

Research Article

Ideology Meets Pragmatism: Examining Governance Dynamics in Israeli Politics

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Abstract

The research focuses on understanding the dynamic relationship between ideological principles and the pragmatic realities of governance, particularly in Israeli politics. It highlights that the intersection of religion, politics, and society creates significant political instability, mainly driven by the strong influence of religious parties. The emphasis on spiritual values in public policy and the dynamic interaction between religious and political domains ensure that religion plays a central role in shaping Israel's societal norms and governance. This intricate relationship underscores the ongoing challenges of balancing religious orthodoxy with secular democratic principles, ultimately affecting the stability and cohesion of Israeli society. Data for this study is collected through multiple sources to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject, including scholarly research and analysis of opinion polls of public sentiment regarding political ideologies, religious pluralism, and social integration. The study acknowledges potential limitations, such as the reliance on secondary data for some aspects of the research and the challenge of generalizing findings beyond the specific context of Israel. These limitations are addressed by contextualizing the findings and suggesting areas for future research. The study concludes that Israel's future as a democratic and inclusive homeland is based on reconciling its religious and secular dimensions, which requires navigating complex internal dynamics and external pressures, including security concerns and international relationships. Since the evolving ideological landscape, influenced by changing societal values and external geopolitical factors, shapes Israel's political and social trajectory, this approach aims to bridge gaps between different segments of society, ensuring that all groups can contribute to and benefit from the nation's social, economic, and political life.

Keywords

Religious Status Quo, Secular-religious Tension, Civil Religion in Israel, State and Religion in Israel, Israeli Democracy and Identity

1. Introduction

This analysis investigates Israel's complex interplay of religion, politics, and society, aiming to explore the ideological rifts of religious parties and their broader implications for Israeli governance and societal cohesion. This approach captures the multifaceted interaction between secular and spir-

itual communities and its impact on political stability and policymaking. It includes an examination of Israeli Basic Laws to understand the legal framework governing the state and its implications for political ideology and social integration. The review includes the Basic Law of the Nation-State

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of the Jewish People and other relevant legislation.

By integrating multiple data sources and analytical methods, the study aims to understand better how ideological rifts and the influence of religious parties shape Israeli governance and societal cohesion. It shows a noticeable shift towards greater religious orthodoxy in Israeli public life, driven by the political power of religious parties. This shift affects various sectors, including education, where religious schools receive substantial support, and family law, where Orthodox interpretations dictate legal standards. This increasing orthodoxy challenges the secular segments of society, leading to ongoing debates about the role of religion in a modern democratic state.

The analysis reveals that the interplay of religion, politics, and society leads to significant political instability shaped by the profound influence of religious parties. The prioritization of spiritual values in public policy and the dynamic interaction between religious and political spheres ensure that religion remains dominant in shaping Israel's societal norms and governance. This complex relationship highlights the ongoing challenges in balancing religious orthodoxy with secular democratic principles, impacting Israeli society's stability and cohesion.

2. Political Ideology

Political ideology is a set of ideas about the ideal form of government, outlining a vision for how society should be structured and governed [4]. It includes interconnected beliefs, values, and principles regarding the organization of society and governance [14]. Ideology defines political parties, shaping their identity, goals, and actions. Through ideology, parties seek to implement their societal vision and compete for political power and influence [30]. However, ideological principles may conflict with the practical necessities of governing and addressing real-world problems. Different political ideologies have distinct preferences for government forms, including power distribution among branches, the role of political parties and interest groups, the state-individual relationship, and resource allocation within society [37]. While ideology offers a consistent governance vision, practical politics requires pragmatism and flexibility to effectively address challenges, achieve results, and compromise to handle governance complexities [17].

This study explores the complex interplay between political ideology, practical politics, and social integration in Israel. The research focuses on understanding the dynamic relationship between ideological principles and the pragmatic realities of governance, particularly in the context of politics, characterized by a lasting religious status quo, defining Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people. The law reserves the right to self-determination exclusively for the Jewish collective, relegating the Arab minority, constituting around 20% of Israeli citizens, to a secondary status. Substantial domestic support for ethno-religious concepts of state and nationhood

is evident in various opinion polls, reflecting the prevailing belief that the country faces existential threats [6].

The identity politics pursued by ultra-Orthodox parties is closely tied to the extreme significance of religious faith. The leadership perceives constant threats from spiritual, social, cultural, and political phenomena. These assumptions guide various aspects of the community's life, aiming to shield Jewish culture from the influences of Western culture and secularism [9]. The community's rapid growth challenges the nation's democratic and liberal foundations as internal ideological dynamics and external pressures, including security threats and diplomatic challenges, shape the political landscape [49].

The Jewish majority, which includes secular, traditional, and religious Jews, coexists with a significant Arab minority, Druze, Christians, and other groups. The Jewish nation-state law, which defines Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people, reinforces the Jewish identity of the state but also highlights the tensions between maintaining a Jewish character and ensuring equal rights for all citizens [11].

Economic inequalities exist between different groups, particularly between Jewish and Arab communities [21]. The average income for Arab families is substantially lower than that of Jewish families, a gap partly explained by limited access to higher-paying jobs and industries [38]. Education, a key driver of economic advancement, is another prominent area of disparities. Schools in Palestinian Arab communities receive less funding per student, leading to larger class sizes, fewer resources, and lower average academic outcomes. These educational gaps contribute to economic disadvantage as fewer students from these communities reach higher education and well-paying career paths [32].

Furthermore, discriminatory practices in the housing market restrict Arab citizens' access to land and housing in more affluent, predominantly Jewish areas. This limits their ability to build wealth through property and access better economic opportunities [33]. Taken together, these factors reflect a system of structural inequality, where Arab communities in Israel are economically disadvantaged, impacting their overall quality of life and social integration. Disparities in income, employment opportunities, and resource access contribute to social divisions [40].

The education system is segmented along ethnic and religious lines, with separate schools for Jewish, Arab, and ultra-Orthodox children. This segregation perpetuates social divides and hampers integration efforts, causing cultural differences between secular and religious Jews and posing significant challenges to social cohesion [15]. The ultra-Orthodox community maintains a distinct lifestyle that often contrasts sharply with the secular majority. Implementing legal reforms to ensure equal treatment and protection for all citizens under the law is crucial. This includes amending laws that discriminate against minority groups and ensuring that all religious practices and traditions are respected [52].

Religion, governance, and politics are deeply intertwined,

creating a unique landscape influencing the country's policies, societal norms, and political dynamics [2]. The country was established as a Jewish state, which navigates the complex relationship between its religious identity and democratic values, affecting its governance and political processes. Israel's Basic Laws are a de facto constitution outlining fundamental governance principles and citizens' rights. These laws reflect the country's dual identity as a Jewish and democratic state. In addition, the Orthodox Jewish Rabbinate holds significant authority over many aspects of personal status law, including marriage, divorce, and conversion [38].

This influence stems from historical agreements made during Israel's founding and continues to shape the legal and social landscape. For instance, Jewish citizens must marry according to Orthodox Jewish law, as civil marriage is not available. Religious education is a prominent feature of the Israeli school system. Public funding supports religious schools that adhere to Orthodox Jewish teachings. Cultural policies also reflect religious values, such as the observance of Jewish holidays [7].

The political system includes a wide array of parties, many of which are religiously affiliated. These parties play crucial roles in coalition governments. Their influence extends beyond religious affairs, impacting broader policy areas like budget allocations and social services. While religious parties and institutions wield significant influence, efforts to promote greater inclusivity and equality continue [12]. Due to the proportional representation electoral system, coalition governments are the norm. Religious parties often become kingmakers, leveraging their position to secure concessions on religious and social issues. This dynamic can lead to political instability but also ensures that religious perspectives are integrated into national policy since there is a significant divide between secular and religious communities. Secular Israelis push for greater separation between religion and state, advocating for civil marriage and public transportation on the Sabbath. In contrast, religious communities strive to maintain and expand religious laws and customs in public life. Mandatory military service is a cornerstone of Israeli society [10]. However, as explained by [5], ultra-Orthodox Jews have traditionally been exempted, opting instead for religious study. This exemption has sparked considerable debate and political tension, with calls for greater integration of the Haredi community into national service.

3. Social Integration

Social integration is a multifaceted issue shaped by the country's diverse population, religious affiliations, and complex political landscape (Bogaards, 2023). Israel operates under a religious status quo established during its founding, which significantly influences social integration. This arrangement preserves certain religious norms and practices within public and legal life, aiming to balance the spiritual and secular aspects of the state [20]. The compromise al-

lowed Israel to function as both a Jewish state and a democracy while giving Orthodox Judaism an official role in critical areas of life, particularly personal status issues like marriage, divorce, and conversion, which are governed by religious law for Jewish citizens. Chen and Yong [9] analyzed the evolution of Haredi Judaism in Israel, highlighting its deep-rooted fundamentalist beliefs and its transformation from a marginalized group to a central force in Israeli society.

This status quo balances religious and secular groups, particularly affecting family law, education, and public life. The Orthodox Jewish community, especially the ultra-Orthodox, wields substantial influence, shaping policies and societal norms [51]. Under this arrangement, Jewish religious courts (rabbinical courts) have exclusive authority over Jewish marriage and divorce. Civil marriages are not allowed within Israel, which creates challenges for couples who do not meet Orthodox Jewish marriage criteria. Additionally, religious regulations are in place regarding the Sabbath; public transportation is generally restricted on Saturdays, and many businesses close in observance of the Jewish day of rest. The status quo also influences dietary laws in public institutions, such as the military and government buildings, where kosher food is often required.

While the religious status quo is intended to prevent conflicts between religious and secular communities, it has also been a source of tension. Secular Israelis often advocate for reforms to allow for more civil liberties, such as the right to civil marriage or more flexible Sabbath laws [36]. At the same time, religious factions aim to uphold or even expand the scope of religious rules. This arrangement has proven politically complex, as religious parties frequently hold influential positions in coalition governments and use their leverage to maintain or strengthen religious norms in public life. Sandler and Herman [42] emphasize how it has shaped Israeli identity, politics, and the relationship between religion and the state. Reckless [35] addresses how the religious status quo affects not only Jewish citizens but also other religious communities, examining the challenges it poses to Israel's democratic character.

The religious status quo facilitates the legal enactment of the Jewish nation-state law, defining Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people [18]. The fundamental laws, serving as fundamentalists' constitutions, reserve the right to self-determination exclusively for the Jewish collective, relegating the Arab minority to a secondary status outside this collective. Substantial domestic support for ethno-religious concepts of state and nationhood is evident in various opinion polls, reflecting the prevailing belief that the country faces existential threats, with the perceived goal of its adversaries being the destruction of the Jewish state [29].

Israel's political landscape is a dynamic reflection of its deep-rooted religious principles. The ideology and governance emanating from these principles continue to shape the nation's path, driving it towards a future anchored in its rich heritage and values. The study explores the significance of

ideologies within religious affiliations and the complexities posed by religious pluralism, demonstrating how Israel's unique social and political environment is influenced and dominated by religious ideology. Israel's approach to religion and state reflects a delicate balance between protecting religious freedom and accommodating the influence of religious institutions, particularly Orthodox Judaism, in various areas of law and governance. This unique structure acknowledges the significance of religion in Israeli society while raising questions and challenges regarding the rights of individuals who do not adhere to the dominant religious authority.

Israel's Basic Laws serve as a foundational legal framework for the state, functioning somewhat akin to a constitution. They outline fundamental principles of governance, citizens' rights, and the state's structure. Among these fundamental laws, human dignity, liberty, and freedom of occupation established Israel as a Jewish and democratic state [8]. These Basic Laws collectively reflect Israel's commitment to being both a Jewish state and a democracy, albeit with inherent tensions between these principles [16]. The notion of Israel as a Jewish state emphasizes its historical and cultural significance as a homeland for the Jewish people. At the same time, the commitment to democracy underscores the principles of equality, pluralism, and the rule of law for all citizens, regardless of their religious or ethnic background [19]. The relationship between Israel's Jewish character and its democratic values has been a subject of ongoing debate and contention within society and politics. Issues such as the rights of minority groups and the status of non-Jewish citizens intersect with these foundational principles, highlighting the complex and dynamic nature of Israeli identity and governance [26].

The research explores the influential role of religious identity, amplified by the country's proportional representation electoral system, which grants disproportionate power to smaller parties, including religious factions. Despite their relatively small size, religious parties, particularly the ultra-Orthodox, have been integral coalition partners, influencing government policies and legislation related to religious affairs and other issues. This demonstrates the complexity of the interplay between religion and governance that shapes Israel's politics.

Israel's political system, characterized by coalition politics and proportional representation, has made it difficult to muster the political consensus required to enact a formal constitution. The need to accommodate diverse political interests and ideologies has led to compromises and delays in the constitutional process [7]. Despite the absence of a formal constitution, the legal system operates effectively through the framework of Basic Laws and other legislation. However, the lack of a unified constitutional document continues to be a subject of debate and contention within Israeli society, reflecting the broader tensions and complexities of identity and governance.

The ethnic democracy model acknowledges the coexist-

ence of democratic structures, such as universal suffrage and legal protections, with mechanisms that support a national identity based on ethnic heritage [24]. This prioritization impacts non-Jewish citizens, who may experience restrictions in cultural representation, land ownership, or social mobility, highlighting a tension between the state's democratic claims and its ethnically centered policies.

These Basic Laws collectively reflect Israel's commitment to being both a Jewish state and a democracy, albeit with inherent tensions between these two principles. The notion of Israel as a Jewish state emphasizes its historical and cultural significance as a homeland for the Jewish people. At the same time, the commitment to democracy underscores the principles of equality, pluralism, and the rule of law for all citizens, regardless of their religious or ethnic background [3]. However, the relationship between Israel's Jewish character and its democratic values has been a subject of ongoing debate and contention within society and politics. The rights of minority groups and the status of non-Jewish citizens intersect with these foundational principles, highlighting the complex and dynamic nature of Israeli identity and governance.

4. No Formal Constitution

Populism and civilizations have transformed the politics of many countries, and many scholars consider them the most significant challenges to democracy [41]. Yilmaz and Morison [51] have identified civilization as an ideology that attaches itself to give itself a solid argument. However, they also argue that Jewish civilization in Israel is different and unique, although the relationship between religions and civilizations is typical in the 21st century. Jewish civilizations existed before Israel was established as the basis of creating a Jewish state [41]. One of the primary debates in modern Jewish thought is whether Judaism should be considered a religion or a nation. This has been a central issue in Jewish history, with scholars trained in political science and political theory deciding to create a separate academic field focused on Jewish politics and political thought [25].

Israeli politics has long been shaped by ideological disputes, especially concerning its identity as a Jewish state. A significant aspect of this conflict revolves around the tension between secular Jews and the ultra-Orthodox community. Despite being a minority, the community has substantial political influence [13]. In the past decades, ultra-Orthodox parties have strategically utilized religious issues to gain political power, while secular politicians have capitalized on anti-religious sentiment among secular Israeli Jews. As Herzog [22] explains, the primary point of contention is the demand for exemptions from military service for ultra-Orthodox religious males, a policy that has profoundly influenced the community. The debate has intensified after the October 7, 2023 debate and the war of Israel with terror organizations, as the lack of soldiers demonstrates the need for

service for all of the population.

This research investigates the social and political divisions arising from religion's role in shaping the Jewish state's identity and culture, exploring the political consequences of the ongoing struggle over ideology. It emphasizes that the dominance of religious groups and the absence of a clear separation between religion and state underscores the complexities inherent in managing diverse religious and secular interests within a democratic framework. As Zandberg [52] explains, religious groups, particularly Orthodox Jewish factions, exert considerable influence over various aspects of Israeli society in addition to the political arena. They have a strong presence in education, family law, and cultural affairs. For example, Sharabi [44] shows that orthodox interpretations of Jewish law dictate policies regarding marriage, leading to restrictions on interfaith and same-sex marriages.

As a result, Orthodox parties play a prominent role in politics, advocating for policies aligned with their religious beliefs and priorities. These parties prioritize religious education, Sabbath observance, marriage and divorce laws, and funding for religious institutions [45]. Their presence in coalition governments has enabled them to influence policy decisions and shape legislation by Orthodox Jewish values [28]. Over time, religious politics, shaped by common goals and secular ambivalence, evolved into a politicized religious compromise. This compromise, known as the status quo, allowed the government to mediate between secular and religious groups [34]. However, religious influence over general societal life is particularly pronounced due to the absence of a legal separation between the state and religion. The prevalence of stringent religious laws, reflective of the influential role of religion in every Israeli's life, is attributed to the political power wielded by Orthodox parties. Despite constituting a minority of the population, the ultra-Orthodox can bring down the government if their demands are not met, and historical reliance on their support has led governments to seek their involvement in forming majority coalitions [10].

Recognizing and accommodating diverse ethnic, religious, and linguistic identities have become prominent features of twenty-first-century politics. Seyoum [43] argues that across the globe, individuals rally around longstanding grievances related to these identities, seeking acknowledgment and recognition from broader society, and protest discrimination and marginalization from social and economic opportunities, demanding social justice. He explains that political scholars and leaders have historically cautioned against explicitly recognizing cultural identities due to potential threats to social harmony, and effective constitutions encompass two fundamental elements: a system of government with institutions to create and enforce laws and policies and a shared acceptance by the populace that the constitution is authoritative.

This research emphasizes the increasing significance of recognizing diverse identities in modern politics. It contrasts this with the superficial nature of constitutions, which often

do not genuinely enforce the principles they profess. Israel's absence of a formal constitution challenges governance, law, and societal cohesion. Without clear rules and procedures, political instability and uncertainty prevail. Minority rights may be jeopardized, and social tensions exacerbated, as Israel lacks a unifying framework that promotes shared values among its diverse population [45]. Opposition to establishing a constitution stems from concerns about limiting the influence of religious law and institutions and potential changes to the existing power structure. Achieving consensus on a constitution would require navigating complex political dynamics and engaging stakeholders comprehensively. However, establishing a constitution could provide stability, protect rights and freedoms, and promote social cohesion despite these challenges. The process would involve intensive dialogue and negotiation, facilitated by neutral parties, to ensure broad-based support and legitimacy [7].

The historical context of its establishment is the primary reason for the absence of a formal constitution. When Israel declared independence in 1948, the country faced urgent security concerns and existential threats, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict. In this tumultuous period, the leadership prioritized the establishment of state institutions and the consolidation of its territorial and political borders over drafting a formal constitution [41]. Additionally, the diverse population and complex societal fabric posed challenges to crafting a constitution that would be widely accepted and representative of all segments of society. Israel is home to diverse religious, ethnic, and cultural communities, each with its interests, values, and historical narratives. Ensuring a constitution accommodating these diverse perspectives while providing a governance framework proved daunting [31].

Instead of a single, comprehensive constitution, Israel's legal system relies on a set of Basic Laws enacted by the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, over time. These Basic Laws outline fundamental principles of governance, citizens' rights, and the structure of the state. While these Basic Laws collectively serve as a foundational legal framework for Israel, they do not form a unified and exhaustive constitution in the traditional sense. However, drafting a formal constitution has been fraught with challenges and controversies. Debates over issues such as the role of religion in the state, the rights of minority groups, and the status of non-Jewish citizens have hindered efforts to reach a consensus on a comprehensive constitutional framework. Although reform is necessary to successfully promote the initiatives against veto players interested in preserving the status quo, the use of power by small minorities they obtain in coalition negotiations is conducive to their policy goals [39].

5. Identity Politics

The relationship between Jewish character and its democratic values remains a subject of ongoing debate and contention even almost a century after the establishment of Isra-

el. Issues such as the rights of minority groups and the status of non-Jewish citizens intersect with these foundational principles, highlighting the complex and dynamic nature of Israeli identity and governance. Specific laws, such as the Law of Return and the Law of the Rabbinical Courts, reinforce Israel's Jewish identity and grant religious factions significant influence in shaping government policies and legislation [50]. However, this approach to religion and state differs from many other democracies since there is no separation of religion and state. The Orthodox Jewish Rabbinate maintains authority over many aspects of family law despite individuals being free to practice their faith without interference from the state. This can be explained by the findings of Lahav [27], that about a quarter of Israeli Jews are secular believers who identify themselves as secular but also believe in their belonging to Judaism as a religion.

In states where democratic institutions coexist with explicitly prioritizing one ethnic group's interests [23]. In Israel's case, this means that while there are democratic rights and protections for all citizens, Jewish identity plays a central role in shaping state policies, laws, and national identity, which can, at times, result in preferential treatment of Jewish citizens over others. Smootha [46] argues that while Israel presents itself as a liberal democracy with equal rights for all, it operates in a way that prioritizes the interests of its Jewish citizens, aligning more with the concept of ethnic democracy. He asserts that despite Israel's self-image and international reputation as a Western liberal democracy, it operates as an ethnic democracy, a democracy where the state is designed to serve the interests of a particular ethnic group. He explains that Jews in Israel have appropriated the state and taken control of its institutions and mechanisms since its policies and measures to ensure the safety of the Jewish population, efforts are made to maintain a Jewish majority within the country, the public sphere, including symbols, language, and cultural expressions, is oriented towards Jewish traditions and identity, cultural policies and initiatives support and promote Jewish heritage and values, and overall policies and state actions are geared towards the collective interests of the Jewish community in Israel.

In a liberal democracy, the state theoretically serves all citizens equally regardless of ethnicity, religion, or other identity markers. However, in an ethnic democracy, the state is structured to reflect and advance the interests of a dominant ethnic group while granting minorities limited rights and protections. This creates an inherent hierarchy within the democratic framework, privileging the dominant ethnic group and embedding their cultural, historical, or religious identity into national policy [48].

This is reflected in laws such as the 2018 Nation-State Law, which enshrines Jewish national self-determination, Hebrew as the state's sole official language, and promotes Jewish settlement as a national value, which critics argue prioritizes Jewish citizens and reinforces their dominance in Israeli society. Although Israel's citizenship status defines it

as a Jewish and democratic state and an ethnic democracy, Friesel [16] argues that Israel should be characterized as an ethnocracy since it is the Jewish ethnos that rule it. The citizenship status of Arab citizens is crucial for Israel's ability to function as an ethnic democracy, a system that combines democratic institutions with the dominance of one ethnic group. The blending of republicanism and ethnonationalism with liberalism as principles of legitimation has created two types of citizenship: republican for Jews and liberal for Arabs. Arab citizens have civil and political rights but are excluded from contributing to the common good. Their citizenship status is more restricted than that of Jews, which encourages and allows Arabs to pursue their political struggles within the legal framework [40].

The paper examines how the citizenship status of Arab citizens is essential for maintaining the country as an ethnic democracy. It is argued that ethnic democracy is a political system that combines democratic institutions with the dominance of a particular ethnic group, and the case of Jewish citizens highlights critical points. Abigail [1] explains that the large scale of international migration and pluralistic social order has moved many states away from assimilating or integrating their ethnic minorities since minorities are increasingly unwilling to relinquish their heritage. Since many hold dual citizenship, globalization has enabled them to maintain or reinvent connections with their homeland. Yadgar [50] argues that this model could serve as an example for other dominant ethnic groups aiming to maintain their dominance while upholding a democratic system of governance. His argument is controversial, although it is widely supported by the Jewish majority, according to which the way Israel manages the citizenship status of its Arab population might serve as a model for other countries where a dominant ethnic group seeks to maintain its dominance while still upholding democratic principles.

The research defines this status as republican citizenship for Jews, which means that Jewish citizens have a form of citizenship that aligns with republican principles, which typically emphasize active participation in the political community and contributing to the common good. It also defines liberal citizenship for Arabs since Arab citizens have a form of citizenship based on liberal principles, which focus on individual rights and freedoms but do not necessarily include full participation in shaping the common good.

This structure results from the complicated issue of rights on the one hand and restrictions on the other. Arab citizens enjoy civil and political rights like voting and running for office. However, despite these rights, they are restricted from fully participating in activities that contribute to the overarching public interest or common good, typically influenced by the dominant Jewish population [47]. This process is examined through the explanations and interpretations provided by members of the Jewish ultra-Orthodox community regarding their choice of academic life over paid work and livelihood. Investigating the community's conceptions, atti-

tudes, and values about work and learning reveals how they relate to worldly affairs and individual existence. Haredi male members have revived religious interpretations primarily based on well-known Biblical narratives and specific rabbinical texts [53].

However, interpretations previously considered marginal in Jewish hermeneutic tradition, often suppressed by key rabbinical figures, have been brought from the margins to the forefront of religious discourse, thought, and practice. This conflict complicates Israeli society since this process transforms the traditional rabbinical view that emphasizes hard work and worldly activism. It achieves this transformation by redefining work, condemning the productive and activist image of human action, and introducing new modes of thought, religious symbols, and economic behavior [16].

6. Conclusion

This study discusses how members of the Jewish Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) community reinterpret traditional religious components to justify their choice of a life devoted to study rather than engaging in paid work. The Haredi community takes different traditional religious components and reinterprets them to support their lifestyle choices, as members of the Haredi community prioritize religious study over working for a livelihood. It looks into their beliefs, attitudes, and values regarding work and learning.

The research explains how the Haredi community reinterprets traditional religious teachings to prioritize a life of study over paid work. This involves reviving previously marginalized interpretations of religious texts and redefining the concept of work. By doing so, they transform traditional rabbinical views on productivity and activism, creating new religious and economic practices within their community. The Haredi community emphasizes religious study, drawing on interpretations of Biblical narratives and rabbinical texts that support this lifestyle. These are interpretations of religious texts previously considered less essential or suppressed by prominent rabbinical figures. The community makes these marginal interpretations more prominent by bringing them to the center of their religious discourse and practice. This reinterpretation leads to new ways of thinking, new religious symbols, and different economic behaviors within the community.

For immigrants separated from their homeland and many relatives, religious membership offers refuge in the sense that it creates a sense of belonging and participation in the face of loss and the strains of adjustment. The liberal democratic nation-state is declining in the West due to globalization, the universalization of minority rights, multiculturalism, and ethno-nationalism. However, while Western countries are moving away from the nation-state model towards multicultural civic democracy, other countries, like Israel, are adopting the model of ethnic democracy, where one ethnic group maintains dominance while still providing certain

democratic rights to minority groups. Israel is a primary example of this model, highlighting its complexities and criticisms.

Ethnic democracy is a democratic state identified with and subservient to a single ethnic nation. It combines democratic institutions with the dominance of one ethnic group. Smooch claims that while Israel is often viewed as a Western liberal democracy, in practice, it functions as an ethnic democracy since Jews promote their national security, demographic goals, public space, culture, and interests. Jews have maintained a distinct religious and national culture for over 3,000 years and adjusted to changing circumstances. They accepted non-Jewish and secular civil values while preserving their internal spiritual identity and struggling to reintegrate the two into the state of Israel.

The research highlights how Israel's citizenship structure, with a dominant Jewish population enjoying fuller civic engagement and a restricted Arab population, allows the country to function as an ethnic democracy. This dual system enables Arabs to engage in political processes legally, providing a potential template for other nations with similar demographic and political dynamics. The dominance of Jewish collective interests has impacted the formal process of acquiring citizenship and the nature and content of what it means to be a citizen in Israel. The content of citizenship is heavily influenced by Jewish cultural and national identity. This means that being a citizen is not just about legal status but also involves embracing certain cultural norms, values, and historical narratives central to Jewish identity. The rights and responsibilities of Israeli citizens are influenced by their alignment with Jewish collective interests in policies related to education, military service, and national holidays that prioritize Jewish traditions and perspectives. Citizenship implies a sense of belonging to the Jewish nation, as the broader context of Jewish collective dominance shapes the experience and implications of being a citizen. This can affect how different groups perceive their place within society and their sense of equal participation. The impact on political struggles is evident in the legal framework, as the restricted citizenship status has led Arab citizens to conduct their political struggles within the boundaries of the law. This is in contrast to Arabs in the occupied territories who do not have citizenship and may resort to different, sometimes extralegal, methods of struggle.

Although Israel guarantees religious freedom for all citizens, tensions exist between religious and secular segments, with debates and conflicts over issues such as the role of religion in public life, state funding for religious institutions, and the enforcement of religious laws. Attempts to promote greater religious pluralism, such as recognizing non-Orthodox Jewish denominations or expanding civil marriage options, have faced resistance from Orthodox authorities and political parties. This has led to ongoing debates and activism within Israeli society about the extent to which religious pluralism should be embraced and supported. However,

achieving religious pluralism involves fostering an environment where diverse spiritual beliefs and practices are respected, protected, and accommodated within the framework of a democratic and inclusive society. This requires legal reforms to ensure equal treatment and protection of all religious communities under the law. It should also include amending existing laws to prohibit discrimination based on religion, guaranteeing freedom of worship and conscience for all citizens, and recognizing diverse religious practices and traditions.

Abbreviations

BMI Body Mass Index

Author Contributions

Yaron Katz is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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