

## Call for Participation/Papers

For contributions to the work on a  
Special Issue of *Theory & Criticism*

Guest editor: Julia Lerner and Inna Leykin

# This Is Not Russia Here?! Emotions and Citizenship in Societies in Turmoil. Between Russia and Israel

In Israel, up until very recently, a few who dared to compare the political and civil processes happening in Israel with Russia were met with a wink and a raised eyebrow – “*This is not Russia, after all!*” Over the last two years, however, such comparisons have become a commonplace. Russia’s full-scale invasion of sovereign Ukraine in February 2022 prompted attempts to compare the national projects of territorial control, occupation and military takeover. Moreover, during the first year of mass protests against the judicial reform initiated by the Israeli government, the political coalition’s strategies were compared to what was occurring in several Eastern European nations, withdrawing from the democratic order. In these comparisons, the Russian case was the warning sign, marking the last stop on the road to ultimate dictatorship. Since October 2023, both Russia and Israel have been engaged in ongoing, bloody and prolonged wars, which, to a varying degree, involved changes in media culture and the use of the ongoing war as an instrument of social control. Tightening the grip on and restricting civil liberties of citizens went hand in hand with social and political efforts to normalize everyday life and to showcase “all is normal.” The changing perceptions of Israelis by the international community have also been compared to that of Russians. Although used by politicians and journalists in Israel, such comparative thinking has been especially prominent among newcomers from Russia, who currently live at the intersection of two civic experiences of political turmoil.

In working on this special issue of **Theory & Criticism**, we propose to bring into focus the comparative view of these two different political and social contexts with shared historical connections and a troubled political present. We would like to use

this comparison as a tool for thinking critically about the contemporary civic experiences of war and political turmoil. We seek to examine a variety of perceptions, meanings and cultural repertoires that political turmoil generates, and through which citizens explain to themselves and to others their existing and imagined relationships with the regime, the state, and the people. Emotions, we believe, play a key role in the interpretation of these relations. Emotions have played a constitutive role in establishing distinct national ethos and identity in both Russia and Israel. Both societies have also incorporated, although in very different ways, dominant psychological tropes of emotional management. More specifically, in the globally used populist political rhetoric, prevalent also in Russia and Israel, emotions have played an important role in constructing a narrative, in which conservative and nationalist political turns are presented as an ultimate response to any existential threat. Furthermore, the experiences of war in the everyday life in both societies contribute to the centrality of public emotions in the political and civil performances – both in the normative hegemonic language of the state and in the dissident voices within the society.

We invite scholars and researchers to propose academic articles or essays that will contribute to the exploration of a comparative thinking about emotions and citizenship in Russia, Israel and beyond. The work can include a comparative empirical or theoretical discussion or focus on a distinct context in Russia or Israel that might be relevant to the critical approach to comparison.

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**Please submit the  
following by Sunday,  
December 1, 2024:**

- An extended **abstract** of the article, approximately 500 words. The abstract should address the comparative framework of the special issue. The language of the abstract can be Hebrew, English or Russian.
- A short **bio**, approximately 200 words, which would also include the author’s major publications.

After selecting the papers for the special issue, we plan to hold two on-line meetings aimed at guiding the writing process.

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We also invite activists, artists, poets, writers and intellectuals, interested in a comparative discussion of the cultural experience of citizenship and emotions in Israel and Russia to take part in a public event at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute expected to be held in **April 2025**.

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**With questions and to submit your proposal please email:  
[einata@vanleer.org.il](mailto:einata@vanleer.org.il)**

The subject line should read: Proposal for special issue: This Is Not Russia Here?!