

Introduction

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There are social, political, economic, and cultural changes linked with the division and balance of power that occur in a society that are characterized by a rapid pace of events, mass gatherings in public spaces, and at times, even extensive bloodshed. These elements are often taken as conclusive evidence of these kinds of events being “revolutions.” Such, for example, was the nature of the French Revolution of 1789, the American Civil War that began in 1861, the 1917 Russian Revolution, the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, and very likely, although it may still be too soon to be certain, the current upheavals sweeping the Arab world. By contrast, there are social, political, cultural, and economic changes that take place that may manifest no violent elements, no piled up bodies in public squares, and yet may well be even more substantive in their transformative nature. Their venues may be concealed, as they happen within the innermost sancta—and primarily in people’s hearts and minds—and they often mature slowly. Such are often only recognized as revolutionary in retrospect, if and when historians or other analysts elucidate the gap between power structures and behavioral patterns in society before the events occurred and the consequent structural, procedural, and intellectual realities thereafter. Some silent revolutionary changes aim

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directly at changing the structure of the government and those who hold its reins, like the 1989 Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, whereas others succeeded in changing world and daily life orders without shocking or toppling the government structure from its very foundations. An outstanding example of this kind of change is the Industrial Revolution that lasted in Europe and North America from the mid-eighteenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries and in many respects also the Feminist Revolution in the West that began in the 1960s. The development of multiculturalism may also be categorized as such a change.

The working hypothesis at the foundation of this discussion asserts that it is entirely possible, even likely that the democratic West may now be undergoing such a “silent revolution” that is likely to effect a fundamental change in the character of liberal democracies as we know them. This change, as yet unnamed, which, for our purposes, we will refer to as political *disenchantment*, is reflected in a pronounced shift in relations between citizens and government. As a direct consequence, broad sectors of the public in many democratic countries no longer perceive politics and politicians as objects of esteem—not to mention admiration—or as the epistemic authority from which the legitimacy of the elected government to make strategic policy decisions is derived, but rather relate to them with aversion, derision, and cynicism. In other words, even if most people do not take to the streets and demonstrate and even if they do not clash head on with the agents of government, many citizens effectively turn their backs on the elected government that is officially supposed to be “by the people and for the people” but in many respects remains without the people. To be sure, political dissatisfaction has been demonstrated in the past as well. It suffices to recall the well-known essay by Henry David Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience” (1849). There is, however, a vast difference between political opposition and aversion to politics—

the most outstanding feature of the gut feeling so many contemporary citizens share.

The momentous change taking place, to be examined below with its most significant manifestations, is liable to erode the pillars of representative democracy and largely undermine the possibility of stabilizing political leadership in the intermediate and long range. If so, it will also adversely affect the ability to formulate the policies necessary for coping with problems that are more complex than ever and with the unprecedented challenges that now face decision makers and the public in the more “affluent” part of the world, i.e., the Western democratic bloc.

In particular, the constant, unhampered, multichannel media coverage has made it extremely difficult to convince the public of the fitness of its leaders, their ability to rise above their own personal, party, and sectoral interests, their virtue, the equitability of resource allocation, and the relative advantage that they possess—or at least are supposed to possess—over “the wisdom of crowds.” Indeed, leaders of wholly democratic countries—such as former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, US President Barack Obama, and the last few Israeli prime ministers as well—learned from their own experience, however popular they may be on election day, the trend turns downward thereafter and the impending fall is not only hard and painful but at times also very rapid. In today’s realities, with the multiplicity of testimonies, reports, and rumors, both true and imaginary, concerning the failures of the system and the weaknesses of its leaders, it is doubtful whether personalities such as Roosevelt, Churchill, Gandhi, De Gaulle, or Ben-Gurion would have been able to remain steadfast on the pedestals they were placed in their own time.

The change described above and its implications constituted the focus of an international workshop that took place at the Israel

Democracy Institute in Jerusalem in December 2008. The articles included in this collection deal with topics discussed at that workshop, representing various theoretical approaches, research methods, and points of view regarding the changing relations between citizens and the democratic political systems in which they live. The discussion in the workshop was divided into two principal parts: The first considered the changes discerned in Western democracies, their causes, configurations, and results, while the second focused on Israeli democracy, delineating the respective changes therein. The basic assumption was that although Israel possesses its own unique structures, dynamics, and characteristics, it too is undergoing processes similar to those experienced by liberal democracies in the west. Consequently, it is possible—and even desirable—to obtain deeper insights, applying a key analytical and conceptual tool developed in other contexts to the Israeli case as well.

Symptoms

Disenchantment with politics manifests several major symptoms that can be summarized as citizens' loss of trust in and increasing criticism of the political system, its institutions, processes, and professional politicians. It thus occurs that in democratic countries grounded in the abstract concept of a "social contract" between citizens and government—by virtue of which citizens voluntarily forgo some of their personal autonomy and place their destiny in the hands of leaders, whom they believe to be committed to and capable of shaping and implementing policy that will serve the interests of all the public—both citizens' trust and the leadership's commitment to the public good are dissipating steadily. As demonstrated clearly in the annual Democracy Indexes of the Israel Democracy Institute, in Israel, as in many other liberal democracies, trust in decision makers is declining steadily, while objective and subjective indicators show

that political corruption is increasing. In other words, it appears that the basic difference between non-democratic and democratic regimes is narrowing, as measured in terms of government legitimacy: Even in wholly democratic countries, citizens are becoming less and less confident about the motivations of their elected officials and do not respect their representatives and public servants. Such disrespect, along with failure to recognize the professional epistemic authority of politicians and the value of accepted political structures and procedures, may also be intensified by the leveling of hierarchies typical of the postmodern intellectual climate that does not recognize the objective advantage of canonical institutions, functions, or texts. This dour political climate undercuts the esteem formerly granted almost automatically to politicians and statespersons, as well to established political frameworks, if only because they were elected to lead or defined as frameworks in which the orderly process of administrating public life is supposed to take place.

Disenchantment with political “professionals” and the system as a whole is exacerbated by constant accusation and often conviction of politicians in many countries on charges of inappropriate activity and at times even actual corruption. Even if they do not violate the law, elected politicians and senior officials are frequently shown to be inattentive to their constituents and ineffective in their performance at best or manipulative and greedy at worst. In this context, we note that far-reaching changes have also taken place in the definition of political corruption, as detailed below. In other words, activities that were once not considered condemnable are now deemed unacceptable by the public and the justice system. Anxiety over corruption and its censure in the media and public discourse leads often to what the professional literature calls *moral panic*, i.e., a kind of mass attack—not necessarily backed by or based on any authentic assessment of

danger—on a person, institution, or social phenomenon perceived as an existential threat to the social order.

It is thus no wonder that politicians have become the whipping boys of cynical editorial pieces and learned analyses and targets for the verbal barbs of satires and stand-up comedy routines. Moreover, establishment political processes are perceived by the public as ineffective in translating voters' authentic aspirations and even as rigid and arbitrary, virtually fossilized and obsolete. Consequently, at a time when extra-establishment political activity at the civil society level is on the rise in all established democracies, the extent of citizen participation in establishment political processes is declining worldwide. The complex structure of the political system is also perceived—justifiably or otherwise—as troublesome, over bureaucratic, and profligate and the alienation that many citizens feel toward it has sharply increased over the years. This alienation is nourished considerably by processes of mass migration, which results in the fact that many people today live in countries without feeling any affinity to those countries' political heritages. Often, they are not fluent in the local language, even if they have acquired residence permits or citizenship. The result of this public climate is that:

[O]nce something of a *bon mot*, conjuring a series of broadly positive connotations—typically associating politics with public scrutiny and accountability—“politics” has increasingly become a dirty word. Indeed, to attribute “political” motives to an actor’s conduct is now invariably to question that actor’s honesty, integrity or capacity to deliver an outcome that reflects anything other than his or her material self-interest—often, all three simultaneously. (Hay 2007, 1)

In his 2007 cross-national study, *Why We Hate Politics*, Colin Hay identified a plethora of manifestations of this political disenchantment and differentiated between formal manifestations (voter turnout and party membership) and informal ones (defiant non-participation, mounting cynicism, decreased vertical political trust, and movement to extra-parliamentary civil participation modes). It is worth emphasizing that disenchantment does not imply disinterest in politics or political indifference. On the contrary, Hay offers data that suggests that people are not disengaging from politics but are instead channeling their efforts to venues outside of the political establishment. However, there is a fly in the ointment. Empirical studies carried out in many countries prove that there is no pure extra-governmental politics. Establishment-style politics succeeds in penetrating extraparliamentary politics by direct or indirect funding of budgets and through the forming of alliances with allies from among civil society.

A 1997 volume of articles edited by the Austrian scholar Andreas Schedler, entitled *The End of Politics—Explorations into Modern Antipolitics*, opens with the following statement, sustaining the argument that politics, in the conventional sense of the word, is no longer “in”:

We live in antipolitical times . . . antipolitical discourses are nothing new in Western political history, but today, in the late twentieth century, they have gained renewed prominence. They now form an important, at times even hegemonic element of the ideological universe. And in all probability they have still not reached the peak of their global career. (Schedler 1997, 1)

In Israel, disgust with anything “political” has led to a situation over

the past few years in which even people involved in political protest avow that their activities are “apolitical” as for example did the leaders of the 2011 “tent protest.” On the tactical level, they apparently seek, thereby, to increase the number of potential participants in the protest activities without encountering any ideological obstacles, but in a more essential sense, this development embodies yet another reflection of the common understanding that “political is bad.”

The specific causes and manifestations of such antipolitical sentiments and actions are the result of circumstances typical of each society and are thus varied. They do share one common feature, however, namely revulsion bordering on hatred of the system, a sensitive situation that is normally discerned only in autocratic and totalitarian regimes. The common wisdom is that democracies exhibit fairly high levels of citizen satisfaction and even contentment. However, in 1992, E. J. Dionne published a book entitled *Why Americans Hate Politics*, claiming that since the 1960s, the American liberal and conservative public has been presented with distorted opportunities for choice, preventing the framing of key issues in public discourse in a manner conducive to their resolution. Politics, according to Dionne, has thus failed in fulfilling its principal function of tending to practical and emotional social problems. Moreover, words have taken over the political process and cast actions aside; therefore, he argues, Americans hate politics.

Another reason that the Americans turned their back on politics was provided by Robert Putnam (2000) in his famous but highly contested essay “Bowling Alone.” Putnam determines that American civil society is breaking down as citizens become more disconnected from their families, neighbors, communities, and the republic itself. He argues that the organizations that gave life to American democracy are fraying. Thus, Americans are disengaging from political involvement, which includes decreasing voter turnout, public meeting attendance,

committee service, and political party work. Putnam also cites growing political distrust in the United States. Although accepting the possibility that this lack of trust could be attributed to the long litany of political tragedies and scandals since the 1960s, he maintains that this explanation was limited when viewed alongside other trends in civic engagement of a wider sort. By contrast, in *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices*, Russell Dalton (2004) dismisses the claims that such trends are a function of scandals, poor performance, and other government failures. His principal answer to the question “Why?” is that the change in public opinion against political establishments in advanced post-industrialized societies is generated by the successful social modernization of these nations. Politics in its familiar form is thus perceived once again as neither essential nor appropriate.

Carl Boggs’s (2007) seminal work sustains the argument that most Americans are increasingly alienated from a political system that is commonly viewed as corrupt, authoritarian, and simply irrelevant to the most important challenges of our time. Citing ever-declining voter participation, Boggs claims that Americans have retreated from political involvement out of justifiable feelings of disgust and pessimism, bemoaning the decline of American liberalism. He also links these trends with global corporate capitalism that dictates an “all consuming corporate agenda,” which, together with the mass media, have created what he perceives as the unholy alliance that dominates today’s American politics.

In his 2006 book *Why Politics Matters*, British scholar Gerry Stoker suggests that in his country—and most probably in other liberal democracies as well—politics is failing because politicians are repeatedly exposed as incompetent in dealing with the increasingly complicated problems facing them. Political disenchantment, he claims, reflects the emergence of a more critical citizenry and politics

is in trouble because more and more issues are moving beyond its control:

It is clear that in the eyes of many people politicians are not the best advertisement for politics. Politics is often viewed as a rather grubby and unpleasant feature of modern life. People who take up politics as a trade or a vocation tend to attract more derision than admiration. Politics is something you apologize for, rather than being proud about. (Stoker 2006, 114)

These negative images prevailing among the public are nourished by firsthand confrontations with various government agencies, reinforced by information obtained from the media: news and investigative journalism, the film industry, and publishing houses that create an unending stream of publications, well-based or otherwise, concerning politicians' failures, corruption, and systemic malfunctions. There is no doubt that many more words have been written and spoken and visually portrayed concerning corrupt or inept politicians than about those who do their job properly, represent their constituents, and make decisions wisely.

Furthermore, citizens now feel an increased sense of empowerment, originating in increased education, varied channels of information, and the opening of alternative paths of political participation. Many citizens now have the opportunity and means to express their positions, for example via Facebook and Twitter, and demand that they be taken into account by decision makers. When such demands are not met forthwith or are not voiced sufficiently in the increasing political polyphony, frustration and disappointment increase and politicians are perceived as deaf or inattentive to the voices reaching them—through various channels—from their respective constituencies.

It is important to note, however, that the severe criticism leveled at governments defined as democratic does not originate in substantive public rejection of democratic values and procedures themselves. On the contrary, numerous studies show that throughout the world, support of democracy as the preferred form of government is now on the rise. Today, everyone speaks of values such as freedom of organization, freedom of expression, guarding minority rights, freedom of religion and worship and the like, even if they often do so as lip service rather than out of authentic commitment.

The Essays in this Collection

Comprehension of the changes that democratic political systems undergo demands a thorough grasp of their theoretical and functional infrastructures, as examined in this collection's opening essay by **Yaron Ezrahi**, "The Reality of Political Fictions: Democracy between Modernity and Postmodernity," which focuses on analysis of the democratic discourse. Ezrahi describes the tension between the (interpretive) concepts at the foundation of politics and the attempt to define and consolidate fundamental political facts. Politics, he determines, is a constant process of negotiating compromises that cannot be reduced to rational decision making. The average normative system is the basis for political system functioning, not philosophical logic or pure science. As an example of reliance on popular wisdom and discourse as the foundation of politics, he notes that French revolutionaries iconographically embodied the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen within the image of the Ten Commandments. Moreover, he claims, fictions also have a key role in political activity. For example, the concept of separation of powers: The ostensible separation between the political and judicial branches is, in his view, fictitious yet highly important in preventing arbitrary

use of the state's power and in creating a system of checks and balances that is essential to maintaining the government's democratic character. On the one hand, fictions must be rigid, constituting a kind of natural law that serves as the backbone of government. On the other hand, however, they also have to be open to constant interpretation, as otherwise they would silence the democratic process. In summary, the author presents de Tocqueville's assessment that a democratic society ought to be guided chiefly by "good sense and practical intelligence," concluding that unfortunately, this principle is not applicable in the contemporary Israeli context. Consequently, Ezrahi perceives a highly urgent need to develop an oxymoronic political dynamic stability, enabling the government in Israel to persevere and maintain the essence of democracy.

While Ezrahi deals with the content of discourse in democratic societies, **Astrid von Busekist**, in her essay "One Man, One Voice! One People, One Language?" addresses its linguistic aspects, claiming that the ability to speak a common language indeed does not necessarily reflect shared values, although it does intensify persuasive skills and a sense of belonging among citizens who share a language with their leaders. There are two competing conceptions regarding the link between language and democracy: The first is utilitarian, perceiving language as a tool and maintaining that in the multinational context, a *lingua franca* is required to ensure political participation, social mobility, and equal opportunity. The second bears cultural emphasis and highly values the variety in citizens' identities, of which different languages are a formative component. A citizen's free choice to use the language that best expresses his or her identity, von Busekist maintains, is a component of democracy of no less significance than equality, social mobility, or the existence of a common language. Nevertheless, empirical studies show that one of the variables that best explains political alienation is the lack of a common language.

Countries that are divided linguistically, such as Belgium, were found to be more vulnerable democracies. Proper democratic politics can apparently take place only if there is significant citizen participation, the achievement of which is facilitated by the relevant basic linguistic abilities. Europeans now realize that a common language is a necessary condition for maintaining the democratic character of the European Union, but they act inconsistently, encouraging use of English, on the one hand, but at the same time celebrating the diversity of languages. The result is a lack of clarity and increasing political tensions. Discussions concerning adoption of a common language cover several issues, including how to choose one language while according all due respect to the others, as well as the democratic process to be adopted for such decision making. The essay presents various solutions to questions concerning official European language policy, each of which is examined according to its projected share in preventing development of antipolitical sentiment and in rebuilding ties among citizens and between them and their representatives.

The function of language is most prominent in the media, of course. We have already noted their key role as a mediator (and even instigator) between citizens and the government. Nevertheless, as explained well in **John Lloyd**'s essay "The Triple Crisis of Politics and the Media," the media are undergoing a severe earthquake that makes it difficult for them to do their job and perhaps even prevents them from performing it properly, intensifying friction between the public and its leaders. According to Lloyd, the media are experiencing three overlapping crises, of which the first and most obvious is the financial crunch because of the cutback in advertising budgets that primarily affects news transmission. As advertising declines, newspapers close and television news and current events shows on the commercial channels are scaled back in favor of lighter and more popular programming. Today, we see more clearly than ever

how dependent the notion of “public service journalism” is on private consumption, a decline in which is entailed a concomitant decline in the ability to maintain appropriate media.

A trust crisis prevails here as well. Like confidence in politicians, public trust in (printed and televised) coverage, especially of the news, is on the decline in many countries. This may be the result of news reports becoming less meticulous and more sensational, but it may also be due to increased public expectations. Moreover, it has been noted on more than one occasion that although they lead the call for accountability and transparency, the media may not always practice what they preach.

Finally, there is a crisis in relations between the media and democracy. On the one hand, public and government figures have a greater need for the media, but on the other, fearing for their political fate, they are also far more cautious in their interaction with them. The media, for their part, demand that politicians provide instant responses and positions regarding issues on the agenda. Because of the common perception that journalists distort their words and seek sensationalism, the media have difficulty obtaining reactions from senior public figures, with media and image advisors entering the picture instead, adding to the distance between journalists and politicians and increasing the likelihood of misunderstandings. The lack of continuity in media coverage and rapid disappearance of topics from the agenda are problematic as well. The resulting damage to the media’s role in maintaining normal democratic functioning is exacerbated by the newspaper owners’ profit motive, rendering restoration of the balance between the papers’ business objectives and their public function as “watchdogs of democracy” nearly impossible. The end of the newspaper era thus entailed a change in the democratic political system as well.

Mass immigration, intensified by globalization, imposes an additional burden on democracies struggling with the above problems. **Riva Kastoryano's** contribution to this volume, "Citizenship, Civil Society, and Transnational Participation: Muslims in Europe," attempts to assess manifestations of the sense of belonging—citizenship, nationality, and identity—according to various levels of political participation within the political community and civil society, national or transnational, focusing on the case of France. In Europe, substantive discussion of the concept of citizenship now concentrates on political integration of immigrants in the nation states in which they reside and in European space as a whole. The immigrants' demand for recognition as equal citizens of their host countries is rather elementary, although it too entails introduction of a new equilibrium between community structures and national institutions and clarification of the connection between the political community as a source of political rights and legitimization and the cultural community as the principal source of identity. The situation worsens regarding political participation within the relatively new framework of the European Union and its supranational institutions, rendering the question of citizenship and its link with territoriality all the more critical, particularly in the case of immigrants. The new European political space allows for political activity across borders, as in the transnational communities that challenge the link between territory and citizenship/nationality. In France, as in many other European countries, recognition of the "other" relates primarily to Islam and the attendant apprehension. Supranational Islamic identity clashes with the doctrine of a nation with a unique cultural identity shared by all its citizens that bridges politically over all differences among them. Nevertheless, although the demand for recognition links the group with the state, the fluidity of European borders led immigrants to develop transnational networks—that connect their

respective countries of origin to the countries in which they reside and link immigrant communities in different countries—and to participate actively in these three spaces. These networks lead to a redefinition of the connection of territory, nation, and political space and challenge the nation state and territory-based political structures, thereby representing a new civic model that often clashes with the classic one, causing friction and increasing civil dissatisfaction among longtime residents and immigrants alike.

Gerry Stoker's essay "Antipolitics in Britain: Dimension, Causes, and Responses," describes the antipolitics phenomenon in Britain, its characteristics, possible sources, and means of curtailing it. Stoker maintains that the public's negative attitude toward politics tends to appear in cyclic format, fanned by media coverage. The well-known study by Almond and Verba (1963) claimed that Great Britain of the 1950s was characterized by participating citizens with a high sense of belonging and political awareness, positing that a political culture of involvement creates stability. Stoker reexamines the findings and shows that, even in that decade, citizens' involvement and trust in politicians in Britain was not very high in terms of sense of belonging, ability to influence, esteem displayed toward institutional functioning, and political participation at various levels. Moreover, he noted that while gender gaps narrowed in the past generation, class gaps in fact widened. Young people and members of immigrant ethnic groups (that were virtually unrepresented in Almond and Verba's study) are repelled by participation. Antipolitics has become a *zeitgeist*, the causes for which may be discerned in various developments, such as political corruption and class exploitation, along with the deliberate delegation of decision making and implementation to extra-governmental bodies and of responsibility for handling political issues to anonymous international organizations. Politics has become a system of marketing campaigns, many of them negative and lacking

normative orientation. Thus, most citizens experience democracy only as observers and consequently feel a sense of distance and disappointment. Severance between citizen and politics in Britain is further exacerbated by the intensification of social individualism trends, the increasing complexity of the political system and its demand for specialization and professionalization, general application of “smart consumerism” to the political sphere, and cynicism that is often provoked by the media. Toward the end of his essay, Stoker attempts to determine what can be done to reverse the trend. In his estimation, there is a need for adherence to democratic procedure despite its flaws. The political elites should admit their mistakes, explain difficulties, and eschew slander. He concludes by stating that politics is a tool for dealing with conflict and mutual dependence. Consequently it cannot provide perfect solutions. We should propose methods of achieving direct citizen participation, while amending representative procedures to revive a political culture supportive of democracy.

Problems similar to those concerning the US, France, and Britain also weigh heavily on Italy, whose democracy is still scarred by the country’s Fascist heritage. **Pierangelo Isernia** and **Danilo Di Mauro** seek to reexamine long-standing research conclusions (or stereotypes) concerning the basic flaws of Italian democracy in their study “The Bumble-Bee is Still Flying: Italian Political Culture at 50.” Almond and Verba characterized the political system in Italy as based on parochial, family, and regional loyalty, claiming that the Italians are particularly low in national pride and tend not to take part in political activity. Above all, they display extended mistrust of the political system. Italian researchers proposed additional reasons for what they perceive as the problematic functioning of the Italian democracy, such as the unstable party structure and incomplete processes of modernization. In the literature, primarily the work

of researchers outside Italy, the results appear to sustain these arguments. Isernia and Di Mauro use the findings of empirical studies conducted by various scholars and institutions in Italy and elsewhere over the past few decades, reanalyzing findings concerning national identity and attitudes toward the political system and its institutions. Their conclusion is that Italian citizens identify with the state and feel pride in their being Italian no less and perhaps even more than do citizens of other nation states. Nevertheless, they apparently do tend to consider nationalism as self-evident and consequently do not accord prominence to this sense of belonging in surveys allowing for choice among affinity groups. The position of Italian citizens toward the political system and politicians is stable—more negative toward parties, political figures, and governmental systems and more positive toward the functioning of the economy, the military, and the media. Another interesting finding the authors cite indicates that the rate of citizen participation in elections in Italy is high and stable despite negative attitudes toward the system.

Many of these dilemmas affect Israel as well, impeding the functioning of its democracy. **Wolfgang Merkel**, in his essay “Embedded and Defective Democracies: Where Does Israel Stand?,” claims that Israeli democracy suffers from several basic flaws that exclude it from the family of embedded democracies and position it among the defective ones. The author opens his essay with the suggestion that the extent of a country’s democracy should not be based on the common key criterion of electoral democracy (as customarily applied in Freedom House reports) but rather according to the embeddedness of the democracy, according to several intrinsic and extrinsic variables. These intrinsic variables are (a) the holding of competitive, open and fair elections; (b) freedom of expression, of association, and a nongovernmental media system that enables free public discussion; (c) protection of citizens from arbitrary state

rule; (d) a system of checks and balances; (e) guaranteeing that the elected officials are indeed those who govern. The external variables are (a) financial gaps in society (the existence of which can adversely affect the essence of democracy); (b) a civil society (an active civil society can curb the state's over-involvement and serve as a space in which democracy is practiced, public discussion takes place, and preferences take shape); (c) the international environment in which the state is situated (which can be either supportive of democracy or not). According to Merkel, one may apply these variables to construct a system that includes embedded democracies—in which all conditions supporting democracy exist—and defective democracies in which said conditions are absent or apply only partially. Merkel describes four types of defective democracies: (a) *exclusive* democracy—that poses obstacles to the participation of certain groups of citizens; (b) *domain* democracy—in which certain groups, such as the military, possess veto power; (c) *illiberal* democracy—in which the rule of law is disrupted; and (d) *delegative* democracy—in which the legislature does not have control over the executive. Examining the case of Israeli democracy—that Freedom House calls the only free democracy in the Middle East—according to embedded democracy criteria, we find it is flawed in terms of civil rights and horizontal accountability (exclusive and lacking checks and balances), variables that Merkel believes to be stable over time, thus preserving the situation of defective democracy.

In his essay “Neo-Liberalism, Sovereignty, and the Crisis of Representation in Israel,” **Dani Filc** also points to a substantive flaw in Israeli democracy concerning representation, i.e., the extent to which the activity of elected officials indeed reflects the values, interests, and wishes of their constituents. He maintains that appropriate representation is critical to normal democratic functioning, as it translates popular sovereignty into terms of governance and legislation.

There are three chief formats for democratic representation: (a) the *Burkean* model, in which representation is carried out through a process of *deliberation* among representatives who serve the common good to the best of their judgment; (b) the *instructed delegate* model, in which representatives are the “ambassadors” of their constituents and act on the basis of unceasing deliberation with them; and (c) the *responsible party* model, in which parties function as ideological institutions. Each of these three formats has a substantive defect: The first system demands an elite with service awareness; “ambassadorial” representation is almost impossible to apply because of the size and variation of the modern democratic society; and parties have shifted from ideological foci to support-rallying organizations and now follow a market-oriented path. We also note the dominance of neo-liberal ideas in the political upper echelons of most long-term and new democracies, aggressively promoted by such institutions as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These concepts erode representation in several ways: They encourage delegation of authority to ostensibly professional bodies, contribute to the formation of technocratic elite that has no roots in the public at large, and bring about a situation in which state governments essentially turn into “relay stations” of global policy. The result, claims Filc, is a representation crisis, reflected in public avoidance of political participation, anti-establishment voting, membership in anti-establishment and revolutionary movements, and the rapid growth and decline of political parties. All these phenomena lead to a decline of public trust in the political establishment, focusing on three aspects of representation: the feeling that individuals and groups either have no representation at all or are represented inequitably; the sense that representatives are more loyal to those who recruited them to their service for money or other favors than to their constituents; and the estimation that establishment processes are defective from the outset. According to Filc, the representation crisis is especially severe in Israel

because of the overtly representative electoral system practiced and the relatively high interest in politics among Israeli citizens. Indeed, studies conducted in Israel indicate an extended decline in public trust in political institutions in general and in parties and politicians in particular. Moreover, significant sectors of Israeli society, such as immigrants from the former Soviet Union or Arabs, feel that they are not represented appropriately. These developments, coupled with the neo-liberal policies that wrested decision-making authority from the representative institutions in key spheres of activity such as pensions, credit, and foreign exchange rates, point to a serious representation crisis in Israel that is liable to wear down the democratic system's legitimacy.

As indicated, the conception that the political system is corrupt from its foundation is one of the most obvious causes of civil disenchantment with politics. **Yossi Shain** focuses on this common feeling in his study “The Roots and Implications of Discomfort,” claiming it has only a partial foundation in reality. Modern democracy, he maintains, is based on a liberal ethical conceptual complex that encourages civil criticism yet mandates development of a procedural system that is virtually bound to disappoint the public. Loss of the aristocratic order’s “virtues” plays a role as well. In Israeli democracy, one may identify several “traditions of corruption”—one linked with the shattering of the kibbutz ideal, another with the post-1967 occupation that many perceive as a corrupting influence, and another with the clash between ostensibly pure traditionalism and inferior modernity. The author reviews key events that intensified the popular feeling that all is corrupt, claiming that in research on political corruption, it is customary to differentiate between the corrupt resource allocation (giving jobs to cronies and the like) and diversion of public resources to the politicians’ own pockets. While the second type is hard-core corruption according

to all standards, the first, at times, may be considered part of the normal goods distribution system in the democratic order. The author reviews the structural forms of civil service in democratic countries, differentiating between the European tradition of professional public administration independent of representatives and the American tradition of public administration nominated by elected officials. He states that during the pre-State period and the early years of independence, Israel developed a professional public administration, subject to the well-known constraints imposed by local tradition. In many respects (including research corroboration), this administration became more and more professional, but the public perceived it as politicized, an image promoted primarily by the judicial branch, headed by the Supreme Court, that considers the country's watchdogs (the Attorney General, the State Comptroller and to a certain extent also the media) to be the final barrier to total corruption of civil service. Israeli society, claims Shain, is based on high cohesion and on a "soft constitution," explaining the minimal respect accorded the government and those who head it and the exaggerated apprehension over disagreements. The situation is exacerbated by the erosion of the founding Zionist ethos and its replacement with a variety of paths, some of them mutually contradictory: Capitalistic individualism, religious separatism, provincial Levantinism, religious nationalism, privatized kibbutz communities, universalistic post-Zionism, and civil indifference. Integrity and compromise, Shain determines, usually cannot coexist. Consequently, it is only natural for professional politicians, who are always compelled to compromise, to be accused of a lack of integrity. The democratic order effectively encourages hypocrisy—compromises cloaked with apparent integrity. The author distinguishes a vicious circle in all that concerns political corruption: The public is nourished by the results of media surveys that measure

public opinion on political corruption, resulting in a sense of increasing corruption. Moreover, new surveys on the same subject reflect and intensify the opinions shaped by the previous ones.

Yael Yishai discusses the escape from (organized) politics that has been so characteristic of Israeli society over the past few years in her essay “Escape from Politics: The Case of Israel.” Escape from politics may be expressed as (a) indifference and failure to perform one’s civic duty (Israel voter turnout rate is in the lowest third among democracies and political party membership rates are very low as well—only 6% in 2006, for example); (b) voting for escapist or anti-party parties (Yishai places the Democratic Movement for Change (1977), the Center Party and Shinui (1999) and the Pensioners’ Party (2006) in this category, noting that since the establishment of the state, over 160 parties, most of them escapist or anti-party, did not pass the required threshold for election to the Knesset; in the 2009 elections, votes equivalent to 3.8 seats were lost because they were cast for such parties); (c) social activity in civil society; (d) challenging the political system head-on. The four types of escapism differ from one another in their attitude toward politics and each is deleterious in its own way. Indifference threatens the government’s legitimacy and ability to govern, escapist parties subvert the pillars of parliamentary politics, reliance on civil social organizations weakens government accountability by releasing the state from its basic obligations, and challenging the system head-on—and violating the political rules of the game—threatens the very existence of the state. Nevertheless, claims Yishai, a moderate measure of escapism is not necessarily bad and may even be essential to normal democratic functioning. Thus, the escapist parties guarantee a different kind of politics, and many also offer the public a platform for “cleaning the political stables.” Civil society’s handling of social affairs has a positive role in that it increases access to vital goods and services and intensifies social

solidarity. On more than one occasion, however, as Yishai shows, civic social organizations or the third sector, such as organizations that distribute food to the needy in Israel, do not act efficiently or distribute items rationally according to authentic needs. To maintain the level of escapism bearable, the state has to encourage and enable people to participate actively in political life, condemn corruption, and present a clear policy that will reduce the charm of anti-party parties, assume responsibility for supplying the basic needs of its citizens, and take legal and social steps against those who challenge the system to an extent that endangers the regime's stability. Such measures are likely to reduce the intensity of escape from politics to a level that Israel is capable of bearing as a democratic state.

In his essay, “The Israeli Third Sector: Patterns of Activity and Growth, 1980—2007,” **Benjamin Gidron** maps out Israel’s third sector, which Yael Yishai identified as a possible channel for the energies of rank and file citizens who are repelled by politics but want to be involved socially. He notes that the third sector has grown rapidly over the past few decades and a significant civil society is taking shape. Similar phenomena have been observed in other countries as well, influenced by processes of globalization and privatization. In the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the third sector in Israel accounted for more than a quarter of a million jobs and its financial scope had tripled since the early 1990s. Effectively, during the designated period, the third sector generated 11% of the GDP and provided about 12% of the country’s employment. The most outstanding areas of third sector activity in Israel are health and education, which in the not too distant past were the exclusive responsibility of the state. About a quarter of the sector’s organizations focus on providing various types of religious services. Funds, charitable projects, legal aid associations, environmental groups and other bodies comprise the remaining 25%. As Gidron

shows, however, the sector's independence is only an illusion. Actually, its financing relies on the central and local government as its principal source, with none of the prominent commercialization evident in other Western countries. In other words, Israel's third sector is umbilically linked to the established political system. During the past few decades, there has been rapid growth in the number of NGOs comprising the sector: In 2007, there were 45,000 registered NGOs, more than half of them active. It appears that the weaker population strata, peripheral groups, and excluded sectors stand out among those who establish such associations. According to Gidron, the sharp increase in third sector activity and the close ties between it and the established political system raise several critical questions concerning public attitudes to the political system and hence affect the future of democracy in Israel. For example, does Israeli society become more "civil" as a result of the third sector's growth?; and is the sector's growth a reflection of pluralism or of a high level of fragmentation in Israeli society?

Kalman Neuman, in his essay, "New Politics, No Politics, and Antipolitics: The Dilemma of the Religious Right in Israel" points to a clear correlation in Israel between religious and political identities, wherein most religious Jews are also right-wingers. The trauma of unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria in 2005 was, according to him, a decisive and formative moment for the religious right that raised questions regarding relations with the state and doubts concerning its own ability to act politically. The failure to halt the disengagement led to severe criticism of the internal leadership and ultimately to reorganization of the Council of Settlements of Judea and Samaria and appeals to replace the representatives of the religious right in the Knesset. The ostensible "betrayal" of their common objective by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, once the symbol of Israel's right wing, impelled the religious right to seek explanations.

One such explanation that sits well with the antipolitical atmosphere linked Sharon's behavior with an ongoing investigation in which he and his sons were accused of corruption. One claim then highly prevalent among the religious right determined that Sharon carried out the disengagement to gain the support of the judicial system and the media. Besides personal criticism of Sharon, radical developments began taking place in internal religious discourse, as evidenced particularly in the content of weekly flyers distributed in synagogues for the Sabbath. Sharon's "betrayal" was described as the failure of the secular right, that originates in a structural malfunction of secular Zionism and its lack of devotion to the Land of Israel after forgoing the values of Judaism. A new political ideology developed that emphasized the need to become a powerful representative force that would prevent territorial concessions in the future, although there were also those who went a step farther and aspired to replace the state leadership entirely with a religious leadership. This vision represented a kind of anti-antipolitics, as it generated a new political objective in response to dejection and helplessness following the failure of the struggle against disengagement. The idea of a religious leadership may be promoted through several political strategies: (1) founding a broad political party that unites all religious Zionists and appeals to the traditional as well; (2) joining political forces with the ultra-Orthodox; (3) taking over the leadership of the central party—the Likud. Furthermore, at the fringes of religious Zionism, the vision of hegemony is actually linked with the ideology of exit from legitimate political activity. This approach rejects cooperation with the political and legal system and aims at bringing about political change from without. Although this position is only upheld by a small minority at present, in case of withdrawal from the West Bank, in Neuman's estimation, it could be adopted by a considerable share of religious Zionists.

David Ohana shows in his essay “The Politics of Despair: The Case of Political Theology in Israel,” that from the outset, Zionism was accompanied by political theology, although various Jewish intellectuals warned repeatedly of the dangers that lurked in the encounter between the theological and the political, foreseeing the negative implications of messianism on the political sphere, the mingling of sacred and secular, and the unholy alliance between religion and its political expressions. After the establishment of the state, Zionism faced a problem: With the disappearance of religious authority, where would Zionism derive its legitimization? In this context, David Ben-Gurion and Rabbi A. I. Kook each represent a different variety of political theology that aimed at solving this problem. The former, a political leader, did not hesitate to appropriate the sacred and rally empty myths for the good of building the state, while the latter, a religious leader, summarily harnessed the secular and adopted Zionist pioneering for the purpose of mystical speculation about the coming of the Messiah. What is common to both is the elevation of the secular to the level of the sacred. Rabbi Kook’s transcendental religious messianism was based on the Creator and Ben-Gurion’s Promethean secular messianism on the sovereignty of man. Ben-Gurion attempted to nationalize the concept of Jewish messianism and shift it from religious faith to the secular sphere. Republicanism was a broad, comprehensive, and multifaceted secular ideology that had taken over religious myths and applied them to the state-building project. Religious intellectuals had already warned against Ben-Gurion’s messianic vision, fearing the radical implications of national secularism and the rise of “territorial” or “Canaanite” messianism. The territorial messianism of the Land of Israel Movement had only one principle—the link between the people and the land—an absolute that was to be fulfilled *in toto*. Liberation of the land replaced liberation of the people as the order of the day. This new “tribal

religion” rendered the place—the Land of Israel—sacred, the sole source of legitimization. But when the historic context of the Land of Israel clashed with the ideal of the Jewish National Home, it became necessary to choose between national independence in part of the Land of Israel or settlement in the entire Land of Israel. The majority of the Zionist movement chose the former. Disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005 and the incidents in Hebron in 2008 are stages in a sectoralization process among the settlers, who seek to become free of Israeli secular democracy. The murderous acts of Baruch Goldstein and Yigal Amir after the Oslo Accords are test cases for the politics of despair. It would be a mistake to view their deeds as limited goals. According to Ohana, they represent only the tip of the iceberg, expressing the Israeli religious right’s distaste for the political and cultural establishment, its hostility toward the putatively debilitating secular culture, and lack of trust in the laws of democracy. These acts are not ideological but rather the politics of despair: idealism that turned into nihilism and politics that became terror. Yigal Amir’s act of murder was more than a political protest: it was the culmination of cultural and political despair. Essentially, it was a dual murder, in which Rabin was assassinated not only as the representative of the Oslo Accords but also as the representative of secular and democratic Israeli culture. The radical right seeks to prove that the individual or minority has the power to change things through violence, through shock treatment. Such strategy is justified the moment cultural pessimism combines with political theology.

Rather than providing an academic analysis, **Yishai Menuchin** in his essay, “Ethical Slippery Slopes and ‘Easy’ Solutions for Social Responsibility,” presents a normative political *Weltanschauung*. People in democratic societies hold various opinions and possess various values that create different individual and social priorities. People are supposed to determine their own individual attitudes to

their deeds, to those of their colleagues, and to decisions and actions in which their society is involved. Public discussion helps each individual in society clarify how others judge realities and how they would choose to act. Values exist in a given society when their meaning is clear to all who participate therein, whether they agree with them or oppose them. Membership in society also has a moral significance and consequently includes commitment and responsibility. The democratic system of values is supposed to provide the individual with a kind of social/moral compass that helps in coping with complex social realities. Commitment to democratic values yields responsibility for society and its activities and only a secondary commitment to the governing institutions and their decisions. Members are responsible not only for themselves and their deeds but also for all activities of society and the deeds of the other members thereof. Moreover, individual commitment to the democratic character of his or her society is not limited to accepting majority decisions, voting in elections, expressing opinions, or obeying the law. Each individual in society has responsibility and commitment to rectify the deeds of that society. This “responsibility,” however, is a vague and politically biased concept. Customarily, it is those who do not obey establishment decisions who are called to account for their deeds, ignoring the responsibility of those who do obey the rules and cooperate. All members of society are responsible for overt injustice, even if someone else did the deed and they only stood on the sidelines. When individuals estimate that others are witnessing the same act, law, or command, they feel that the responsibility is not only their own, but divided among all witnesses. Many also assume that someone else will respond and that there is no authentic need to take any personal action. But responsibility is absolute regarding each of the witnesses. When an individual shrugs off moral responsibility for social decisions, that person essentially ignores a primary commitment to democratic values. There are several acceptable ways

for individuals to bypass democratic responsibility for the actions of their society: (1) conformist obedience, through which individuals exempt themselves from the need to seek out the true meaning of the law, consider the various alternatives, and cope with moral problems and social commitment; (2) avowing the complexity of the issue and appealing to authorities or commentators who help the individual avoid personal decisions; (3) “internal exile” in which individuals detach themselves from society and effectively evade commitment to values that demand opposition to its actions; (4) post facto assumption of responsibility—declaring *mea culpa*, expressing regret, asking for forgiveness, the “shoot first, cry later” phenomenon. Many times, says Menuhin, individuals know or feel that the laws or deeds their society carries out are immoral. Nevertheless, they participate therein and obey. Moral responsibility, however, is supposed to lead individuals to take a clear stand when there is overt incompatibility between the acts they witness and the democratic system of values they uphold. In such cases, people may find themselves in situations in which fulfillment of moral responsibility demands turning one’s back, condemning, and even resisting acts ostensibly committed with the authority and permission of the political system in which they live.

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