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The Political Behavior of the Jewish Religious Parties in Israeli Multi-Party System

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Abstract: Israel has a multi-party political system. Jewish religious parties—which include religious Zionist parties and non-Zionist ultra-Orthodox parties—are considered by major parties their natural coalition partners although these partners are not necessarily the most reliable. The persistent tension between the religious agenda of these parties and the semi-secular nature of the state often result in coalition's instability and from time to time cause government's collapse. To attract the support of the religious parties, the leading party must fulfill their requests, which resulted in many privileges to the religious community in Israel, including the exemption from the military service. In recent years, the religious parties in a close political alliance with right-wing Jewish nationalists, act to strengthen the Jewish character of the State of Israel, deepen the influence of Jewish religious values in Israel's education system and the society at large, as well as vigorously promote the development of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. Due to the rapid growth of religious population, the Israeli society can be expected to become more and more right-wing and religious in the future.

Keywords: Israel, Multi-Party Political System, Religious Party, Coalition, Separation of the State and Church