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Israel
(Medinat Yisrael)

GAD BARZILAI

Ever since the November 1988 parliamentary (Knesset) elections and the formation of a National Unity Government in December of that year, the Israeli political system had to contend with a succession of major problems. Some of these were partly legacies from the past; others cropped up as the consequence of developments during the course of 1989 in Israel, in the Middle East generally, and in other parts of the world. The most significant sociopolitical events in Israel itself were those directly associated with the ongoing occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Palestinian uprising in the territories, which had erupted in December 1987, continued to impair the smooth functioning of daily life within Israel proper. Continuous attempts to minimize that damage, by suppressing the Intifada and restoring normalcy and order to the territories, dominated the Israeli political agenda during 1989.

The year, however, also witnessed a number of other important events, all of which deserve analysis. This chapter, therefore, discusses the Israeli political setting in its different dimensions.