of professional advise only characterizes Israel's intergovernmental supervisory system (Kalchheim 1988:53).

The overlap of functions — the ministry making policy and the municipality implementing — is not however, a relationship between equals as suggested by Elazar and others who emphasize that "The State of Israel as a whole is a mosaic compounded of state and local authorities functioning together, each with its appropriate competencies, powers and tasks and each deriving its authority directly or indirectly from the people" (Elazar 1988:xxxiii). Equally important is his later point in the same book that "From a power perspective local governments are indeed subordinate to governmental and party centers" (1988:3). The advantage is usually with the ministry.

Also, the standing of municipalities varies with some having more influence than others on the ministries and their policies. In general the ministry's influence and dominance is inversely proportional to the socio-economic and political standing of the particular community. As a rule the more powerful have been those communities mostly in the center whose residents are veteran settlers of European origin and the weaker those communities on the periphery whose residents are more recent Jewish immigrants from Arab countries. Party, government and personal ties of local leaders also matter. The style and power of the mayor significantly influence local national relations and the standing of a particular municipality. Crucial according to Arian's view is the ability of the mayor to influence bureaucrats, politicians and party active in decision making processes regarding local affairs (1985:241). The left right dichotomy in the modern state of Israel is of little analytic value.

A final factor in local national relations concerns the Union of Local Authorities (ULA) a voluntary organization of Israeli municipalities and local councils established in 1936 and reorganized in 1956 when Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa joined. Its stated goal "is to further the mutual interests of the local municipalities in their relations with state organs such as government offices and the Knesset (Kalchheim 1988:49). At times the relationship of this organization to the Ministry of Interior resembles that of the Farm Bureau to the United States Department of Agriculture whereby the government agency uses its clients' interest group to obtain more resources for itself and the client and to regulate the client (see McConnell 1967 and Lowi 1964).

CONCLUSIONS

While this paper began by describing Israel as a unitary political system, the evidence presented suggests that the distinction between federal versus unitary systems has little explanatory value. This supports the findings of others who questions the importance of the unitary-federal dichotomy in policy implementation (Kjellberg and Teune 1980; Lazin 1987; Sharpe 1982 and Smith 1982). For a long time scholars assumed that unitary political systems were better able to implement social policy because of their greater authority and power over lower levels of government. In contrast federal systems characterized by interdependence between different levels of government were assumed to have more serious problems implementing their domestic social welfare policies (see Rockman 1987). The federalist character of the American system, for example, gave states and local governments important roles in implementing national policies which enabled them to coopt federal officials to alter and adjust federal programs to meet local needs (Selznick 1966 and Lazin 1973).

More recent research by American and European scholars as well as the evidence presented here has shown that local level units of government exert considerable influence in the implementation of national policies of their respective unitary systems (Ashford 1978 & 1990; Kjellberg and Teune 1980; Lazin 1980, 1987; Sharpe 1982 and Tarrow et al. 1978). With respect to federal systems Peterson et

al. (1986) argue convincingly that certain types of policy are not obstructed when local level governments implement federal programs.[12] They found both competition between federal state and local offices and mutual accommodation (1986:xi,13). "Intergovernmental efforts on behalf of developmental objectives are marked by cooperative, mutually adaptive relations between central and local governments because the federal government, by aiding local economic development, is only assisting local governments in what they would otherwise want to do anyway."

"Federal and unitary states may, [therefore], despite constitutional differences, have much in common" (Smith 1982:27). As Hanf argues ". . . both the formulation and implementation of public policy increasingly involve different governmental levels and agencies, as well as interactions between public authorities and private organizations" (Hanf and Scharpf 1978, p. 1).

This paper has shown that a highly unitary, hierarchical and centralized system may be significantly fragmented in its center which strengthens the standing of municipal governments within the intergovernmental system. It also enhances their ability to influence national policies which they implement within their jurisdictions. Moreover, the fragmentation of government along party lines significantly weakens coordination between government ministries. Individual ministries as well as the Jewish Agency often operate independent programs with their own budgets and guidelines. While causing confusion on the local level this also provides the mayors with many options and sources of revenues and resources. Moreover a particular ministry or the Jewish Agency may support municipal independence vis a vis another ministry or the national government. Finally fragmentation within a particular ministry hinders the effectiveness of the already inadequate system of ministry supervision of municipal authorities.

NOTES

1. Comments here refer to municipalities (towns or local councils and cities (local councils with more than 20 000 residents) and not to the rural regional councils and agricultural settlements (see Newman 1986).
2. While an absolute majority (61) insures Knesset approval, a government can be formed by a sim-

ple majority provided some Knesset members abstain from the vote to form a new government.
3. The Office of the State Comptroller performs the oversight function. See Aberbach et al. (1981:22) for a discussion of the power of the American versus European legislatures.
4. Zionist settlement began in the 1880s. Theodore Herzl, in 1897, founded the political movement to establish an independent Jewish state.
5. Ben Gurion merged (abolished) all pre-state military organizations into the Defense Army of Israel.
6. In 1949 and since 1973 surplus votes are divided up by a D'Hondt or Bader-Ofer system which takes the number of votes and divides it by the number of seats plus one (Arian 1985:120ff).
7. Aberbach et al. (1981:102) suggest that having no districts would lead to the expectation of less local organizational pressure in a parliamentary system.
8. In 1984 any group could establish a party and run candidates for the Knesset by obtaining 2500 signatures and providing a bond of about $2000 (Arian 1985:126).
9. According to Sheffer the cartel declined because (1) the participation of large numbers of Oriental Jews in the 1967 war helped overcome their inferiority which in turn led to their political independence; (2) the unity government (1967—70) gave legitimacy to Menachem Begin who had always been in the opposition; and (3) the failures of the 1973 war tarnished the reputation of the elite cartel and the dominant party. Abramson writes (1989:55) that the outcome of the six days war "made Herut's policies more relevant to the electorate."
10. Mapam arose from Hashomer Hatzair, the Marxist-socialist Zionist movement" (Peretz and Smooha 1989:396). Mapam did not join the unity government of 1984. In the 1988 elections Mapam ran as an independent party.
11. While critics of Begin accused his party of "giving away Videos" at election time, others argue that these same policies probably enabled most Israeli families to obtain their first washing machine.
12. They distinguish between developmental ("intended to improve the economic position of a community in its competition with other areas" (p. 12) and redistributive ("that benefit low-income or otherwise especially needy groups in the community." (p. 15) policies. They suggest that implementation is much easier and less problematic in the former than the latter.

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LIST OF HEBREW TERMS

Agudat Israel	Non-Zionist ultra orthodox political movement and party.
Ashkenazim	Jews of European Origin.
Achdut Avoda	Labor Unity Party, merged to form Labor party.
Gahal	A right wing political bloc established in 1965 between the Herut and La-Am parties.
Hashomer Hatzair	Marxist oriented Zionist Youth movement which established the Mapam party.
Herut	Freedom party founded by Jabotinsky in 1935 and led by Menachem Begin since 1948.
Knesset	Israel's 120 member Parliament.
La-Am	A small liberal party.
Likud	Unity Party or bloc formed in 1977 when Gahal merged with a liberal party.
Mapai	Israel's Worker's Party.
Mapam	United Workers Party.
Rafi	Mapai splinter party founded by David Ben Gurion.
SHAAS	Sephardi Torah Guardians, an ultra-orthodox political party; the Sephardi "Agudat Israel."
Sepharadim/ Orientals	Jews from Arab Lands in North Africa and the Middle East.
TAMI	Tradition of Israel Movement, an ethnic (North African political party established by Aaron Abuchazeira in 1981).
Yishuv	Hebrew term for Jewish settlement in Palestine under the Ottoman Empire (Until 1917) and the British mandate of Palestine (1917—1948).