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Israel in the Shadow of Fundamentalism

Book Review: Uri J. Huppert, *Izrael w cieniu fundamentalizmów*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek 2016, (pp. 230). ISBN 978–83–8019–497–7. Price: 33,81.

Dr Uri J. Huppert is a Jewish lawyer and political scientist, born in 1933 in Bielsko-Biała, Poland. He survived the turmoil of the Second World War, and emigrated to Israel in 1950s. The experiences of war and his close ties with Israel have shaped his views, contributing to the creation of many outstanding works from the history and politics of this country. One of these publications is a reviewed book titled “Israel in the Shadow of Fundamentalism”. The first edition of this work took place in 2007, whereas the reviewed publication is a second, expanded edition published in 2016.

Compared to the first edition, resume includes (besides introduction and preface to the last edition) notes for the second edition and many journalistic articles, originally published in the journal *Res Humana*. These articles can be treated as an extended introduction. Also, the ending consists of a journalistic article, originally published in *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Both journalistic access as well as the ending, move the important ethical issues which relate not only to Israel, but the whole modern world. The author brings up the topic of tolerance, morality and the refugees, recalling the problems that are commented in the media, e.g. because of the Arab Spring.

Generally, the author’s reflections contain following points: (1) moral and ethical aspects connected with religious fundamentalism; (2) Jewish settlements at the Palestine lands and the political controversies, (3) the role of migration for the national identity and (4) the identity problems of the population living in Israel.

The outline of argument is based on author's indication, that the source of social and political divisions in Israel lies within the character of the orthodox Judaism. The book shall aspire to the knowledge compendium about the culture and Jewish religion and the modern Israel specificity of functioning. However, this compendium should be directed to persons having a sufficient knowledge about Israel's problems. This is the second point of criticism of the presented works. The need to possess knowledge about the history of the Jews is crucial to understand both the specificity of the topic, as well as following the author's way to conduct the discourse. Uri Huppert refers, in fact, on the occasion of reflection on orthodox Judaism, to many events that currently take place on the political scene of the Middle East; therefore, the recipient who does not have a suitably wide range of knowledge, will not be able to make a deep analysis of the examples. A reader is not favoured by the lack of precise dating (p. 45; versed in the subject recipient is able to conclude that described the Israeli blockade of the autonomous Gaza Strip took place in 2005, but this is not indicated immediately and requires consultation with one's knowledge or supplementary sources of this knowledge).

The author has made a comprehensive analysis of fundamentalisms functioning inside Israel and determine its weaknesses. The book is unique in this regard, because it fills the gap in a topic of culture of the Jewish religion. On the Polish publishing market little books refer to the conflict in the Middle East and the question of Israel from this point of view. Author effectively fills this gap, allowing a Polish reader to look at the issue from a wider perspective.

A surprising point of reference is the author's radicalism in attributing that the biggest role in the conflict was played by religious orthodoxy. However, it's possible that the author's intention was to analyse the situation inside Israel, under 'laboratory', in isolation of Israel's on factors such as the dramatic experiences of Jews during the Holocaust is functioning in a hostile environment. This procedure allows us to see many important aspects faced by the residents of the modern Israel, which in other analyses covering the whole spectrum of factors influencing Israel (both exogenous and endogenous) are omitted. It is undoubtedly one of the biggest advantage of the book, which thus fills a gap in the literature on the present topic in Poland. As a result, after a period of severe shortages in the field of literature on Judaism and Jewish culture, Polish reader receives a source rich in content, enriched with analysis of today's events as the Arab Spring. Moreover, Uri Huppert 'enlivens' his discourse by weaving into the book some stories of the real people – the Jews struggling with the problem of recognition of their identity - and reaching into the court records of cases conducted in the past, the sources of law in Israel and expression of judges. As a result, typical

theoretical considerations described in the book will allow you to refer those issues to the problems faced by real, living people today.

These criteria of analysis and a wide selection of the content make the book able to provide an irreplaceable assistance in conducting research not only for political scientists, but also for philosophers, cultural theorists, faith theorists and lawyers. These remarks detract in no way from the momentous character this publication; on the contrary, they emphasize its character. The author of the book shall now be counted as one of the leading Hebrew scholars worldwide.

References:

Huppert, U.J. (2016). *Izrael w cieniu fundamentalizmów*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek.

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