

Coalition-Targeted Duvergerian Voting: How Expectations Affect Voter Choice under Proportional Representation

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Abstracts

Inspired by analyses of majoritarian systems, students of consensual polities have analyzed strategic voting due to barriers to party success, namely, district magnitude and threshold. Given the prevalence of coalition governments in proportional systems, we analyze a type of strategic voting seldom studied: how expected coalition composition affects voter choice. We identify Duvergerian behavior by voters targeted at the coalition formation stage. We contend that when voters perceive their preferred party as unlikely to participate in the coalition, they often desert it and instead support the lesser of evils among those they perceive as viable coalition partners. We demonstrate our argument using data of coalition expectations from the 2006 Israeli elections. We find an appreciable albeit differential effect of coalition expectations on voter choice. Importantly, results hold controlling for ideological and coalition preferences. Lastly, we explore a broad cross-national comparison, showing that there is less, not more, proximity voting where coalitions are prevalent.