PREFACE

I started working on this book in the spring of 2000. At that time, the political atmosphere in Israel seemed calm. My biggest concern was about the possible results of an evacuation of Jewish settlements from Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip as part of a possible progress in the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. I was worried that the ideological rift between the different segments of Israeli society would manifest itself again in a violent way and that the events of 1994–95, which led to the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin could repeat themselves. Furthermore, I hoped that this time the Israeli State would use in its response to the growing wave of extremism measures that would not only be effective but would comply with the democratic nature of the State.

During the months in which I was doing the research for this book, two things happened simultaneously. First, the political reality in Israel, and later in other parts of the world, shifted dramatically and the question of how democracies should respond to challenges of extremism and violence became less of a theoretical issue and much more of an acute problem for policy-makers. Second, the more I studied the ‘defending democracy’ concept the better I understood that this term is much broader and more diversified than I first imagined. In light of the issues involved, I sincerely hope that this book will contribute not only to the theoretical understanding of the means by which democracies can respond to extremist and violent challenges and still adhere to democratic principles. I hope that it will also encourage policy-makers to take into consideration the different aspects and possible consequences of their policies and help them choose the ‘immunised’ route. Though this route requires more time and effort than the ‘militant’ one, it holds the potential for finding the ‘golden path’ in the defence of democracy from its challengers as well as from itself.

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