Editors' Note

An academic journal, naturally, cannot deal with current affairs. The research process requires time and perspective and is always lagging behind the actual events. This is all the more applicable when it comes to a period of accelerated changes, as has happened in recent years in the Western world. Even those who do not subscribe to Heraclitus's notion of *panta rhei* (everything flows) or his adage that "you cannot step twice into the same river" cannot ignore the rapid, deep, and dramatic changes that are taking place in many countries—especially in Europe, but in Asia and the United States as well. Similar occurrences are also taking place in Israel, the research arena in which ISR operates.

Some of these processes and changes give us cause for very serious concern. Defining them academically as a weakening of liberal democracy, populism, or anti-liberal tendencies by no means exhausts what is happening. The Brookings Institution in Washington, DC, has recently characterized the regime in the United States, as well as those in some European countries, as 'neo-authoritarian'. Others assert that we have entered an era of 'post-democracy'.

What has been happening in Israel in recent years has clear similarities to what has occurred and is continuing to occur in Poland, Hungary, and other Central European countries. Politicians in power have challenged and tinkered with the processes of the Israeli judicial system and have tried to undermine the independence of the Supreme Court. A small hegemonic group largely controls and dominates much of the media. A systematic campaign has succeeded in restricting the scope of civil society, while civil rights organizations are portrayed as 'enemies of the people'. The government regularly depicts both the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition as unpatriotic, or even literally as traitors.

A frightening conversion is taking place with regard to nationalism—one that has seen growing support for ideas of ethnic or organic nationalism (and in some cases even racism) that justify the majority's demand not to take into account the views, interests, or needs of minorities. Humanist

and universalistic principles, even those integral to Israeli history and government, are branded as alien and dangerous, and processes of 'religionization' allow religious institutions and leaders to impose their preferred lifestyle on the secular majority and thus reshape the public sphere.

In Europe and the United States, all these processes have already received academic treatment. In Israel, however, scholarly preoccupation with them has just begun and so far is expressed only in the writings of a few academics and intellectuals in the media.

We are entering a new and portentous chapter in Israel's history and development, and ISR invites social scientists, historians, and academics in other fields of research to analyze and assess what is going on. We promise to give priority to the publication of articles that deal with such important issues. Obviously, we welcome all responsible points of view: there is not and never will be a political litmus test applied to articles that ISR accepts. In fact, we particularly welcome points of view that disagree with what we have stated above.

Our autumn issue commemorated Israel's 70th anniversary by focusing on Israeli culture, and this second commemorative issue highlights Israeli society. It deals with important topics, some of which are from the past, with others very current. We begin with an article that addresses some of the issues identified above. In "Effects of Religious Identity and Ethnicity on the Israeli-Jewish Electorate," Ephraim Yuchtman-Yaar, Yasmin Alkhalay, and Tom Aival consider this especially topical question, both conceptually and empirically. They come to some conclusions that call into question conventional wisdom on this contentious concern.

It is followed by three articles on Israeli history. The first, "Civic Awareness and Associations in Israel's Underprivileged Sectors in the 1950s–1960s," by Paula Kabalo, breaks new methodological ground. Kabalo looks at records of informal civic associations in the Arab sector and in a poorer area of Tel Aviv and finds a lively, freewheeling civic spirit that has not been previously studied to any great extent.

The next two articles focus largely on party politics. In "Reshaping the Political Order in Israel, 1965–1967," Yechiam Weitz considers the two years prior to the Six-Day War. He contends that during this period large 'aligned' parties formed on both the left and the right, as opposed to the hegemonic Mapai party and a flock of smaller parties that had constituted the political scene up to then. In "The Creation of the Likud and the Struggle for the Identity of the 'Alternative Party,'" Amir Goldstein focuses on the right, examining the extensive series of political machinations that culminated in the creation of the Likud party in 1973. He suggests that, ironically, much of the impetus to unite the center-right came from people and factions seeking to curtail the power of Menachem Begin. Instead, Begin

emerged as undisputed leader of the new party and, of course, finally became prime minister in 1977.

The two articles that follow address a very current issue, namely citizenship. In "The Ethics of Citizenship in Israel," Ben Herzog takes a primarily legal approach, examining the tension between 'republican' and 'liberal' conceptions. In "Israel's Politics of Citizenship," Assaf Shapira focuses on 'immigrants' (as opposed to *olim*) and contrasts how access to citizenship in Israel compares with the situation in other developed liberal democracies.

In the final article, "Relations between Development Towns and Kibbutzim: Sderot and Sha'ar HaNegev," Moti Gigi examines a notoriously rocky Israeli problem. He takes on the relations between the kibbutzim organized in the Sha'ar HaNegev Regional Council and the development town of Sderot during five years in the 1970s, when a partnership program was operating. The results changed the relationship, but not in ways that were originally envisioned.

We then travel back to the present with a review essay by Ian Lustick titled "The Occupation after 51 Years." Lustick reviews three recent books on the subject and concludes that none of them gets to the essence of the matter as he perceives it.

We have a particularly rich and varied harvest of book reviews to complete this issue. We begin with a review of Edna Lomsky-Feder and Orna Sasson-Levy's *Women Soldiers and Citizenship in Israel: Gendered Encounters with the State*, followed by a review of Aviva Halamish's important volume, *The Kibbutz: Utopia and Politics*. Then we bend our usual policy of not reviewing edited volumes and publish a review of an important book, titled *Handbook of Israel: Major Debates* in two volumes, which contains a number of cogent discussions of the current issues roiling the Israeli academic conversation. Another major book reviewed is Uri Ram's *Israeli Sociology: Text in Context*, a history and analysis of the discipline in Israel.

The next book reviewed, *Transforming The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, is also a series of essays, but all by one person, Herbert Kelman, who initiated a famous set of dialogues between Israelis and Palestinians at Harvard in the 1980s and has written extensively on conflict resolution and related themes. A rather different perspective is presented in Charles Freilich's *Israeli National Security: A New Strategy for an Era of Change*. For a change, we then include a review of a book on economics. David Rosenberg's *Israel's Technology Economy: Origins and Impact* examines the positives as well as the negatives in Israel's much-ballyhooed high-tech sector. The last—but by no means least—review is on another less covered topic: theater. Lee Perlman's *But Abu Ibrahim, We're Family!* tells about and analyzes four Israeli-Arab productions in Israeli theaters and discusses the challenges of doing so in the context of the current political situation.

Finally, we are adding a new annual feature to our book reviews section. Once a year, a committee of the Association for Israel Studies will choose the best book in the field of Israel Studies, published during the previous year, to receive the prestigious Yonathan Shapiro Prize. In 2018, there was a tie, and two books were awarded the prize. We thought that would be of interest to our readers and have therefore included the reasoning of the committee that chose the winners.

We hope you enjoy this selection of articles and reviews, and we encourage you to respond to our invitation to address the current critical issues mentioned above. As always, we also appreciate hearing back from you about what you do and do not like in this issue.

— *Yoram Peri and Paul L. Scham*