

Dr hab. Radosław Bania, prof. nadzw. UŁ

Katedra

Bliskiego Wschodu i Północnej Afryki

Uniwersytet Łódzki

Review Report on the Ph.D. Thesis of Mordechai Levy entitled: *The "Kibbutzim" as a Collective Political Identity Under Change*, Poznań 2016 (pp. 362), prepared under the guidance of a scientific supervisor prof. UAM dr. hab. Radosław Fiedler

Mordechai Levy presented the doctoral thesis submitted to the political situation in Israel. The main subject of analysis is Kibbutzim movement and the change it has been surrendered from the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Kibbutz was and still is an important Israeli institution in the field of social, economic and political subjects. It played a crucial role in the "heroic" era of Israel history in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century during the struggle over the creation of the Jewish State. During the following decades after the establishment of the Israeli State the Kibbutzis have stayed important social, economic and political entities. They were notorious places of support for the lefties parties in Israel. These factors confirm that the Kibbutzim movement as a subject of the research analysis is properly located.

The Ph.D. thesis is well structured and correctly presented. The thesis is written on 362 pages altogether. It consists of six main chapters, Introduction, Conclusions and Bibliography. At the beginning of the thesis the list of tables and list of figures as well as the Glossary at the end are introduced. The numerous tables and graphs are presented inside the dissertation. Their introduction to the main text is proper. Moreover, they help to understand the acknowledgements presented inside the text.

The aims and methods are performed in the Introduction (p. 6-13) as well as hypothesis of the research. Author claims that there are numerous relations (he named four) that influence the voters in Kibbutz to participate in general election to Knesset. These relations are thoroughly described. The main objective of the research taken is to understand the factors of change in the Kibbutzim at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Author claims that the fulfilment of this aim will allow him to understand the political changes experienced by the Israeli society as a whole in the same period of time. The following aim of the research is to create an explanatory model that may help to explain the change in the political participation of the group.

These assumptions are based on the sound research procedure and methods. To proceed the research procedure Author used the general empirical perspective. The most important

thing is that he succeeded in connection of the quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis of the research material. It is noticeably that the main data collected for his research are the primary ones. The secondary data analysis is taken only as a subsidiary method. The sources of data were numerous books, articles, and documents. The literature used as a source of information is impressive. The most important publication for the thesis research are presented in the Bibliography. Author also used sound e-publications.

The first two chapters of the dissertation are going to explain the theoretical background of the research. In the first chapter of the dissertation (Voting Behaviour) Mordechai Levy introduces the problem of the voting behaviour. His aim is to present the main research approaches to such questions as the motivation of voting and voting models. In the second chapter (Collective Political Identity) the author takes into consideration the theoretical concept of the collective identity and its influence on the political behaviour of individuals. On the basis of this theory he introduces the two structural models of the low-level theories. They are seen by Mordechai Levy as the useful and needed tools to understand and to explain the voting model. These are respectively "social identity theory" and "social representation theory". The author analyses them thoroughly and gives the reason that decides of the significance of these approaches to his research.

The third chapter (The Israeli Political System) analyses the Israeli political system. Author focuses his attention on the historical as well as acting Israeli political parties. This chapter discusses the characteristic of the Israeli party system. Author presents the roots and development of the political parties, from the mandate period up to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Author was able to make the historical as well as the functional classification of the Israeli political parties. He thoroughly described the features that influenced the existence and development of the party system in Israel. The most interesting feature of this chapter is that Mordechai Levy presented (1) the causes of the extremely defragmentation of the political parties in Israel (nevertheless he stressed that one of the features to cease the negative consequences of such situation was the creation of the political blocs that were participate in parliamentary voting and enable to create the government), and (2) the dynamic of the development of the whole system and main phases of its development.

The fourth chapter (The Kibbutz – A Unique Socialist Settlement) presents the characteristic of the Kibbutz institution in the Israeli society. This chapter is mainly historical in its analysis. Firstly, the Author analyses the institution of commune in the world socialist movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the main pattern that was used to introduce its special form – kibbutz in the Zionist movement. Secondly, the author was able to present how important role



played the Kibbutz institution in creation of the Israeli State and his defence after granting the Independence after the WWII. Author stressed that the institution of Kibbutz was the main source of the political background for the lefties parties in Israel, from the 40's till the end of the 70's.

The fifth chapter (the Crisis in Kibbutzim) introduces the question of the crisis in the Kibbutzim movement. This chapter addresses the different aspect of the crisis that was experienced by the whole movement at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Author discuss the causes of the crisis and its consequences for the development of the institution of Kibbutz. Especially puts a lot of attention to factors that were contributed to the crisis. A scope of factor is taking under consideration, especially economic, political and demographic. The most interesting thing in this chapter is that Author was able to prove that the whole idea of Kibbutzim lost its value on many fields as a sound social, and economic community based on the lefties values. Nevertheless, the institution of Kibbutz was able to survive because of the taken reforms.

The last chapter (The Change in the Political Identity of the Kibbutzim) is directly connected with the main objective of the thesis and the research hypothesis taken as a scope of the research. The main value of this analysis is that it was based on the direct research in form of the questionnaires, in-depth reviews and focus group that allowed to collect the sound data. Author contributed its attention to the question of the change in voting behaviour of the Kibbutz's inhabitants. He took under investigation three of the most important Kibbutz's in Israel. This allowed him to make important generalization. The author showed how and into what direction the voting behaviour of the Kibbutz inhabitants has changed from the 80's. The most general finding was that the Kibbutzim's voters mostly changed their support from the "lefties-wing of parties", seen as a traditional pattern of voting, to the "central-wing parties". That is why the Kibbutzim is no longer the solid source of support for the lefties parties in Israel.

In the last section of the thesis (Conclusion) Author highlights the key findings that represent the valuable basis for development of the explanatory model of his research. He was able to find a lot of relations that contribute to the voting behaviour of the Kibbutz inhabitants. The author found numerous relations that show the described changes of voting behaviour of the Kibbutz inhabitants. One of the most important findings is that there is a solid age gap in the political affiliation of the Kibbutz's inhabitants. It was presented that the young people (aged from 20 years old) are the main source of support for the central wing parties. Nevertheless, the group the older citizens (aged 50 and more) still votes for the lefties parties. This results also underline that there an important change took place in the social and collective

identity of the Kibbutz members. The other important question named by the author is that the process of the transformation of the social and collective identity may be described as an open process and the given barriers between Israeli society and inhabitants of the Kibbutz are going to fall. The process of political participation of the Kibbutzi's inhabitants is going to resemble the general political process that may be found in the Israeli society but is not the same. The next question that is worthy to mention is that author found, because of his research, that despite the crisis of the institution of the Kibbutzim, its members still belong to the one of the competing form of the identities in Israeli society. Despite the changes of voting behaviour from "left" to the "centre", they still belong to the "civil-liberal identity" camp. Moreover Author claims that the collected data copy with the Kibbutzim may not be seen as a representative for the whole Israeli society. The general tendency is that during the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century data survey show that voting behaviour and political affiliation of Kibbutz's inhabitants do not copy with the main trends. Author claims that the most voters in Israel are going to support the right wing parties and they are more open for the "Jewish ethnic identity" so important for the right wing parties.

The thesis is inspired from the theoretical and methodological point of view. Theories and explanatory models introduced to obtain the research aims are solid and well located. Thesis is perfectly written and very well documented. The most important issue is that the whole explanation is based on the primary not secondary sources. The aims of the research are fulfilled. The hypothesis and arguments are well formulated and based on the relevant sources and literature. The conclusion confirms that the formed objective of the research was successfully obtained.

Nevertheless, I would take into consideration two main question that formulate my critical approach.

Firstly, I am not sure whether the third chapter fully represents the taken question that is suggested by its title. I mean the term used by Author – political system. I think that this term is incorrect because of the scope of questions taken into consideration in this chapter. The term – political system generally copy with the whole area of the political life in the state. Despite the fact that "political system" is one of the main categories in the political science, there is not one and unquestioned definition what the political system is (see Easton, Dahl and others). Nevertheless, the political system is seen as an area of political interaction in society as well as the set of the institutions that are politically engaged. Moreover, the element of culture must be taken into consideration when we are going to explain the patterns of the political behaviour.



That is why I claim that the third chapter of the thesis do not correspondent to the political system conception. The whole elements of the Israeli political system such us institutions, norm, values or political culture were not described inside this chapter. In my opinion only one area of the political system was taken into consideration – political parties and party system. Nevertheless, the whole concept of the Israeli party system has been described thoroughly and with methodological discipline. Also the dynamic of this system has been presented very well. That is why I claim that the title of this chapter should be changed from "The Israeli Political System" to "The Israeli Party System". Such move is rather rhetorical because it will not change the whole explanatory model taken in the thesis.

Secondly, the next question is connected with the final result of research. Author has found and properly take into consideration the change of the voting behaviour and political affiliation. He found that among the Kibbutz's inhabitants the support for the right wing parties is low but nevertheless it does occur. I would like to find some sort of explanation of this situation. Especially, what is the main cause of such behaviour in an area where the left and central parties affiliation is dominant. The next question is whether, because of the general tendency in Israel society to rise "the ethnic camp" in Israeli society, the situation in which the Kibbutz's inhabitants will transform significantly their affiliation from left/center to the right may occur in the next decades.

To sum up, this dissertation presents the high level of scientific work. It seems to be the interesting topic to the specialist from the political science. The explanations are suitable and focuses on the relevant topics. The author proved his abilities to do research and to use the relevant theories and methodology.

In my opinion the reviewed thesis fulfilled all requirements posed on the theses aimed to obtain the Ph.D. degree in the field of political sciences. This thesis is ready to defend orally in front of respective commission. It fulfills all relevant conditions needed by the Polish Law (*Ustawa z 14 marca 2003 r. o stopniach i tytule naukowym oraz o stopniach i tytule w zakresie sztuki* - Dz. U. Nr 65, poz. 595)

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dr hab. Radosław Bania, prof. nadzw. UŁ

