Welcome to the first issue of Israel Institute Magazine! The Institute was founded in 2012 in a partnership between Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich and the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation in order to expand the field of Israel Studies and enhance knowledge of modern Israel. The Institute does not engage in political activism or advocacy. Rather, we aspire to advance excellence in scholarship, as well as to promote high quality resources for professors, students and others curious about Israel to study the country in a deep and well-informed way. We believe that our mission can best be achieved through robust support for exceptional, academically rigorous analysis on a range of topics, and the Institute partners with elite universities, think tanks and cultural institutions on a variety of programs in order to strengthen the development of a broad and multi-faceted field of study related to Israel.

Israel Studies is an interdisciplinary field that draws on experts who examine the country through numerous different lenses, from the social sciences and law to the humanities, cultural studies and the arts. Taken together, these experts illustrate the myriad ways that research on Israel can be relevant to the broader pool of knowledge on domestic, regional and global subjects, not only in the Middle East but around the world. The magazine that you are holding showcases the range of disciplines and topics of study represented in Israel Studies.

In these pages you will find articles about the Institute’s solo initiatives and collaborations. You can read about this past summer’s Leadership Summit, an event that brought together a group of Israel Studies leaders from around the globe, specializing in academia, the policy world and the arts. You will also find articles by several Israel Institute grantees discussing recent Israel-focused research, as well as profiles of Institute-affiliated scholars and artists teaching at U.S. and European campuses.

This magazine also attempts to contribute to knowledge of Israel and the field of Israel Studies beyond our specific programs, through the introduction of several regular columns: Our book review section – in this issue, an analysis of Professor Guy Ben-Porat’s award-winning book on secularism in Israel – seeks to highlight recently published scholarship on Israel. Meanwhile, our “State of Israel” feature addresses Israeli current events. The violence that engulfed Israel and Gaza this summer was underway as this article was being written. In this issue, in an effort to understand “what’s next” for the region, we have turned to leading think tank experts who work with the Institute to get a first cut of what the events of this summer mean for Israel going forward. And for a wider historical perspective of regional issues, be sure to read the column of our president, Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich. In this issue, he looks at the so-called “New Middle East,” a term that has evolved over two decades, most recently in the turmoil of the past few years.

Finally, as you should expect from a magazine such as this, you will find a comprehensive description of Institute programs, as well as a section of “News & Notes” to keep you up to date on our recent activities and keep you informed of opportunities that may be relevant to you.

I hope you enjoy the magazine and look forward to our future issues!

Dr. Ariel Ilan Roth
Executive Director, Israel Institute
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Israel and the New Middle East

The term “New Middle East” is ever changing. It was given currency by the title of Shimon Peres’ 1993 book in which he argued that a political diplomatic peace between Israel and the Arabs was not a final but an interim goal.

The real challenge facing the region, he argued, was the discrepancy between limited resources and an exploding population. Political peace, he proceeded, should enable Israel and the Arab world to collabortate in building a new Middle East, a region predicated on economic development and growth. The book was not well received in the Arab world where the dominant view held that such economic cooperation would in practice become an instrument of Israeli domination.

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In the first decade of the 21st century, the emergence of “a new New Middle East” took place. It was defined by several fresh developments, primarily the new role assumed by Turkey and Iran. These two successor states of the Turkish and Persian empires that had dominated the Middle East for centuries had played relatively marginal roles in the Middle East during much of the 20th century. Turkey looked west toward Europe and Iran was preoccupied with the Soviet threat and by domestic problems. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 had transformed Iran’s outlook on the region. It was determined to export its revolution, and countries like Lebanon became the arena of a massive Iranian investment. But it was only in 2003 that the destruction of Saddam Hussein’s regime removed the chief obstacle to its expansion. It was also at about that time that Iran’s nuclear program was given a fresh impetus. Iran’s quest for regional hegemony became manifest and ominous. In Turkey, Erdogan’s rise to power established the first durable Islamist government in that country. Turkey’s rejection by Europe reinforced the new government’s decision to seek compensation in the former territories of the Ottoman Empire. The combined effect of these developments was a new role played in the Middle East by two large, powerful, Muslim, non-Arab states that changed the face of the regional arena.

The new century’s second decade brought with it profound changes. The hopes generated in late 2010 and early 2011 by the “Arab Spring” were dashed soon thereafter, but some of its immediate consequences remained important: the fall of Mubarak’s regime in Egypt, the outbreak
of the Syrian civil war and a vague, pervasive change that the domestic status quo in much of the Arab world was not acceptable to the majority of the population. The “Arab Spring” was replaced by the “Arab Turmoil,” the collapse of several Arab states – Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and, in a different fashion, Lebanon. Egypt was stabilized by General Sisi’s takeover, but the conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood was suspended rather than terminated. The impact of these developments was enhanced by international trends, most significantly the Obama administration’s new view of the Middle East. Washington shifted its focus to the Asia Pacific region. It did not lose all interest in the Middle East, but the latter became less important to Obama’s policy planners, as America’s dependence on Middle Eastern oil has declined. There is evidence of fatigue with the arena that has produced too many American failures, two costly failed wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and a series of failed diplomatic efforts in the Israeli-Palestinian arena. President Obama is determined not to be drawn into another significant military involvement in the Middle East. But as the tragic civil war in Syria has amply demonstrated, failure to help the moderate secular opposition in 2012 only served to deliver large parts of Syria (and Iraq) into the hands of the radical, jihadist Islamic State organization.

The old pattern of regional politics has vanished. There is no comprehensive new order. But there are new possibilities and prospects. Some of them are negative. The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, Hizbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza are three radical, Islamist organizations well entrenched and in control of territory and advanced weapons systems. Turkey and Qatar support the Muslim Brotherhood (and the affiliated Hamas). Iran is Hizbollah’s patron and its shadow is cast across the region. But there are countervailing forces. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and other moderate Arab states are quite eager to collaborate with Israel. Israel’s ability to provide its neighbors with natural gas and desalinated water is a welcome new development. A hostile Turkey sends hundreds of trucks through Israel to the Gulf using Israel as a substitute for Syria. Israeli leaders and policy planners look at these developments and are toying with notions of regional peace and new alliances and partnerships. But there is an elephant in the room – the Palestinian issue. Regional peace is not the escape route from the Palestinian issue. But if Israel addresses the issue squarely and is willing to move along towards its resolution, in partnership with regional actors and with the Palestinian Authority, the current version of the New Middle East could become a blessing rather than a curse. ▲

Itamar Rabinovich

• Founding President of the Israel Institute
• Former Ambassador of Israel to the United States and chief negotiator with Syria
• Former President of Tel Aviv University
• Professor Emeritus of Middle Eastern History at Tel Aviv University
• Distinguished Global Professor at New York University
• Non-Resident Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution
• Recent books include The Linger ing Conflict: Israel, the Arabs and the Middle East (2011) and The View from Damascus (2009)
• Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles
Teaching Impartiality

The Israel Institute speaks with noted historian, Professor Derek Penslar, about developments and challenges in the field of Israel Studies.

**IIM:** What can Israel Studies scholars do to avoid the challenge of politicization of academia, in particular the selective or de-contextualized use of academic scholarship by people seeking to make political points?

**PENSLAR:** There is no hermetic barrier between universities and the rest of the world. Scholarship can be manipulated by people with an agenda, but the imperative to produce rigorous scholarship remains. This is as true for Israel Studies as for any other field. In their research and teaching Israel Studies scholars should strive for neutrality and respect opposing points of view, but they do have the right, particularly outside of the classroom setting, to present their views on political issues, e.g., in the mass media. An Israel Studies scholar’s right of freedom of expression should not be more restricted than that of any other citizen.

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**IIM:** What metrics should we use to gauge whether certain views are merely controversial or beyond the pale of serious academic discourse?

**PENSLAR:** Subjecting students to a political litmus test is a violation of the fundamental mission of the university. Debates about culpability in the Arab-Israeli conflict or the future political structure of Israel and Palestine are just as legitimate as debates about, say, the origins of the Cold War or the future of Scotland within the United Kingdom. Although students and instructors alike have wide latitude in what they say, they must avoid inflammatory or threatening speech. They should speak from knowledge, not sentiment. They must be willing to question their own pre-assumptions, to think critically about their own views as well as those of others.

**IIM:** Israel is, for a variety of reasons, a topic that evokes very powerful and often polarized emotions. What practices can scholars and departments adopt to ensure civility during classes, seminars, conferences and other academic events?

**PENSLAR:** Civility is not to be confused with bland “niceness.” In an academic setting to be “civil” means to engage in intelligent, respectful discourse, stating one’s own views firmly while attentively listening to one’s interlocutor. Speech can be civil while being sharp, challenging and prone to make elements of one’s audience profoundly uncomfortable. University administrators need to defend robust civil speech but must display no tolerance for disruptions, heckling or intimidation.

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**IIM:** How central should the Israeli-Arab conflict be in Israel Studies? How can we prevent this topic from taking over the whole field?

**PENSLAR:** The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is to Israeli history what race and slavery are to United States history or empire is to the history of modern Britain. For all three of these countries, certain themes have been dominant although not omnipresent. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is rarely far away from most topics within Israel Studies, and it should not be avoided because it is uncomfortable or controversial. Nor should it be artificially injected into a field where it does not belong (e.g., ideological disputes within the kibbutz movements or changing roles of women in the Haredi workforce).

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**IIM:** What are the benefits of comparative research on Israel or, generally, in Country Studies or Area Studies programs? How can such comparative projects best be incorporated into country-specific programs?

**PENSLAR:** There’s a lot of debate within universities about the virtues of Area Studies as opposed to disciplines. It’s hard to imagine one flourishing without the other, as we need both expertise in the languages and cultures of specific parts of the world and theoretical breadth and depth in our research questions, approach and method. Ideally, Israel Studies should be framed as the intersection of Middle East Studies, Jewish Studies, disciplines such as Political Science, International Relations and History, and relevant thematically-defined fields such as cultural studies and colonial/post-colonial studies. If Israel Studies is to play a serious role in academia, it needs to contribute to global conversations about subjects such as immigration, state-building, nationalism, ethnic conflict and conflict resolution.
**IIM:** How important is learning Arabic, as well as Hebrew, for Israel Studies? Should this be a requisite for Israel Studies scholars specializing in certain fields (e.g. politics)?

**PENSALAR:** One of the most important distinctions between the founding generation of Israel Studies and its current cohort is that the latter is routinely learning Arabic. Access to Arabic sources widens our field of vision in many fields – most obviously political, diplomatic and military history, but also social and economic history, given the historically rich and complex relationship between Jews and Palestinians within what is, after all, a very small piece of territory.

**IIM:** From your personal experience, what are the primary differences in teaching and research between American, Canadian and British universities?

**PENSALAR:** Israel Studies in Canada is not as well developed as in the United States. Where it does exist, student interest is high, and the students tend to be mostly non-Jewish. (In contrast, when I taught an Israeli history course at Columbia about five years ago, about 2/3 of the students were Jewish.) Israel Studies is considerably more developed in the United Kingdom than in Canada; Israel’s history, politics and culture are taught in at least ten major U.K. universities. In the U.K., as in Canada, students are most often not Jewish. Politically, students who take Israel Studies classes in Canada and the U.K. may be somewhat more critical towards Israel than in the United States, but in general those who are willing to sit in on a series of lectures or take part in a seminar on modern Israel have nuanced views, as those with more extreme opinions on either side don’t bother attending.

**DEREK J. PENSALAR** is the Stanley Lewis Professor of Modern Israel Studies at Oxford and the Samuel Zacks Professor of Jewish History at the University of Toronto. His fields of expertise include modern Jewish history, nationality theory and the history of Zionism and Israel. Penslar has written or edited ten books, including *Israel in History: The Jewish State in Comparative Perspective* (2006); *The Origins of the State of Israel 1882-1948: A Documentary History* (with Eran Kaplan, 2011); and *Jews and the Military: A History* (2013). He is currently writing a biography of Theodor Herzl for Yale University Press’ Jewish Lives series. Penslar is co-editor of *The Journal of Israeli History* and serves on the editorial boards of *Israel Studies* and the *Israel Studies Review*. He is an elected fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and the American Academy for Jewish Research. Penslar serves on the Israel Institute’s Advisory Board.
What's Next?

After a summer of conflict, experts offer initial assessments of Israel’s way forward

BY NOA LEVANON KLEIN

The tumultuous summer of 2014 has Israel scrambling to reassess its policy toward the Palestinians and, specifically, Gaza. In the several years leading up to the most recent outbreak of tensions, Israel had an important and consistent policy principle when it came to the Palestinians: Gaza and the West Bank are not the same. Following the election of Hamas to Palestinian parliament in 2006, the group’s subsequent refusal to recognize the State of Israel or previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements and finally its wrestling control of Gaza from Fatah in 2007, Israel adopted a dual approach to the Palestinian issue. In the West Bank, Israel was open to a political solution. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority who govern there were considered moderates with whom Israel could credibly negotiate. Both the centrist government of Ehud Olmert and the right-leaning government of Benjamin Netanyahu met with Abbas and his negotiators over the past seven years. Meanwhile in Gaza, Israel saw a terrorist group dedicated to the destruction of the Jewish State with which it could not negotiate, and chose the strategy of military containment. Because of this perception...
of Hamas, Netanyahu opposed the 2014 reconciliation agreement between Hamas and Fatah aimed at creating a Palestinian unity government.

Summer 2014 complicated matters for Israel on both fronts. Vis-à-vis the West Bank, the reconciliation process between Hamas and Fatah ultimately brought an end to the latest round of U.S.-mediated talks led by Secretary of State John Kerry. Meanwhile, in Gaza, Israel’s strategy of military containment was proving more challenging, as Operation Protective Edge revealed Hamas’ military capabilities to be greater than surmised by the Israeli intelligence community. For instance, while the success of the Iron Dome anti-missile system had helped Israel mitigate the threat of rocket attacks, many experts were surprised by the scope of Hamas’ tunnel network, which opened the possibility for mass casualty events. Taken together, the summer’s events drove a seismic shift in Israel’s perception of its strategy toward the Palestinians, especially in Gaza.

In an interview with the Israel Institute, Maj. Gen. (ret.) Amos Yadlin reflected on Israel’s security in the context of the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The former chief of the Israel Defense Forces’ Military Intelligence Directorate and current director of the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) stated his belief that “a peace agreement is preferable” as a solution to this conflict. However, he highlighted the challenges to achieving an agreement that would be acceptable to Israel from a security perspective.

Yadlin elucidated that “there is a peace that [Israel] can live with, like the Clinton Parameters, which the Palestinians are not accepting” and which takes Israel’s security concerns into account. In contrast, Kerry’s recent proposals are what Yadlin termed a “Palestinian peace – a peace that Israel cannot live with,” because they are seen to prioritize Palestinian demands over Israel’s security needs and leave Israel vulnerable. Compounding this gap between Israeli and Palestinian negotiating positions is Hamas’ anti-Israel stance, which Yadlin argued made any comprehensive peace agreement largely a moot point for now. “You don’t need to be too sophisticated to understand that, as long as Hamas is in charge in Gaza, Abbas can sign an agreement – if he ever decides to sign an agreement with Israel – but it will be shelved until Hamas is controlled [or] implemented only in the West Bank,” he said.

Nonetheless, Yadlin recognized that the status quo is “unsustainable” in the long run. In this security context, Yadlin raised a third option to address the current Israeli-Palestinian impasse: proactive and unilateral disengagement by Israel from portions of the West Bank that would generate conditions to make a future political settlement possible on terms that are feasible to Israel.

At first glance, this position might seem counterintuitive, as critics of Israel’s 2005 disengagement have long pointed to Hamas’ takeover of Gaza as a cautionary tale against further territorial withdrawals. In response, Yadlin contended that “the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza was the strategically right move, however, there were a couple of mistakes that were done in the process and I’m suggesting that we correct them.”

— MAJ. GEN. AMOS YADLIN
Dr. Natan Sachs, a Foreign Policy Fellow at the Brookings Institution’s Center for Middle East Policy, argued that the summer’s conflict affords Israel an opportunity to unravel Hamas’ rule over the territory.

“The Palestinians inside Gaza lack the means to confront Hamas, and without a political process, its rule will continue,” Sachs explained. “Israel should therefore couple the military pressure with a political outlet, by allowing Palestinian politics to take their course. The reconciliation agreement between Hamas and Fatah, though highly distasteful, is the lesser of evils in this case. Tacit Israeli acceptance of Hamas, without international support. “I would hesitate to continue in such a process if the international community is not with us, if they will not support the move as a move that is helping to keep the two-state solution viable,” Yadlin stressed. “If they will continue to say that unilateralism is negative and there is no agreement possible, in my view, they are supporting and enabling the end of the two-state solution.” In the absence of a viable peace agreement, “the international community should support [a unilateral Israeli move] because it keeps the two-state solution viable and it’s better than the status quo.”

Other experts with whom the Institute spoke shared their thoughts on how Israel should move forward from its conflict with Hamas. A common theme was the need to overcome a lack of coherent Palestinian governance.

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— AMBASSADOR DANIEL SHEK

of a bureaucratic government committed to the Quartet principles — as was the government sworn in by Mahmoud Abbas last Spring — could offer a start to unraveling the Hamas stranglehold over Gaza and over southern Israel.”

Dr. Nimrod Goren, founder and chairman of Mitvim — The Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies, concurred with the need to end the split between Hamas and Fatah. Like Sachs, he agreed that Israel should accept the unity government. However, rather than seeing an Abbas-dominated unity government simply as a tool to replace Hamas, Goren believes that Palestinian reconciliation is important in its own right.

The warfare in Gaza this summer, said Goren, “proved the need to engage in conflict resolution, and not just in conflict management.” Because a unified Palestinian leadership is necessary for the two-state solution to be reached and implemented, “Israel should encourage its Western allies to be in touch with both Fatah and Hamas in order to ensure that Israel’s interests are taken into account in the Palestinian reconciliation process, and that this process will be constructive for the peace process,” he said.

Likewise, Ambassador Daniel Shek, an independent consultant and 27-year veteran of Israel’s diplomatic service, suggested that Israel reassess its current approach to Hamas. “I believe it was a mistake for Israel to refuse any contact with the unity government created by the Palestinians just weeks before the fighting broke out. Hamas agreed to its creation from a position of great weakness and [the agreement] could have been an opportunity to bring the Hamas leadership and Gaza itself under the wing of Abbas. At least it was worth calling the bluff, the risk being virtually none,” Shek said.

“I still believe that the only hope that this round of fighting will end with more than merely the restoration of a precarious truce is if, in the wake of a ceasefire, Abbas’ power in Gaza can be restored and Hamas brought to cooperate with him on all fronts — including the peace talks (even if only tacitly),” he added.

Shek drew a historical parallel. “Prior to Oslo, Palestinian leadership underwent a process of political change that allowed them to become partners for peace,” he explained. “Because of that, I was never in the camp that said, ‘We’ll never speak with Hamas.’ It’s difficult to conceive of speaking to Hamas directly, as it is today, because there are no common agendas or overlapping topics for negotiations. However, certain processes for change could take place, which also took place with the PLO in the 1980s, that could create enough of a convergence of the two sides to make negotiations possible.”

Meanwhile, Dr. Jonathan Schanzer, vice president of research at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, suggested another option: “the creation of stronger alternatives to Hamas in the Palestinian political arena.”

As Schanzer explained, “Right now the choices are either Hamas or Fatah. But the corrupt and ossified Fatah faction is currently not strong enough to overtake Hamas, politically or militarily. The key now is to undertake an initiative to prompt the Palestinian political system to evolve to include new parties that have a compelling ideology that is both secular and forward-looking. If done right, the expansion of the Palestinian political arena can weaken Hamas in a meaningful way.”

Regardless of one’s perspective, this summer’s events are challenging the governing consensus on Hamas that has shaped Israel’s policy decisions for nearly a decade. In the coming months and years, Israeli leaders will have to take lessons from this summer’s flare up of hostilities and decide whether they will adjust their policy toward Hamas. ▲
Kibbutz Kfar Giladi, founded in 1916, is located about as far north as you can get in Israel without being in Lebanon. Sequestered in this remote spot – which has borne witness to so many phases of Israel’s development – scholars, policy analysts and artists gathered for two and a half days this past June to talk about Israel Studies. They had come to attend the Israel Institute’s inaugural Leadership Summit, a meeting designed to create a community of Israel Studies experts among practitioners from multiple disciplines and generations.

The Leadership Summit was conceived by the Israel Institute’s Program Director, Dr. Michael Koplow, as a mechanism to acquaint Israel Studies professionals from various specialties with one another and help forge meaningful connections among them. “We felt that the Leadership Summit would provide a relaxed and informal setting to engage in the critical task of building a more cohesive field of Israel Studies,” Koplow said.

The desire to organize the event was rooted in an understanding that, because Israel Studies is an interdisciplinary field, it is inherently fragmented. “One of the challenges of an interdisciplinary field is that most of us become very comfortable within our own academic or scholarly milieu, and being a part of something that is cross-disciplinary is unnerving,” Dr. Ari Roth, the Israel Institute’s Executive Director, explained. Indeed, while there have been multiple successful efforts within the field of Israel Studies to encourage interdisciplinary interactions – such as the Association of Israel Studies’ and European Association of Israel Studies’ annual conventions – such conferences are often organized around a set of thematic panels, which tend to keep participants grouped within their own academic disciplines. The Institute wanted to try something different.

Israel experts from three continents gathered to discuss new research, professional challenges in Israel Studies and critical issues in Israeli domestic and foreign policy at the 2014 Leadership Summit

BY NOA LEVANON KLEIN
“The ambition of the Leadership Summit is to push the boundaries of interdisciplinarity by more or less forcing you to interact – pleasantly – and engage with people who engage with the study of Israel, but with a disciplinary perspective other than your own,” Roth said in his opening remarks at the summit.

Another important objective of the summit was intergenerational interaction. “There are leading luminaries in the field of Israel Studies in this room with whom those of us in younger generations don’t always have the opportunity to study,” Roth pointed out in his introduction. “So we thought that one of the coolest things that we could do is to bring people together from all points of the career spectrum to talk both about research and about broader professional issues, such as career management. “Integrating younger scholars was the most important part of this process for us,” Koplow concurred.

In trying to bring professionals from different generations and backgrounds together, the summit’s goal was about more than sharing information. Rather, Israel Institute’s founding president, Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich, highlighted that it was about “creating a community.”

The summit, comprised of both talks and small group discussions, aimed to foster relaxed and open interactions among the guests in order to maximize interdisciplinary and intergenerational exchanges.

“It was a great comment on the importance and meaning of intergenerational, interdisciplinary, multi-method and transnational thinking,” Professor Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, said of the summit’s format and focus on dialogue.

Among the summit’s activities, noted historian Benny Morris, a professor at Ben-Gurion University, spoke about the academic community’s evolving response over two decades to his publications and those of other Israeli historians known as the “New Historians.” Participants were also privy to a brief lecture on the security challenges in northern Israel, delivered at the Lebanese border by Amb. Rabinovich himself.

In an attempt to ease participants into the more free-flowing approach, the summit’s first few events demonstrated features of a traditional conference, but with a twist. The early breakout sessions, for example, were arranged thematically, grouping participants by academic or professional focus. Unlike a traditional panel or lecture, however, these interactions were more casual, with all participants as equal members of the dialogue. These meetings allowed young scholars to receive feedback about their research topics from seasoned practitioners in their field while exposing senior scholars to projects by their younger colleagues.

The conference’s one formal panel also highlighted the concept of interdisciplinary interactions and featured representatives from academia to the arts. Dr. Martin Kramer, President of Shalem College; Naomi Fortis, Executive Director of Jerusalem Season of Culture; and Professor Ronald Zweig, Director of New York University’s Taub Center for Israel Studies each addressed the challenges within their specific field for Israel-related work, as well as possible mechanisms for overcoming these challenges.

The rest of the summit facilitated prolonged dialogue among diverse groups, tackling cross-disciplinary issues. Roundtables ranged from navigating early
career challenges to fostering continuity in the field of Israel Studies. In one room, policy practitioners and academics from multiple countries and disciplines debated the “Social, Political and Cultural Implications of the Israeli-Diaspora Divide.”

Later workshops, comprised of similarly varied participants, delved directly into Israeli current events and political challenges. Participants discussed Israel’s “Friends and Foes” in a session about Israel’s foreign relations; the “Future of Israel’s Political System” in a workshop dealing with Israeli domestic issues; and questions of international perception and internal identity in a workshop on “Zionism in Our Time.”

From Morris’ lecture to small group sessions, a recurring theme of discussions dealt with the importance of ensuring and maintaining academic rigor in Israel-related research. Senior academics and practitioners, dispensing advice, emphasized the crucial need to hone one’s expertise and advance one’s reputation in a specific scholarly discipline, irrespective of the regional focus on Israel as a topic of study. This approach, while obviously important, did highlight the ongoing challenge of keeping an Israel Studies association at the forefront of individuals’ careers.

At the same time, the cross-disciplinary nature of Israel Studies presented itself as an opportunity, rather than a challenge, when it came to the workshops on Israeli political issues. The range of voices – varied in terms of profession, area of study and age – yielded fascinating and multi-faceted discussions. Ultimately, this seemed to encourage and invigorate participants in their ongoing endeavors in Israel Studies.

“As someone who has been working in the field of Israel Studies for a while, and has witnessed its rapid growth, the Leadership Summit provided a rare and welcome opportunity for me to think broadly about the future development of the field and to share views and experiences with other scholars working in the field,” said Dov Waxman, Professor of Political Science, International Affairs and Israel Studies at Northeastern University.

“It was a success that we managed to do something that was different,” Amb. Rabinovich said in concluding remarks. “People go home with the sense that they participated in something new, different, useful, helpful and I think we are blazing a path now.”
Counter-terrorism and the Courts

What are the varying roles that courts play in counter-terrorism policy? Comparing the Israeli and U.S. Supreme Courts’ approaches to national security law examines this question.

BY SAMUEL RASCOFF

When it comes to policing government counter-terrorism policies, the Israeli court system is not shy about jumping into the fray. Why have American courts largely (though certainly not entirely) avoided direct involvement in the adjudication of controversial counter-terrorism policies, while the Israel Supreme Court has asserted itself forcefully in this domain? For example, unlike American courts, the Israeli court has expressed opinions on the merits of issues ranging from targeted killing to interrogation to the use of so-called “human shields” in military operations. My interest in this critically important question has been sparked by a seminar at New York University Law School that I have twice co-taught with retired Israel Supreme Court President Dorit Beinisch. This course examined national security law in the U.S. and Israel in global perspective. We paid close attention to judicial pronouncements, seeking to tease out their strategic implications through attunement to political and legal institutional life and sensitivity to underlying tradeoffs. For example, judicial interventions potentially curtail the freedom to operate enjoyed by militaries and intelligence services, but they also potentially enhance the public, and perhaps even the international, legitimacy of the underlying activities. Or, more critically, a decisive opinion passing on the legitimacy of a controversial practice might tend to sustain that practice past the point where it pays a strategic dividend.

Examining the role of Israeli courts in counter-terrorism can lead to a broader understanding of the function of national security oversight and the institutions best positioned to provide it. When it comes to the more specific issue of overseeing secretive intelligence agencies, there is a dearth of general comparative legal and
institutional analysis in this area, notwithstanding the importance of the issues that it raises: what sorts of institutions constitute the intelligence oversight ecosystem and what sort of levers do various overseers possess? How much of oversight takes place within various intelligence agencies themselves, carried out by Inspectors General, say, or by agency lawyers? What is the nature of the oversight being practiced? For example, are overseers centrally concerned with detecting or deterring violations of law or are they mainly tasked with inquiring into past intelligence failures with an eye to averting future ones? How does secrecy affect the ability of certain overseers to function in this area?

A question within this larger project that has motivated my recent research on intelligence oversight in the U.S. and Israel is the role that former officials play in this area. American scholars have begun to pay close attention to the centrality of informal actors in constraining national security decision-making, thinking mainly about the press and NGOs. But consideration of the Israeli scene, and in particular of the public criticisms of current policies offered by former intelligence officials like Meir Dagan and Yuval Diskin, caused me to wonder whether the role of former officials in shaping policy can be conceptualized and assessed. For example, Dagan, the former Mossad chief, told 60 Minutes that "an attack on Iran before you are exploring all other approaches is not the right way how to do it." Another powerful example of former officials weighing in on hot-button national security dilemmas is supplied by the sometimes scathing criticism mounted by former directors of the Shin Bet (including Diskin and Ami Ayalon) in the recent documentary The Gatekeepers.

In some ways, former officials are well-positioned to shape decision-making. For one thing, they cannot be written off as know-nothings. At the same time, they are less constrained than current officials to toe an official line. Broadly speaking, they can wield influence in two ways. First, they can constitute an informal network (with hubs at various think tanks, academic institutions, businesses and political bodies). Members of a tight-knit security elite, these former officials are able to intervene with current office-holders or, as the case may be, appeal directly to the public. Former officials can also participate in the oversight of national security more formally. One of the signature institutions in Israeli national oversight is the investigatory committee. The 1987 Landau Commission, which issued proposals on interrogation standards, and the 2010 Turkel Commission, which focused on the legal and policy issues surrounding the Israeli commando raid on the Gaza flotilla, were both headed by former Supreme Court judges. It is not unusual for former security officials to serve on these sorts of bodies as well.

Israel provides an important test case for exploring these issues and formulating policy responses. My working assumption is that some amount of participation by former officials is desirable, and in any event, inevitable. But of course there are also risks involved, especially when former officials air their disagreements with current officials publicly. How should these risks be attended to while not jeopardizing the potential gains? More generally, what theoretical and perhaps even practical lessons for American and other liberal-democratic governments can be extracted from the Israeli experience? In answering these questions and, more holistically, in undertaking to compare American and Israeli national security law and the forces that drive it, I aim to help shape emerging scholarly discussions and to expose a new generation of lawyers to the challenges that this area presents.

FOOTNOTE

1 60 Minutes: The Spymaster: Meir Dagan on Iran’s Threat (CBS television broadcast Sep. 12, 2012).

Samuel Rascoff

Samuel Rascoff is an Associate Professor of Law at New York University’s School of Law, where he teaches and writes in the area of national security law and serves as faculty director of the Center on Law and Security. Prior to NYU, Rascoff served as the director of intelligence analysis at the New York City Police Department. A graduate of Harvard, Oxford and Yale Law School, Rascoff previously served as a law clerk to U.S. Supreme Court Justice David H. Souter and to Judge Pierre N. Leval of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. He was also a special assistant with the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq and an associate at Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz. Rascoff’s publications include “Counterterrorism and New Deterrence” (NYU Law Review); “Establishing Official Islam? The Law and Strategy of Counter-Radicalization” (Stanford Law Review); “Domesticating Intelligence” (Southern California Law Review); and “The Law of Homegrown (Counter-) Terrorism” (Texas Law Review). He received a Faculty Development Grant from the Israel Institute for the 2013-14 academic year to research comparative national security law and comparative intelligence oversight.
NGOs in Conflict
A “Third Actor” and its Effects on Human Rights

BY ORI SWED

As reporters covered the conflict in Gaza this summer, they didn’t rely only on accounts from Israeli military personnel or Palestinian municipal representatives. Almost without fail, articles cited anecdotes and statistics provided by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to round out their picture of a chaotic conflict region. This recognition of NGOs’ involvement in conflict regions is not an isolated incident, and it reflects the phenomenon of the increased influence of such organizations on the ground in recent years.
In the past few decades, NGOs have turned into important players in the global landscape and, in the process, presented a new challenge for military actors. Encompassing a range of local and international groups such as Doctors without Borders, OXFAM and the Red Cross, NGOs have turned into important players in the global landscape, becoming cornerstones in aid and development efforts and maintaining a high presence of workers and affiliates in the field, including in conflict regions. In the process, the NGO sector has become a so-called “third actor” that has presented a real challenge for military actors. Because the nongovernmental sector is structurally divorced from local agendas and politics — despite occasionally getting caught in them — NGOs are able to operate in the field as relatively neutral players and to criticize events from the ground level. Military actors’ attempts to deal with this “third actor” vary. While some, such as the U.S. military, choose an inclusive approach, incorporating nongovernmental organizations into their development efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, others identify the nongovernmental sector as a threat or a challenge.

In the Israeli context, the presence of NGOs in areas of conflict has led to interesting outcomes not only with the direct improvement of the human conditions of those who suffer, but also by applying a strict civilian oversight mechanism over the actors’ behavior and actions. In some cases, we can trace a direct link between NGO presence and a change in the tactical decisions and actions of military actors in the field. Take for example, the nongovernmental organization Machsom Watch, which monitors Israeli soldiers’ behavior at checkpoints across the West Bank. It places civilian observers at the checkpoints to document and record the day-to-day encounters of the local population with the soldiers operating the checkpoints. Its presence and actions apply pressure on the soldiers to behave in accordance with international standards and regulations. It applies a cost for a checkpoint’s existence for the military to consider. In the long run, this pressure may not necessarily translate into top-level decisions to dismantle the checkpoint. However, in the short run, its impact is evident in the soldiers’ behavior and decisions on the ground.

The recent outbreak of violence between Israel and Hamas underscored the significant part the NGO sector plays in areas and times of conflict. NGO efforts dealt with a range of issues, from public opinion to military tactics. For example, nongovernmental reports played an interesting role in the conflict’s narrative framing, with Israeli human rights NGO B’Tselem attempting to promote anti-war discourse in Israeli media by depicting suffering on the Palestinian side. On the ground in Gaza, groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International interviewed Palestinian civilians about their experiences during the operation.

NGOs’ “third party” status and presence on the ground make these organizations increasingly utilized witnesses in the aftermath of military operations.

Ori Swed

Ori Swed is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Texas at Austin and an Israel Institute Doctoral Fellow. His main research area is the interception between culture and conflict in global and historical perspectives. In addition to his dissertation, which examines the influence of NGOs in conflict zones, Swed also researches issues such as military technology, social effects of terror and economies of conflict. His research with Professor John Butler on military capital in the high-tech context is published in Armed Forces & Society. He received his M.A. in History and a dual B.A in History and Sociology from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
operations, as fighting subsides and legal or diplomatic battles begin. Such interactions and their ramifications are the entry point of my dissertation research. Specifically, my study focuses on how the presence and actions of the nongovernmental sector in conflict areas may mitigate human rights violations committed by military actors.

My study addresses this question in three stages, moving from general to particular cases. First, I examine NGO-military relations using a global sample, looking at how the increase in the NGO sector in conflict areas impacts human rights measures. Then, I look at four cases of democracies that deal with low intensity conflicts with autonomy-seeking groups or independence movements. In these four cases, I examine how the presence and actions of nongovernmental actors has impacted human rights violations in each case. The four case studies are: the Protestant insurgency – called “The Troubles” – in Northern Ireland against Britain; the Basque insurgency in Spain; the last decade’s wave of Islamic insurgency of Boko Haram and other groups in northern Nigeria; and the Jewish insurgency in British Palestine against colonial rule. All of these cases feature democracies fighting separatists in low intensity conflicts, yet each case highlights different conditions of NGO presence and influence. Finally, in the last part of the dissertation, I examine the contemporary Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an in-depth case study. Here I observe how the dynamics of nongovernmental actors and combatants translate to the field and, specifically, how the presence and actions of certain NGOs influence military actors and their tactical decisions at particular junctures in time.

This study's importance derives from its direct link to conflict mitigation and peace building. At a minimum, it attempts to tie together both a significant policy tool – the NGO sector – and an urgent policy matter – the violation of human rights in conflict areas. But moreover, it aims to highlight the large scope of possible nongovernmental influence, beyond what has been perceived as the traditional impact of NGOs. The nongovernmental sector's role in policy implementation in conflict and non-conflict areas has been marked as an important policy instrument, but one that is associated mostly with the term and policy approach of so-called “soft power.” This study's goal is not only to supplement an additional layer to the literature on soft power by analyzing nongovernmental organizations, but also to reveal the mechanism by which this power operates in the field and intersects with governments’ hard power. In this way, the study aspires to inform policy makers about the nature of nongovernmental instruments and actors, their limitations and their points of strength.
Walking the Land

Tracing the evolution of Israel’s trail system illuminates important historical and political trends.

BY DR. SHAY RABINEAU

My area of scholarly interest is hiking trails, and yes, I realize that this makes me one of the luckiest academics in the world. Contrary to what many people assume, however, my research does not consist primarily of taking walks outdoors. For me, as a non-Jew and a non-Israeli who had traveled the country as a tourist, and had even worked for a Holy Land tour operator, hiking was an entry point that allowed me to see dimensions of the country not normally visible to outsiders. Hiking lies close to the foundation of what it means to be Israeli. Since the early days of the Zionist movement, the act of “walking the land” has been understood to forge bonds between Jewish youth and the Jewish homeland, and hiking continues to be used in the same way today.

My current book project is a history that describes how Jewish immigrants to Palestine encountered a web of unpaved paths that crisscrossed Palestine and used them to articulate their own relationship with the land they knew as Eretz Israel, or the Land of Israel – the Jewish homeland. Over time, they concretized
developed a rich literature on hiking as it relates to collective memory and commemorative sites in Israel, few have examined the directions hiking has gone since the early days of Israeli statehood and the degree to which trails still affect (and reflect) Israelis’ understanding of their relationship with their home country. There is much here to explore: one need only look at the frequency with which trails and even trail markings appear in songs, films and popular literature to see the depth with which walking the land is still embedded in the Israeli psyche. David Grossman’s recent bestselling novel *To the End of the Land* is but one example: in the book, Shvil Israel, or Israel National Trail, and its iconic orange-blue-white blazes serve as devices for exploring deep personal and existential themes.

The history of Israel’s hiking trails reflects surrounding social and political changes in the region, and hiking trails can offer insights both into Israeli society and its conflicts with the Palestinians and with neighboring Arab states. The act of walking the land was only one of many mechanisms in the Zionist nation-building project that gave Jewish youth a sense of connection with their old-new country. At the same time, though, it was one of the only mechanisms that imbued youth with the type of knowledge that would enable them to fight for the country. Already in the early 1930s, hikers affiliated with the underground Haganah defense organization were taking the offensive in exploring Palestine and asserting Jewish presence within it. In 1934, for example, a group of nineteen-year-olds loaded their packs with food, water and illegal guns, and walked all the way around the Dead Sea.

After the 1936-1939 Arab Revolt, hiking and military reconnaissance became intertwined. Groups of Jewish hikers would venture into Arab-controlled territory and record the locations of villages, bridges, wells, fences and other features that would be important in case of full-scale conflict for control of the country. Hiking served as a cover for paramilitary training activities, and the guides of the youth movements became the elite scouts of the Palmach. Those scouts, who were regarded as knowing more about the land than anyone else, were also regarded as more capable of fighting for the land than anyone else. They became culture heroes for the whole Yishuv and inspired subsequent waves of Israeli youth to explore the new boundaries of the country after statehood.

Shay Rabineau is an Israel Institute post-doctoral fellow, currently conducting research as a Scholar-in-Residence in the Department of Geography at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Shay’s continuing research about hiking trails seeks to explore how hiking and trail marking operate in the service of nation-building, and how both constitute claims over contested land in the Middle East. He holds a Ph.D. from Brandeis University.
Most of Israel’s most famous military leaders were hikers long before they were soldiers. They had been steeped in the culture of exploration originally created by the early Zionist pioneers and they expressed their connection to Eretz Israel in terms of a deep love. Their knowledge of the land was described in Hebrew as “yedi’at ha-aretz,” which played on the biblical term for the intimate knowledge that existed between lovers. As they poured out their wanderlust and explored the country’s farthest reaches, they wrote descriptions of the land that often verged on the erotic. They cast themselves as lovers and the land as the beloved, and they jealously guarded the relationship.

This mentality continued into the first decades of Israeli statehood, when the elite hikers of the youth movements continued to fill the ranks of the elite units of the IDF. Long before Israeli military commando Meir Har-Zion was described by Moshe Dayan as the finest fighter in Jewish history, he was famous for his clandestine hikes into enemy territory to visit places like Petra.

After Israel’s victory in 1967, the country became more affluent, and the world became more open, so young people increasingly began traveling overseas. Then, following Israelis’ disillusionment with the Labor Party in the wake of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Labor Zionist culture of hiking and exploration lost what little glamour it had left. Overseas backpacking became all the rage for young men and women, and even though students and families still walked Israel’s trails, trail planners knew that hiking needed to become exciting again. Trails were marked and mapped around the Mount Carmel area, giving people easy options for day trips and weekend hikes. Building on that impulse to make hiking safe, accessible and interesting for larger numbers of Israelis, trail planners began developing the cross-country Israel National Trail during the 1980s. Today that trail is the crown jewel of Israeli hiking and a rite of passage for youth that many Israelis now take for granted. And the ever-changing route of that trail serves as an indicator of the types of land use issues that exist in a country with a high population and limited resources.

While Israel has changed a great deal since pre-independence days, many of the mechanisms founded by early Zionists to inculcate young Jewish men and women with a deep love for the homeland are still in place today. Virtually every Jewish Israeli becomes familiar at a young age with the shape and character of the country through the tradition of the annual school hike. Some schools set up their annual hikes in such a way that by the time students graduate, they have walked the entire length of the country on the Israel National Trail. As recent events have illustrated, the young generation of Israelis is just as devoted as previous generations have been to protecting the integrity of the homeland and keeping its boundaries secure.

When I first embarked on my exploration of the history of Israeli trails, I wondered whether I would ever find enough material for a viable scholarly study. It quickly became apparent, however, that I had found an embarrassment of riches. Now that I am aware of the deep imprint hiking has left on Israeli society and on the country’s physical landscape, I see it everywhere. My study on the history of the trail network is, I hope, only a foundation for much more work on the subject. Whole dissertations could be written on hiking songs, hiking and the military, hiking and environmental activism and many other topics. How far I will choose to pursue this specific topic as a scholar of Israeli history and geography has yet to be seen, but in any case, I look forward to where other scholars will go, and how a better understanding of “walking the land” will shape our understanding of modern Israel.
Universal Language of Dance

The Israel Institute speaks with choreographers Niv Sheinfeld and Oren Laor, who spent several months at Rutgers University this past year as Schusterman Visiting Israeli Artists.
IIM: How did you first become interested in dance and choreography? Were there any performances that particularly inspired you?

SHEINFELD: I started late for a dancer, at age 18. I began working with the Liat Dror & Nir Ben Gal Company [in Israel]. Before that, I was a gymnast. I never really got into classical dance – ballet doesn’t really speak to me. I love [German modern dance performer and choreographer] Pina Bausch, especially her piece Nelken (Carnations).

LAOR: I actually had a background in theater. Of course I’d done what is called “movement training” while studying drama but I did not have a traditional dance background. I got involved in dancing only after getting to know Niv, in my thirties. He wanted my help, by using dramaturgy, to lighten a piece he was working on, called Covariance. It was a really great experience and led to increased cooperation and eventually the collaboration that we have now.

In terms of inspiration, I love DV8, a British group that does what is called physical theater. And I agree that Pina Bausch is very inspirational. She really revolutionized the field because her performers were not dancers but rather people who dance. What I mean is, they were good dancers, very well trained, but you really saw them as people.

IIM: Speaking of students, could you speak a bit more about your experience on a college campus? Which elements did you find unique or surprising?

SHEINFELD: Well, the winter in New Jersey was extremely surprising for us – so much snow! But, in terms of the students, we ended up putting up a show with more students than we expected. We auditioned around a hundred. We thought to take 7 or 8 students, but ended up taking 17 because we felt that they were so eager to engage with our project and we wanted to give a chance to as many people as we could.

LAOR: I was really impressed by the students. They are really hard workers. They’re not lazy. They’re not precious. They’re serious. They came to absorb something, to receive something. You feel like there’s an enthusiasm in the dialogue about new cultures and new ideas.

IIM: How did you feel that your choreography translated to American or non-Israeli audiences?

LAOR: Translating our dance to an American stage was a very positive experience. At Rutgers, where we led students in putting on a performance of Runway, the audience went crazy. We got amazing feedback. They were not used to humor in dance, to experimental dance, for example, where the notion of what is beautiful and what should be acceptable is being constantly challenged. It was very well received.

SHEINFELD: Yeah, Runway went very well. It’s interesting because it was, in a way, a reaction to more conventional dance that you see in the United States. It was shocking for Rutgers students to learn about the genre of body research, of less choreographed dance. This type of genre is very visible in contemporary Western European dance but it’s rare in the U.S., and the students really responded well to this type of exploration with us. Unexpectedly, when we put on a version of the same show in Tel Aviv, with Israelis of the same age, the Israelis were a bit reserved. They opened up more slowly than the American students did.

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IIM: Have there been any new collaborations or opportunities that arose from your time at Rutgers?

SHEINFELD: It was much easier to bring us to perform in North America when we were based at Rutgers. We performed in San Francisco and Toronto. We performed at the Nasher Museum of Art [at Duke University].

Niv Sheinfeld and Oren Laor in a performance of their original piece, Two Room Apartment.
University]. We had several performances in New York, such as at the Abrons Arts Center downtown and at the 92nd St. Y.

LAOR: In addition to performing more, we also made connections as choreographers. Randy James, a faculty member at Rutgers who runs [the New Jersey repertory company] 10 Hairy Legs will be performing Covariance, our original collaborative dance project, at NY Live Arts in June 2015. It will be interesting to see how that goes. It’s a big thing for us for an American company to buy our work and premier it in New York.

Also, Joanna Rosenthal, the artistic manager of the Chicago-based dance company, SPDW, contacted us to create a new work for her company. The company will be coming to Israel for a short residency to work with us and after that we will go to Chicago to complete the work.

IIM: What challenges have you faced as Israelis performing abroad?

LAOR: In Santiago, Chile, which has a large Palestinian community, there was a small demonstration outside the theater, with a picket sign and a megaphone. We were considered persona non grata. I think part of the issue was that the show was advertised as being sponsored by the Israeli embassy, so it was perceived as being government-affiliated, rather than just Israelis performing.

SHEINFELD: On the other hand, we had a show in England where it wasn’t associated with the embassy but they wouldn’t take Israeli artists. We were meant to perform at festivals in Brighton and Nottingham and, two weeks before the show, the theater – not the festival – in Brighton refused to take us because we were Israeli. It’s really ironic because the pieces we meant to perform focus on humanity and on the complexity of the human condition. It’s not as if Israelis are some sort of monolithic entity.

IIM: So it seems that people project the Israeli label on to you. In your personal opinion, what do you think makes Israeli art “Israeli”?

SHEINFELD: Israeli art is art that was created in Israel. National identity is a very individual thing and it depends on the artist’s personal perception. I think that living here, with all of the complexity, and living in this tempestuous region of the Middle East, isn’t simple. When we define ourselves as people who live here, then it’s Israeli art. That said, I prefer to think of us as humans and then Israelis. The Israeliness arrives after the humanity.

LAOR: Israeli contemporary dance has a very strong reputation around the globe. Of course not too many Israeli choreographers reach international audiences, but those who do leave a mark. I think this is because they’re known for their straightforwardness – they don’t apologize for themselves, they cut through the issues, they raise the not so comfortable questions. Let’s not talk about love and flowers when the issue is war. If the issue is war, let’s talk about war.

IIM: In what ways do you feel that your Israeli identity is expressed through your performances?

LAOR: We take our materials from the stuff around us and that’s Israel. Big Mouth, for example, has aspects of Israeli dance; the music is Israeli and contains Hebrew. But the themes are broad. It expresses the conflict between the individual and the collective, the tension between wanting to belong versus wanting to find your own voice. So it’s a universal theme, but the dough is created from what we know from our surroundings.

When we first staged that show, we assumed it would not leave Israel. But we ended up taking it abroad and it was very successful in Europe. We held many post-show talks to discuss the work and we were happy to discover that audiences found it very universal.

SHEINFELD: I think this is the benefit of dance as a medium. It’s not textual. The language is universal – it’s body language. So there’s an ability to be universal. Of course, the surroundings and society and the reality you’re in, they have a certain energy that enters the work. The Israeliness comes through because the art form is a kind of mirror.

▲ Students at Rutgers perform Sheinfeld and Laor’s dance piece, Runway.
The recent political developments in Israel have been dominated by religious concerns. Whether it be violence directed at alleged religious heresy in places such as Beit Shemesh or the ongoing controversy over women’s prayer at the Western Wall, the widely held perception is of a country where secular conduct, let alone secular values, are increasingly under threat. Professor Guy Ben-Porat’s *Between State and Synagogue: The Secularization of Contemporary Israel* challenges this popular view in arguing that Israel has in fact been undergoing a steady process of secularization since the 1980s driven by a confluence of factors that are unlikely to abate.

Ben-Porat’s argument hinges upon the distinction between the ideology of secularism and the process of secularization, the latter defined as a decline in religious authority and its hold over public life. The secularization process is driven, according to Ben-Porat, not only by ideology but also by socioeconomic changes that affect institutions and create opportunities for secular development. Secularization happens in the course of normal practices of everyday life when people who do not think of themselves as necessarily secular nonetheless engage in activities that violate religious codes. Thus, secularization is a result of a set of complex processes – economic growth, consumerism, globalization – that interact with each other to create institutional change through alternative political channels outside the formal political sphere.

Ben-Porat contends that the consensus on public religion in Israel was challenged in the 1980s by a combination of three factors: newfound Israeli consumerism driven by globalization and neoliberal economic reforms; the mass absorption of one million immigrants from the former Soviet Union between 1989 and 2000; and the emergence of cultural, religious and...
spiritual alternatives to Orthodox Judaism. Prior to the 1980s, the hegemony of religious institutions had held strong due to a desire to accommodate the Orthodox community as part of social prioritization of state-building and national consensus. Once these three other factors emerged, the political system was not equipped to handle the pressure for change and slow transformations began to take place that led to secularization.

Ben-Porat painstakingly traces this process by examining four issues – marriage, burial, pork and commerce on the Sabbath – that he asserts show secularization at work. These areas are all characterized by a loosening in recent decades of religious strictures mandating adherence to Orthodox practice and a new arrangement in which religious law has been routinely circumvented by those wishing to do so. In all four instances, Ben-Porat lays out a pattern of a consensus status quo undermined by consumerism, Soviet immigrants and non-Orthodox Jewish alternatives, and new secularization measures designed by what he calls secular entrepreneurs that take advantage of these demographic and cultural changes to alter the status quo. As Ben-Porat writes (p.57), “secularization advanced by actions, small and large, that circumvented the status quo rather than directly challenging it.” The four case studies stand out as a particular strength of the book given their exhaustive detail and comprehensive history, and Ben-Porat does a superb job in breaking down the contributions of the various structural forces and actors that altered the previous institutional arrangements.

Despite his comprehensively convincing theory as to how secularization has made strides in Israel since the 1980s, some of Ben-Porat’s conclusions are open to challenge. While he attempts to measure the influence of his three main variables in each case, it is clear from his own recounting of history that Soviet immigrants play an outsized role in this secularization story. This overreliance opens the question of how much secularism as an ideology should be downplayed in this story of institutional change. Ben-Porat’s description of secularization being driven by people who do not necessarily think of themselves as secular does not quite fit the case of many Soviet immigrants, who are indeed ardently self-defined secularists. As such, his differentiating Soviet immigrants from veteran Israelis by emphasizing their traditional, ethnocentric and conservative nature rather than their more ideological secularism seems a bit like a case of trying to fit a square example into a round theory. In addition, his pointing to the growth of the Conservative and Reform movements in Israel and New Age streams of Judaism as a primary factor in non-ideological secularization is problematic for two reasons: first, these groups are still relatively small and he overstates their influence, and second, their opposition to the Orthodox monopoly on religious life in Israel is certainly ideological in its own way even though it is not based in secularism.

Ben-Porat’s examples also demonstrate the practical limitations of his overall theory. There is no doubt that secularization is occurring, but his studies of the relaxation of limitations on eating and serving pork and of shopping on the Sabbath fit more neatly into his institutional pattern than the issues of marriage and burial. Despite cataloguing a bevy of efforts to make civil marriage and other alternatives to Orthodox marriage more widespread, Ben-Porat’s own figures show that only 4% of Israelis utilize cohabitation or common law marriage and that only 750 Israeli weddings a year take place in Cyprus (the destination of choice for Israelis seeking to marry outside of the rabbinate), so evidence of actual secularization on this front seems thin. On the issue of burial, the push for civil burial was alleviated by the 1996 passage of the Law for Alternative Civil Burial, so this case does not neatly conform to Ben-Porat’s model of actions outside of formal political arenas circumventing the status quo. Rather, it was a direct challenge resolved by the Knesset. Furthermore, in the cases of both marriage and burial, the economic pressures were negligible, leading one to conclude that secularization efforts have resulted almost entirely from the Soviet immigrant factor.

A better explanation may be one that Ben-Porat sets out himself in his conclusion when he categorizes and then discusses three different sources of secularization: ideological secularism, driven by non-Orthodox movements; demographic secularism, driven by the influx of Russian immigrants; and secularization of everyday life, driven by economic changes. Perhaps the success of secularization is predicated on the presence of all three sources, explaining why the process has occurred to a greater degree with regard to kashrut and the Sabbath, where it has been driven by all three sources, in contrast to the more limited successes with marriage and burial – issues that are most tied to demographic secularism but are less subject to the secularization of everyday life.

Overall, Between State and Synagogue is a welcome contribution to studies of religion and secularism in Israel and institutional change more generally. Ben-Porat’s research is illuminating in its own right while also leading to a set of questions for future scholars to tackle.

In June 2014, the Israel Institute was a co-sponsor of the Association for Israel Studies’ (AIS) annual international convention, which took place in Sde Boker, Israel. During the convention, the joint Israel Institute-AIS academic awards were announced. The Lifetime Achievement Award was given to Professor Yosef Gorny, head of the Zionist Research Institute at Tel Aviv University. Dr. Omri Herzog, an artist, cultural commentator and lecturer at Sapir Academic College in Israel, received the Young Scholar Award.

The Institute has also helped sponsor multiple international conferences hosted by universities across America. These include a 40th anniversary retrospective conference at the University of Texas in October 2013, which explored the historical, political and sociological repercussions of the Yom Kippur War; a conference at Northwestern University in November 2013 on the cultural role of Zionism, entitled “The Zionist Ideal in Israeli Culture: Dream and Reality”; and a conference at Brandeis University in April 2014 on the impact of the Holocaust on Israeli arts, politics, society and identity, entitled “The Shoah in Israeli Culture, Memory and Politics.”
Advancing Hebrew Literature and Culture

In an effort to create greater exposure in the humanities to Hebrew literature and culture, the Israel Institute supports Dibur, a new peer-reviewed online journal for Hebrew and Jewish literature. Dibur is being launched under the auspices of Arcade, Stanford University’s Open Access “digital salon” for online publications in literature and the humanities. Editors Professor Vered Shemtov of Stanford and Professor Anat Weisman of Ben-Gurion University are working on an inaugural issue, expected in Summer 2015.

The Israel Institute, partnering with the Jewish philanthropic organization Natan, brought renowned Israeli journalist Ari Shavit to ten top U.S. campuses in early 2014. Shavit gave talks at Brandeis, Harvard, Columbia, American, Georgetown, Johns Hopkins, Maryland, UCLA, Stanford and UC Berkeley on the important relationship between Israel and American Jews, as well as other themes from his celebrated book, My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel. At Harvard and American, Jeffrey Goldberg, a columnist for the Atlantic and Bloomberg, joined Shavit for panels on these topics.

INTRODUCING STEINHARDT-ISRAEL INSTITUTE INTERNS

We are pleased to introduce the first class of the Steinhardt-Israel Institute interns. This internship, which pairs recent college graduates with leading Israeli think tanks, provides unique opportunities for young scholars to immerse themselves in Israel-relevant work and gain experience in Israel-related research. Our interns for the 2014-2015 academic year:

- Reuben Berman has a joint degree in Ancient History and Talmud from Columbia and the Jewish Theological Seminary. His research interests include Israel’s legal development, Israeli-diaspora relations and Haredi-secular relations in Israel. He is interning at the Reut Institute in Tel Aviv.
- Tova Cohen studied Political Science and Jewish Studies at the University of Colorado in Boulder. She is interested in Israeli domestic politics and wrote her undergraduate thesis on African asylum seekers in Israel. She will be at the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Jerusalem.
- The Moshe Dayan Center in Tel Aviv has matched with Linda Dayan (no relation). A graduate of Bard College with a focus in Middle East Studies and Written Arts, Linda is especially interested in minority communities in the Middle East and Sephardic/Mizrahi communities in Israel.
- Caroline Kahlenberg is a History grad from Middlebury, with a minor in Gender Studies. She is interested in majority-minority relations and the ultra-Orthodox sector in Israel, with a focus on gender in observant communities. She is working with the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies.
- Maya Kornberg has a B.A. from Stanford University in International Relations with a focus on the Middle East, and is pursuing a Masters of Public Administration at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs. She is working at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv.
- Uri Sadot, who holds a B.A. from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a M.A. from Princeton University and Sorbonne University, is interning at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv. His research focus is on international relations and national security.
### Our Fellows Around the Globe

Curious to know where our junior and senior fellows will be conducting their research this upcoming year?

#### 2014-15 Doctoral Fellows

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Institution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yemima Cohen</td>
<td>Hebrew University of Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Eastwood</td>
<td>School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oded Erez</td>
<td>UCLA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anat Goldman</td>
<td>University of Washington</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elyakim Kislev</td>
<td>Columbia University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Susanna Klosko</td>
<td>Brandeis University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yael Lifshitz Goldberg</td>
<td>New York University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nimrod Lin</td>
<td>University of Toronto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason Olson</td>
<td>Brandeis University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elad Popovich</td>
<td>Haifa University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anne Sophie Sebban</td>
<td>Sorbonne University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ori Swed</td>
<td>University of Texas at Austin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marc Volovici</td>
<td>Princeton University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zehavit Zaslansky</td>
<td>Cambridge University</td>
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#### 2014-15 Post-Doctoral Fellows

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Ofra Amihay</td>
<td>Georgetown University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Tali Artman-Partock</td>
<td>Cambridge University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johannes Becke</td>
<td>Oxford University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Cameron Brown</td>
<td>Hebrew University of Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Kfir Cohen</td>
<td>UC Davis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Liat Eldor</td>
<td>Wharton Business School, University of Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Roey Gafter</td>
<td>Tel Aviv University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Randall Geller</td>
<td>University of Toronto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Reut Itzkovitch Malka</td>
<td>Stanford University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Sebastian Klor</td>
<td>University of Texas at Austin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Lior Libman</td>
<td>University College London</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Daniel Mahla</td>
<td>Berlin Technical University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Liora Norwich</td>
<td>Brandeis University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Shani Oppenheimer Weller</td>
<td>University of Colorado</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Shay Rabineau</td>
<td>Hebrew University of Jerusalem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Yoatan Saigiv</td>
<td>SOAS, University of London</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Gidon Ticotsky</td>
<td>Stanford University</td>
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<td>Dr. Sharon Weinblum</td>
<td>Oxford University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Shaya Weiss</td>
<td>Bar Ilan University</td>
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<td>Dr. Simon Williams</td>
<td>Harvard University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Albert Wolf</td>
<td>Hebrew University of Jerusalem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Rona Yona</td>
<td>New York University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Hila Zaban</td>
<td>SOAS, University of London</td>
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*Supported in partnership with the Haruv Institute*

#### 2014-2015 Faculty Exchanges

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Prof. Oren Barak</td>
<td>Cornell University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prof. Yuval Ben-Bassat</td>
<td>UC Berkeley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prof. Ariel Bendor</td>
<td>University of Maryland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prof. Moshe Maor</td>
<td>New York University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prof. Benjamin Miller</td>
<td>Dartmouth University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prof. Ronen Perry</td>
<td>Oxford University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prof. Sammy Smooha</td>
<td>New York University</td>
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### China-Israel Studies

The Israel Institute, in partnership with Israeli and American think tanks, spent several months this past year studying Sino-Israel relations. Since December 2013, three forum meetings have taken place, each dealing with a different crucial aspect of this relationship. These gatherings – such as the trilateral meeting in Washington, D.C., in February 2014 cohosted by the Institute, the Brookings Institution and the Institute for National Security Studies in Israel (INSS) – brought together members of the governmental, business, non-profit and academic sectors. Small group meetings between forum participants are planned for this upcoming year in order to facilitate joint research projects. The Institute hopes to cohost another trilateral meeting in the 2015-16 academic year. This project was made possible by the generous support of the Guilford & Diane Glazer Foundation.

### Start-Up Nation

The Israel Institute, in cooperation with Start-Up Nation Central (SNC), launched a new program designed to present and analyze Israel’s unique role as the Start-Up Nation. As part of this program, Tel Aviv University’s Recanati Business School hosted several distinguished business professors from around the world at a one-week seminar in Israel this past June. The event, which served as an introduction to Israeli entrepreneurship and innovation, included visits to Israeli companies and meetings with leading Israeli researchers and businesspeople. The program was made possible thanks to substantial support by the Paul E. Singer Foundation. Similar programs are scheduled to take place this upcoming fall, spearheaded by the Technion and the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya (IDC).
NEW SCHOLARLY WORK

Make sure not to miss Dr. Jonathan Gribetz’s new book, *Defining Neighbors: Religion, Race, and the Early Zionist-Arab Encounter*, being published this fall by Princeton University Press. Gribetz, an assistant professor at Princeton University, was the recipient of an Israel Institute book grant.
The Israel Institute works in partnership with leading academic, research and cultural institutions to enhance knowledge and study of modern Israel in the United States and around the world. In pursuit of this mission, the Israel Institute supports a diverse range of programs, listed below.

**DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS**
The Institute offers fellowships to Ph.D. students in advanced stages of their doctoral process, who are researching and writing their dissertation on a topic related to Israel or incorporating Israel as a case study. Successful candidates reflect the Institute’s goal of advancing the study and understanding of modern Israel, and address issues of contemporary, historical or cultural importance.

**POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS**
The Institute offers post-doctoral fellowships to highly qualified recent Ph.D.s who are working on Israel-focused topics and who are developing courses on modern Israel. The fellowship appointments are for up to two years and open to academics in a range of fields and departments. Fellows teach classes in Israel Studies and develop their dissertations into books. The Institute seeks promising scholars who can teach about Israel effectively while carrying out an innovative research agenda.

**FACULTY EXCHANGES AND TEACHING FELLOWSHIPS**
The Institute assists in fostering academic exchanges involving senior academics and policy experts between campuses in the U.S., Israel and Europe. Among other initiatives, the Institute has sent professors during the past and current academic years to Princeton University, Cornell University, Dartmouth University, New York University, the University of Pennsylvania and the Lille Institute of Political Science (Sciences Po Lille).

**RESEARCH GRANTS**
The Institute offers grants for scholars, academics and independent researchers to conduct substantive research on issues related to modern Israel. Areas of study include, but are not limited to, Israeli history, politics, economics and law. Grants are aimed at facilitating the research and writing of books or scholarly articles that make a serious contribution to the field of Israel Studies or promote a greater understanding of modern Israel.

**FACULTY DEVELOPMENT GRANTS**
The Institute offers grants that enable faculty members to develop new courses in Israel Studies. Designed for professors who have some knowledge of Israel but not enough to teach a course in the field, the program is also an opportunity to travel to Israel, hone language skills and take part in any other activities that will assist in developing and teaching Israel Studies courses.
**MONOGRAPH SERIES**
The Institute commissions scholars to write academic books on topics related to Israel that will fill gaps in the field of Israel Studies. The Institute also subsidizes works on Israel that already have been accepted for publication by an academic press.

**ACADEMIC CONFERENCES**
The Institute convenes and co-sponsors academic conferences devoted to the study of Israel and related topics. Each October, the Institute organizes its own conference on major issues and developments in the field of Israel Studies. The Institute is also a supporter of the Association for Israel Studies’ annual conventions, as well as academic conferences at other institutions. The Israel Institute has supported such conferences at Northwestern University, Brandeis University and other institutions.

**ANNUAL PUBLIC FORUM**
The Institute sponsors an annual public lecture or panel discussion featuring prominent figures discussing contemporary Israel-related topics. The event is designed to serve as a high-level forum for policy experts, and an opportunity for them to convene and exchange diverse perspectives.

**ACADEMIC PRIZES**
In collaboration with the Association for Israel Studies (AIS), the Institute co-sponsors two annual prizes that are awarded at the AIS annual convention: a lifetime achievement award and an award for young scholars.

**ENGLISH-LANGUAGE STUDY ABROAD SCHOLARSHIPS**
The Institute offers competitive, partial scholarships to college and graduate students who are accepted to attend English-language Israel Studies programs at Israeli universities.

**INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS**
The Israel Institute matches young scholars with top think tanks and research institutions in Israel and the United States for a period of a few months to a year. These internships grant college students and recent college graduates access to a broad community of scholars and policy practitioners, while providing important work experience.

**THINK TANK COLLABORATIONS**
The Institute supports senior visiting fellows at leading think tanks. The Institute also supports younger scholars as research assistants, which gives them a firsthand opportunity to work in the policy community and to make vital connections with leading intellectuals outside of their academic institutions.

**SCHUSTERMAN VISITING ARTIST PROGRAM**
One of the largest organized residency programs of Israeli artists ever to launch in the United States, the Israel Institute’s Schusterman Visiting Artist Program brings Israeli artists from various disciplines – including visual art, film, music and choreography – to North America, where they reside for two to four months at some of the nation’s most esteemed universities. To date, 60 artists have participated in this program. The program’s objective is to foster high levels of interaction between the Israeli artists-in-residence and the local communities where they are based, through classes, lectures, exhibitions, screenings, readings and performances.

**TRANSLATION PROJECT**
The Israel Institute supports an annual translation project in order to increase international access and exposure to modern Hebrew literature. Through the translation of recently published Israeli books into English, the project creates a global platform to showcase the work of promising Israeli writers and expand the reach of Israeli arts and culture abroad.

For details about any of these programs, please refer to our website: [www.israelinstitute.org](http://www.israelinstitute.org)

**DONORS**
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Director of Arts and Cultural Programs: Marge Goldwater
Program Officer: Noa Levanon Klein
Program Coordinator: Jill Wyler
Office Manager: Kerren Marcus
ABOUT THE ISRAEL INSTITUTE

The ISRAEL INSTITUTE works in partnership with leading academic, research and cultural institutions to enhance knowledge and study of modern Israel in the United States and around the world. Founded in 2012 as an independent, nonpartisan organization based in Washington, D.C. and Tel Aviv, the Institute supports scholarship, research and exchanges to empower the growth of a multi-faceted field of Israel Studies and expand opportunities to explore the diversity and complexity of contemporary Israel.

The Israel Institute provides programs for emerging and senior scholars to encourage new scholarship, facilitate the development of new courses and expand learning opportunities. The Institute is dedicated to promoting new research on Israel and showcasing Israeli literature, arts and culture. The Institute also provides unique opportunities for exceptional college students and graduates to immerse themselves in Israel-relevant work and gain experience in Israel-related research through valuable internship experiences. We invite you to learn more at www.israelinstitute.org or call us at 202.289.1431 for more information.

ISRAEL INSTITUTE

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