

Post-industrial economy

Economics



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Ruth Gavison's exploration of the complex question as to whether or not the state of Israel comprises a modern democracy presents an exceedingly detailed and comprehensive approach to the issue. The thrust of Gavison's article is to suggest that, ultimately, Israel does fulfill the criteria of being a democracy and that by failing to recognize the State as such, the web of International relations and the delicate balance between religious theocracy and national democracy which presently exists in Israel will be threatened.

Obviously, one of the central issues of concern in determining the status of Israel as a democracy is the issue of Palestinian citizenship and the representation of Palestinians in the Israeli government. Gavison herself remarks that Israel is, in fact, "a state defined and structured as the locus of Jewish self-determination" (Gavison, p. 44); this reality coupled with the fact that Israel maintains "a 17 percent Palestinian minority within its borders" (Gavison, p. 44) begs the question, roughly, as to whether Israel is fundamentally a democracy or a theocracy.

The main points of Gavison's research which support the idea that Israel is a democracy begin with Israel's governmental apparatus themselves. She points out that "All conceded that Israel does have strong procedural elements of democracy: all its citizens have civil and political rights, it has regular and free elections. It has an independent judiciary. It has impressive freedom of speech and association" (Gavison, p. 48).

Nevertheless, the issue of the "Jewish" state requires deep exploration in order to facilitate an understanding of Gavison's position that Israel, despite comprising a "Jewish" state with a minority Palestinian population, is still a democracy. The first aspect which Gavison covers is the question of what a

Jewish state actually means. Is the term meant to suggest a nation ruled by a theocracy? Or simply a nation which exists to preserve specific cultural and national values which transcend religious identification?

Gavison concedes that " Some orthodox Jews [...] do want a religious state" (Gavison, 49) but this aspect of religious exclusion as extending to governmental power, though it represents an obvious theocracy, is not a majority opinion in Israel, nor does the present government reflect such a radically religious stance. Even so, the actualization of a religious state need not attain full or blatant theocracy in order to exert the same non-democratic influence.

In fact, it is precisely this question which stands as the most troubling and complex aspect of Gavison's study. While her insistence that a blatant theocracy would, of course, be a non-democratic government, her concession that " A Jewish religious state may also move on a continuum, between a full theocracy (in which decisions are made by religious leaders according to religious law) and a state that accommodates the fact that it has a large observant group within it" (Gavison 53).

From this concession, Gavison's argument necessarily must utilize a certain degree of emotional appeal and subjectivity in order to bridge the gap between her admission that Israel " is clearly a Jewish state, on all these spectra" (Gavison 53) with her final conclusion that Israel represents a true democracy.

The complexity of Gavison's argument presents a certain degree of evidence to suggest that anyone approaching the topic with a duplicitous notion that a

state can be both a democratic nation and a culturally specific state with a culturally specific and racially specific religious philosophy which extends to the apparatus of government itself, will find themselves in the paradox as Gavison, who, despite her eloquent treatment of the subject fails in my opinion to reconcile the essentially inimical tendencies at play in the state of Israel.

2. Ram, Uri. *The Globalization of Israel: McWorld in Tel Aviv, Jihad in Jerusalem*
Ram takes a highly technical and statistically dense approach to his consideration of Israel as a modern state, moving forward through a multilayered revolution as it moves into the twenty-first century. The central assertion of Ram's thesis is that Israel has moved from a predominantly industrially based economy to an economy which is based in knowledge-intensive and service-oriented industries.

The slight paradox of his assertion is that the post-industrial globalization of Israel is very much a consequence of its industrial expansion which took place during the latter half of the preceding century. No immediate conclusions are drawn about the relative merit of the post-industrial economy over the industrial economy of the past, but comprehensive statistics are shown which establish clearly that such an evolution has, in fact, taken place in the Israeli economy.

The article moves very deliberately and very densely toward an evaluation of the minutiae of each of the post-industrial economic sectors which Ram identifies as being part of the trend toward globalization. Among these sectors, electronics, finances, and human intelligence play dominant roles and this is due to what Ram identifies as a very large degree of human

resources in Israel where a densely educated population has begun to export, rather than manufactured goods and items, knowledges and skill-sets which are in abundance in Israel but lacking in other countries.

The consequence of the transition from hard-industrial sectors of the economy to exportable knowledges and skill-sets is a greater preponderance of multinational corporations of which Israel comprises an important, but not exclusionary, component. If there has been a corresponding drop in nationalism as a whole due to the encroaching globalization of the Israeli economy, Ram addresses the issue purely in technical terms.

he points out that most of the publically owned companies in Israel have given way to private industries and he views this as being a part of the globalization process. However, he does cite a general upward mobility among the former hard-industrial classes which he considers a modern "bourgeoisie" with former workers "ascending" into the mid-professional and intellectual class. This results in a deflation of what he called the "labor elite" which, obviously, forfeited a degree of power and influence in the post-industrial economy.

From this point, Ram asserts that the role of government in the post-industrial age of globalization is to act as a sort of management of a corporate style account, seeking to draw better investors, and more reliable and productive international trade agreements. On the whole, Ram's arguments are presented cleanly and energetically. There is scarcely an admission of emotional or subjective prejudice in regard to any of the very complex financial and political ideas which are discussed. That said, Ram certainly skews his argument toward presenting the post-industrial economy

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of Israel in a very flattering and optimistic fashion. Read also what can be concluded about the demise of the knights of labor?

While it is probable that the intimidating battery of comparative statistics and historically precise calculations which Ram uses to bolster his point of view are conclusive, it is also likely, very likely, that such a wide spread of statistical evidence leaves open the possibility of finding discrepancy in Ram's core-argument. Although the article presents a very compelling study of the transition of Israel's economy from an industrial base to a non-industrial base, very little counter-evidence or counter-argument to Ram's central ideas are presented.

In the space where these counter-arguments should properly be placed, a torrent of statistics and math are substituted. Rather than probe the question as to the cultural and sociological "fallout" of the shifting economy in Israel, Ram simply sticks with irrefutable, and often inscrutable, mathematical assurances as to the validity of his points. Reference Gavison, Ruth. Jewish and Democratic? A Rejoinder to the Ethnic Democracy Debate. *Israel Studies*, Volume 4, number 1.