The Democratization of Party Leadership Selection: Israel in Comparative Perspective

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Invitation to the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy
Faculty Seminar

A lecture by:
Dr. Ofer Kenig
Research Fellow at the Israeli Democracy Institute

on:
The Democratization of Party Leadership Selection:
Israel in Comparative Perspective

Monday, December 21, 2009, 11:45 p.m.
Arison Lauder Building
Room A321

Abstract

Party leaders are powerful key actors in every modern parliamentary democracy. In order to get to the most prominent position in a polity (prime minister) one must first win the leadership of a political party. Thus, the office of party leader often serves as a gatekeeper to the highest political position. From here, it is easy to conclude that the methods by which party leaders are selected are important political institutions. Until two decades ago, most political parties in modern parliamentary democracies used rather exclusive methods for selecting their leaders. Since then, however, the practice has changed as many parties, including the major Israeli parties, democratized their selection methods, allowing rank-and-file members, supporters or sometimes any citizen to take part in leadership selection. Despite the fact that the phenomenon has been recognized in the literature, few efforts were made to put it into numbers. This paper aims in filling this gap by trying to present updated comparative data on the scope of the phenomenon, and by delineating several problems of measuring it.

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