

# Challenges of Modern Israel

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Socio-Political Reality:  
Academic Perspectives

Foreword by REMUS PRICOPIE

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A publication of the “Theodor Herzl” Center for Israeli Studies at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA), marking the Center’s 10th anniversary.

The “Theodor Herzl” Center for Israeli Studies (CSIs),  
The National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA) 2022.

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COMUNICARE.RO University Press is a department within the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Faculty of Communication and Public Relations.

SNSPA, Faculty of Communication and Public Relations  
Str. Povernei, nr. 6  
010643, București  
România  
[www.edituracomunicare.ro](http://www.edituracomunicare.ro)  
e-mail: [editura@comunicare.ro](mailto:editura@comunicare.ro)

**Descrierea CIP a Bibliotecii Naționale a României**

**Challenges of Modern Israel. Socio-Political Reality: Academic Perspectives** / coordinated by Liviu Rotman,

Eugenia Mihalcea, Daniel Gheorghe; foreword by Remus Pricopie. – București: Comunicare.ro, 2022

Contine bibliografie

ISBN 978-973-711-638-3

- I. Rotman, Liviu (coord.)
- II. Mihalcea, Eugenia (coord.)
- III. Gheorghe, Daniel (coord.)
- IV. Pricopie, Remus (foreword)

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## *Editors' note*

# **10 years of Israeli Studies at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration – SNSPA**

The anniversary of an academic structure represents also a good opportunity for a review of its activity. Such is the case for the “Theodor Herzl” Center for Israel Studies – SNSPA:

Founding of the “Theodor Herzl” Center for Israel Studies is part of the academic strategy of SNSPA to raise the knowledge of types of governance from various fields of political culture. These area studies represent priorities of modern political science, while attempting to expand its scope. Area studies focus on researching the relationship between general aspects (since all systems of governance are accountable for providing fundamental necessities of a people, i.e., security, education, medical and social assistance, environment etc.) and particular aspects, determined by specific history, and geopolitics of various areas. In regard to Israel Studies, the particular elements generate a special interest. There is an exceptional governance dimension in Israel due to the uniqueness of its history and geopolitics. The first distinguishable element to be mentioned is the fact that the State of Israel found its place on the political world map after a 2000-year absence. During this period, the Jewish people survived in various geographical areas, very different in regard to their political culture, socio-economic levels etc. This aspect has generated a need for optimal solutions in covering public policies to express a certain originality whose main scope has been to contribute to re-building a normalcy.

Based on this approach, a certain academic preoccupation of the Center has been shaped through research, academic activity, gathering of materials for a basic documentation, as well as organizing specific scientific meetings. During these 10 years of activity, the “Theodor Herzl” Center for Israeli Studies – SNSPA has been the only active organization of its kind in Romania, and among the very few in the Central and

Eastern Europe, to firstly establish in the Romanian academic space an autonomous object of study – Israeli Studies.

Since its foundation, the Center organized seven international conferences on different topics related to the Israeli political realities. Out of them, one was jointly organized with the European Association of Israel Studies (EAIS), the rest of them being set up individually.

The main conferences exclusively organized by the Center are:

- “Contemporary Issues in Israeli Politics and Society” (2013)
- “Dilemmas of Israeli Democracy” (2013)
- “Politics and Public Responsibility in Israel and Romania – a Comparative Perspective” (2014)
- “Israeli Political Reality between Internal and International Challenges” (2016)
- “The Burden of History and Geopolitics: Contemporary Israeli Challenges” (2017)
- “Policy of Culture and Memory in Israel” (2018)
- “Education in Israel – Zionist Traditions, Challenges, and Identities” (2019)

The conferences brought together academics and researchers from Israel, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Poland, France among others. At the same time, the Center, with the support of the Faculty of Political Science, built its own academic offer and organized every year courses for students of BA and MA levels.

A few events from the very active Israeli political life (related to elections, national security and/or international relations) represented good opportunities for debates that were attended by both students and professors from SNSPA, guests from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, journalists etc. Additionally, the summer schools, as well as other various informal meetings helped creating a virtual circle of friends of the Center and, consequently, led to a raised awareness regarding the Israeli Studies. The presence of the Center on social media facilitated an efficient dissemination of news and analytical comments regarding various events from Israel within the international academic infrastructure. Moreover, the Center encouraged and supported, financially and through specific expertise, the involvement of young people in the field of Israeli Studies.

Meanwhile, the Center imposed itself as an important actor in the dynamic of Israeli Studies and, simultaneously earned its very good position within the Romanian and international academic infrastructure. The very fact that in 2021 the Center hosted the Annu-

al Conference – Israel in a Changing World, Domestic and International Perspectives and Practices – organized by the EAIS stands proof of it. During its existence, the Center received the permanent support of the SNSPA leadership, the Faculty of Political Science within SNSPA, the Romanian Ministry of National Education, the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Embassy of the State of Israel in Romania, and of other very important academic organizations, such as the Israel Institute in Washington. We express our gratitude towards them all.

This volume that is to be read and judged by our audience, brings together 19 experts, from professors that reached the peak of an academic career to young PhD and MA students, at the dawn of their professional ascension. We took into consideration this structure of contributions as we were motivated by our desire to contribute to the continuation and expansion of this academic area. In the beginning of the volume, we introduced the audience to various perspectives, in an attempt to clarify the complexity of Israeli realities.

The support of SNSPA's leadership and of its Rector, Prof. Remus Pricopie, PhD, has been instrumental in seeing the intellectual adventure of putting together this volume brought to an end, and we are grateful to have accomplished this goal successfully.

We deeply appreciate the proofreading activity provided for the volume by Mr. Pawel Burzala from Poland, and the methodological recommendations of prof. Raphael Vago, from Tel Aviv University.

Last but not least, we would like to emphasize the significant contribution of our colleague involved in the editing activity Mr. Teofan Axinte. We also thank the “Comunicare” Publishing House and to its Editorial Director, Mrs. Livia Szasz, for her willingness to accept our initiative.

On this occasion, we express our hope that this is a first step towards the scientific acknowledgement of our activity, and that the next step towards it won't need to wait the Center's second jubilee.

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EUGENIA MIHALCEA  
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