



Agnieszka Turska-Kawa, *Determinanty chwiejności wyborczej*,
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In 2015, the University of Silesia Press published Agnieszka Turska-Kawa's book entitled *Determinanty chwiejności wyborczej* [*The Determinants of Electoral Volatility*]. This young researcher, who is a recognised scholar in the circles of political science and aims to submit her post-doctoral thesis, focuses on the issues of political parties and electoral systems. Among A. Turska-Kawa's scientific achievements are theoretical and empirical works, including three monographs, several dozen publications in high impact Polish and foreign journals, several dozen chapters in monographs, and research reports. Agnieszka Turska-Kawa has a graduate degree in political science from the Institute of Political Science at the University of Silesia in Katowice. She has also completed psychology studies. For years, she has developed as a scholar, at the same time undertaking

a number of promotional and organisational activities. For example, she was one of the initiators of the Society of Scientific Initiatives, which she headed for many years. At present, she is the Director of the Electoral Research Section. She has organised two panels on election issues at Political Science Congresses.

There is no doubt that studies conducted by this ambitious scholar from the University of Silesia have a high empirical value. A. Turska-Kawa's latest monograph is an innovative work. It addresses issues that have not been the subject of a broad and in-depth discussion in the body of Polish literature yet. The author presents the results of her research and compares them to the findings of Western scholars. She also designs research processes and tools of her own, and draws up their results with the use of a data analysis programme.

What must be emphasised, Agnieszka Turska-Kawa deals with a problem of high cognitive value. She presents issues that are

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very important also from the practical point of view.

The book, which is a valuable and genuine work, is an in-depth, competent and precise study, in which the author conducts an analysis of the phenomenon of electoral volatility. She does it on the basis of the existing body of literature and her own research findings.

What should be stressed is the fact that not only does Agnieszka Turska-Kawa critically examine particular problems, but she has also grasped an extremely important skill of synthesising multi-aspect relations and phenomena, particularly in the political science, social and psychological dimension. The author's conclusions show her as an erudite and an objective researcher.

The work under review has an exceptionally clear, well thought out and logically cohesive structure. The layout of the monograph is correct from the perspective of the construction of a scientific dissertation. The title of the book accurately reflects the subject of deliberations.

The elaborate introduction includes all necessary components. The author provides definitions of key concepts. She also indicates research methods applied in her work and identifies the goal of her deliberations, i.e., the analysis of the phenomenon of electoral volatility.

Agnieszka Turska-Kawa reflects on the influence of the determinants of electoral volatility, identifies relations between system, social, psychological and economic factors. She also asks questions about mo-

tives belonging to particular groups of determinants.

The elaboration of four research hypotheses formulated in the monograph under review: 1. Electoral volatility is generated by system factors; 2. Electoral volatility is generated by social factors; 3. Electoral volatility is generated by sociological factors; 4. Electoral volatility is generated by economic factors, is carried out by articulating five detailed research questions: 1) What are the relations between the indicated groups of factors?, 2. How relevant are they for the level of electoral volatility?, 3. To what degree are motives belonging to particular groups of subject stable in time?

The book under discussion consists of the *Introduction*, five chapters and the *Conclusion*. At the end, there is a large list of bibliographic references and a personal index.

The first chapter, which is entitled *Electoral Volatility from the Theoretical Perspective*, constitutes theoretical and methodological framework for the monograph. The author provides definitions and indicates causes and effects of the phenomenon of electoral volatility. She notes that "not in every case should the system tend to develop the low level of electoral volatility, which may pose a threat to democracy. This usually occurs when this stability remains at the low level after each successive election, not leaving room for the activity of specific social groups (p. 25)".

The following four parts of the monograph refer to the research hypotheses that

the author posed in the *Introducion*. In chapters two-five, she analyses the determinants of the phenomenon of volatility from the scientific point of view.

The second chapter is entitled *The System Determinants of Electoral Volatility*. The author discusses here issues defining the scope of citizens' electoral participation, such as: the political regime, the electoral system, actions to increase voter turnout, or the party system, the polarisation of the political scene, and election manipulations. This part of the book includes valuable deliberations on the issue addressed in the title, but it lacks a summary in which the author would recapitulate her conclusions concerning every factor she discusses.

In the third chapter, entitled *The Social Determinants of Electoral Volatility*, the young scholar provides a scientific argument on the stability and instability of electoral behaviours. The analysis concerns the issue of belonging to social groups and its consequences. As the author indicates, the fact of being a member of a social group and all interactions connected with it determine an individual's civil competences. What is more, shared values, priorities or attitudes towards socio-political phenomena determine the content of an electoral decision (p. 111). What I find particularly important and justifiable in this part of the book are the conclusions included in subchapter 3.3 (*Actions Aimed at Increasing Voter Turnout*). The author notes that there is an urgent need of taking efforts to increase a poll. As a result, the youngest ci-

tizens would become politically socialised. Agnieszka Turska-Kawa accurately remarks that the adoption of responsibility for the state as the common good and the conviction that citizens have a real influence on the decision-making process will lead to greater electoral stability (p. 135).

In subchapter 3.4 (*Pre-election Polls*), the author looks into an interesting issue of relations between pre-election polls and electoral volatility. She notes that polls reflect real electoral behaviours, based on specific estimates. The researcher also indicates that these special calculations would not be made by voters if the results of the polls were not published (p. 135). In subchapter 3.5, entitled *Democracy 2.0*, the author seeks the causes of the crisis of traditional democracy. She also points out that traditionally defined democracy "does not lose social support, but the occurring processes make it adapt its form to «new» citizens – less interested, less involved, less mediatised, who put emphasis on the indirectness and incidental nature of relations rather than on building permanent bonds" (p. 142).

Chapter four, entitled *The Psychological Determinants of Electoral Volatility*, is of very high cognitive value. The author explains why the analysis of psychological factors is important from the point of view of studies of electoral volatility. What is more, it must be emphasised that she accurately identifies groups of determinants, indicating that people's internal predispositions, such as needs, values, expectations

or personality, define their electoral behaviours (p. 163).

In the last, fifth, chapter of the book, entitled *The Economic Determinants of Electoral Volatility*, Agnieszka Turska-Kawa presents the spheres in which politics and economics merge. She notes that a rational individual is naturally profit-oriented, “thus, the economisation of individual efforts takes place not only in the field of economy, but in every area of people’s life”. The author also points out that economic factors undoubtedly affect voters’ decisions. In her deliberations, she refers to rational choice theory, public choice theory and to retrospective and prospective voting. She also addresses the issue of New Politics, which involves placing more emphasis on environmental problems.

In the final part of the book, the author presents interesting conclusions concerning relations between particular groups

of factors, which refer to the research hypotheses posed in the introductory part.

The book under review deserves attention particularly due to the author’s mature research skills. As I mentioned before, what is an undeniable value of the publication is its solid and diverse source base, which is supplemented by a broad body of foreign literature. Agnieszka Turska-Kawa polemically and thoroughly uses the available theoretical and practical works. In doing so, she makes use of her scientific competence and follows methodological guidelines in the field of political science. Another merit of the book is its highly erudite language. It was written in a very interesting and accessible way, with the use of professional terminology.

To sum up, Agnieszka Turska-Kawa’s book is an original and mature work. It should become an obligatory read for all those who deal with studies of electoral systems.