

'Kadima' Where to? – Political Activism in a Post Ideological Era

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In this study we would like to examine the way political activists in the student group of 'Kadima' perceive the party, and to clarify the motivations that motivate this kind of political participation. We will try to explain why these students are prepared to invest in intensive political involvement, with hardly any recompense, especially in a time when ideology is losing its strength, and specifically in a centrist party. The study was done integrating qualitative methods of observation of the activities of the group and semi-structured interviews with five of its activists. The activists show strong connection to the party and to national politics. The study provides us with a look at the catch all party as it is viewed and run "from below", and sketches the contours of the activist in this party.

Introduction

Different actors in the game of political parties are liable to perceive the party and what it represents in different ways. From their perceptions are usually derived the motives due to which they are interested in being representatives, members, activists or voters of this party. These motivations can be value-based, ideological, traditional, political, personal, local or sectoral. The level of involvement of different actors is varied and so are the reasons given by the actor for this involvement.

From this perspective, the activists on the field, who invest their time and energy in the "dirty" work to promote the party, spread its message and recruit supporters, often without compensation and without immediate and personal results, must be highly motivated. One may assume this motivation is probably based on values, ideology, and identification with the party, with its purposes and vision. This issue becomes interesting since nowadays, as many studies have shown, the factor of ideology in politics is decreasing¹.

¹ Shamir M, Ventura R, Arian A, and Kedar O, (2007). "Kadima in the Weakening Party System" in Asher Arian and Michal Shamir (eds.) The Elections in Israel – 2006 (Jerusalem, the Israel Democracy Institute.)

The case of 'Kadima' is particularly interesting, since it is a relatively new party that sees itself as a center party and is not identified with lasting ideological tradition. For the purpose of this study we will examine specifically, in a qualitative method, the student group of the party at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, in an attempt to understand the party from the point of view of its activists.

Our research question is how the activists in the campus perceive the party and its way? What are their motivations for supporting it and participating in its activity? How do they view the role of the student group and its relation to the party? The study will try to characterize the reasons they support and act for the good of the party, what motivates them to promote it, and try to understand if this is an ideological, value-based identification, or is it a support out of pragmatic, real-politic, personal, local or sectoral motivations.

Theoretical Background

A. Center Party in the New Era: Ideology or "Catch All" strategy?

On 21/11/2005 Ariel Sharon held a press conference at the Prime Minister's Office where he announced the establishment of a new party in Israel- 'Kadima'. To the thirteen Likud Knesset members who joined Sharon, various politicians, mayors, council heads and members of academia also joined. 'Kadima' became the third largest party after the Likud and Labor.

Despite the victory in 2006, in the 2009 elections 'Kadima' was in a difficult position of inferiority. Sharon was no longer part of Israeli politics, the policy of one-sidedness became irrelevant since Hamas won the elections in the Palestinian Authority in January 2006: Sharon's disengagement plan did not reach its desired results and Olmert's plan to disengage was shelved. During 'Kadima's rule there were two wars (one, the Second Lebanon War, was considered to be a particular failure), and cases of corruption were attached to the party. Despite all this, 'Kadima', running with Tzipi Livni at its head, won a respectable achievement of 28 seats.

Immediately after its creation there was a heated argument about the circumstances of its establishment. Many commentators and politicians ascribed the pull of the new party to Sharon's popularity and branded it an opportunistic party,

without ideology, unclear and not consistent about policy issues, and saw it as no more than the product of public relations and professional political advisers. Others, such as Sammy Smootha ²and Ben Dror Yemini³, saw it as an almost inevitable development in light of the political and public map created. Despite these criticisms, many expressed readiness to join 'Kadima', whether due to their identification with the centrist policy Sharon presented, or due to the good forecasts the opinion polls showed regarding the party⁴. But what is that centrist policy that Sharon declared? Why did he choose to situate it as a centrist party in the Israeli public? Did he know that in light of this fact it would be easier for the party to pull votes from different directions? Did he assume that this step would help make the party attractive to activists and voters?

In the literature dealing with centrist parties it is customary to divide centrist parties into two main categories: "middle parties" defined technically as being between left and right on a scale, who integrate and compromise between positions on different issues on the agenda, and parties who have a "true" centrist ideology, that stands by itself and isn't a compromise dependent on the scale of political positions. Duverger⁵, claims that in a political system there are no centrist parties. He explains that every center is divided into two parts: left-center and right-center, and therefore its fate are to be torn to pieces, to be annihilated. The crashing of the Radical party in the Third Republic in France and the Socialist party in the Fourth Republic are examples of this. Yannai⁶ calls this the "splitting syndrome of the centrist party". Like Duverger, he finds in this syndrome one of the main reasons for the disappearance of these parties.

² Smootha, S, (2009). "The Big Bang in Israeli Politics" from the site "Ofakim Hadashim" 22/06/2009 <http://www.ofakim.org.il>

³ Yemini, B, D, (2009). "So it is in the Middle" from the site "Ofakim Hadashim" 22/06/2009 <http://www.ofakim.org.il>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Duverger, M, (1962). Political Parties, London and Dradford, Lund Humphries, p 215

⁶ Yanai, N, (2001). "The Appearance of the Center Party in the 1999 Elections: a Systemic and Comparative Study" in Asher Arian and Michal Shamir (eds.) The Elections in Israel – 1999 (Jerusalem, the Israel Democracy Institute.)

On the other hand, researchers such as Hazan⁷, Knoller⁸ and Sartory⁹ claim that it is possible to define a centrist party objectively. Hazan claims that the basic definition of a centrist party relates to two variables: location and position.

The ideologically centrist position and the striving for consensus are also important components in the model of Kirchheimer¹⁰. He claimed that the Second World War and its results caused the reining in of ideology, decrease in the ability of parties to recruit, and decrease in the absolute faithfulness to one party. Together with the trend of technological development and the solidification of the media as a dominant component in politics and society, these brought about the rise of "catch-all" parties. The metaphor presents the party as a political department store. Its purpose is to draw as many voters as it can and it does this by turning to the widest electoral common denominator, while losing its social and ideological identity. The way to draw "clients" is done similar to a market of goods: adoption of an image, a trademark, a brand that has drawing power.

Panebianco¹¹, developing Kirchheimer's theory, presents the contraction of the ideological mass party to a representative, electoral and pragmatic party, that occurs due to the increased influence of the experts in modern society which increases the importance of public administration and interest groups in establishing policy.

Many see in 'Kadima' a centrist party, both in the ideological sense and in the sense of the Israeli party system continuum in the last decade. However, there is a lively debate regarding the circumstances of its foundation, its ability to survive, and its constitution as a significant political player in the party system in Israel over time. Political science researchers who have tried to examine the reasons for these results have reached the conclusion that 'Kadima' not only positioned itself in the center of the map, but also raised the flag of one-sided policy, which mixed growing readiness

⁷ Hazan, R,(1999). The Search for the Center in the Party System in Israel The Elections in Israel – 1996 (Jerusalem, the Israel Democracy Institute.)

⁸ Knoller, E, (2000). Not Right Not Left: the Rise and Disappearance of Center Parties in Israel (1965-1999). Ph.D. dissertation (Ramat Gan, 2000) p.4

⁹ Sartory, G, (1976). Parties and Party System Cambridge University Press, 1976, PP 134-135.

¹⁰ Kirchheimer, O, (1966). "The Catch-All Party." In The West European Party System. Peter Mair, Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 50-60.

¹¹ Panebianco, A ,(1988). Political parties organization and power (New York: Cambridge University press)

for compromise with deep lack of trust regarding the Palestinians. This is a position that fits well with the position of the 'median voter' in the main dimension of policy in Israeli politics: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹²

As mentioned, this study examines this phenomenon "from below" – is this policy the cause for motivation and activity of students in the student group of 'Kadima'? What motivates them? Will the students explain their mobilization with ideological motives or perhaps there are completely different reasons for it? How, if at all, are the national political reality reflected in the activities on campus?

B. Political Participation, Positions and Values of Students in Israel

The most comprehensive study done until now on the topic of political activity of students in Israel is presented in the book "Who Are You the Israeli Student?"¹³. This book examines, primarily in quantitative methods, the general sociological profile of the Israeli student. Another important study, which uses a qualitative method and examines specifically the student groups on campus, is presented in Shlomo Swirski's book "University, State and Society in Israel"¹⁴. Swirski follows the rise of the leftist student group "Yesh" at Haifa University in the 1970's, and how the students perceived the group, and the Israeli society and politics.

The two books deal with the question of the connection between the student population and general society and politics. In both of them the gap between the character of Israeli students and students in other countries is emphasized, primarily in the period they deal with, when the world was awash with protests and rebellions of students. Shapira and Etzioni note that, in general, Israeli students don't have rebellious tendencies, and even when they do, it usually doesn't come into action¹⁵. Their self-perception as students is primarily academic¹⁶. They are generally moderate, passive and conformist politically, despite most of them expressing

¹²Shamir M, Ventura R, Arian A, and Kedar O, (2007). "Kadima in the Weakening Party System" in Asher Arian and Michal Shamir (eds.) The Elections in Israel – 2006(Jerusalem, the Israel Democracy Institute.)

¹³Shapira, R and Etzioni, H, (1973). Who are You the Israeli Student? (Tel Aviv: Am Oved)

¹⁴Swirski, S, (1982). University, State and Society in Israel (Jerusalem: Mifras)

¹⁵Shapira, R and Etzioni, H (1973) p 162

¹⁶Ibid. 143,160-162

support for student rebellions outside Israel¹⁷. The researchers ascribe this approach of the students primarily to their relatively higher age, military service and the security situation in the country.

Swirski, who focuses specifically on a protest group of students active politically, emphasizes the difference between this group and the main current in society. He divides the views of his interviewees into two main forms: 'critics' and 'managers'. He explains these views on the background of the general political context of Israeli society, as a product of a revolutionary movement- the Zionism. From this perspective, the managers see Zionism as something of the past, a movement that finished its part, and now what needs to be done is strengthen what exists and expand it. This is the view of the existing, established, "normal" society, where *"dealing with the missions of creating and struggle, has made way for dealing with problems of conventional management of the existing social order"*¹⁸. In the view of the critics, the place of the Zionist vision and its fulfillment is essential. This is a view that does not accept the existing order as it is, holds that Zionism has still not fulfilled its goals. It sees the existing, "normal" forms as a distortion of the Zionist vision and a deviation from its way and values. They believe that an old-new Zionist socialist vision should be presented, and strive to reach it.

Today too the accusation is repeated that students are indifferent, or egoistic, and go out to the streets only when the matter relates to them personally, as opposed to students in the world, who are the spearhead of every social struggle¹⁹. We will now examine the measure of existence of these positions among activists of the 'Kadima' group on campus. The students are relatively active, but in the overall context of 'Kadima', the motives for its establishment, and reasons for its remaining, it will be interesting to see how they see themselves in the web between the party and the student audience.

¹⁷Ibid. 36-43

¹⁸Swirski, S. (1982). University, State and Society in Israel (Jerusalem: Mifras)

¹⁹Baram, N. (2001) "The Neutered Student" Faces- Quarterly for Culture, Society and Education, vol. 18
<http://www.itu.org.il/Index.asp?ArticleID=1266&CategoryID=506&Page=2>

Methodology

We carried out the study based on several qualitative methods, with an emphasis on interviews with activists in the group. In addition we made observations and used official material published by the party and the student group (Internet site, platform, publications of events and activities).

We interviewed for the purpose of the study 5 activists of the student group of 'Kadima', 4 from Hebrew University and one from Tel Aviv. For the interviews we prepared a partially structured questionnaire²⁰. In the interviews we learned about the character of the activists and their world view, motives and aspirations, their relation to the group and the party. Also, we carried out several observations. The main and most important one was of the meeting of the student group of 'Kadima' at the campus of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In this observation we learned about the character of activities of the group, its goals, the connection with the party, the quality of discussion and ideas expressed, the hierarchy and freedom of expression and opinion existing in the group. Two additional, shorter, observations we carried out on the activity of the group in the university, at a panel held with participation of members of Knesset and at the informatory stand of the group on campus.

Results and Discussion

The 'Kadima' student group at the Hebrew University was established around a year ago after several attempts that failed. There are 25 student members, among them 10 particularly active. This is the largest student group of 'Kadima'. From the various materials we gathered from meeting with members of the 'Kadima' group at the university, there are several trends that characterize their view, their perception of the party, and their motives for political participation in the framework of the group. We will relate here to these trends according to three themes: their view of the party and its message, the role of the group and its activity, and the personal motives for membership in the group.

²⁰see appendix No.1

View of the party and its message

*"In the final analysis, 'Kadima' arose to divide up the land. However you look at it...if someone doesn't agree with this, he can't be in 'Kadima'. This has to be."*²¹

If there is an ideological motif that motivates the members of the 'Kadima' group, it is expressed in this passage, in which Dan, the chairman of the group, summarizes the central message of 'Kadima' in his eyes and those of the rest of the members of the group. The agreement on this issue is amazing. To the extent that even Samir, the Christian-Arab activist describes the purpose of 'Kadima' : *"Compromise with security...to promote peace with vigor and on the other hand to respond harshly when we are attacked...we, as opposed to others, truly believe in two states for two peoples"*²². The activists see the division of the land, without going into how it will be done, as the ideology and main purpose of the party. Some of them explain that this is the only solution for maintaining Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.²³

Of course this statement raises the question: what is the difference between 'Kadima's' view and the other large parties in the range between Meretz and Yisrael Beiteinu. In response to this challenge the answer is usually given negating the other parties for pragmatic reasons: *"As opposed to the extremism of the Likud and inaction of Labor, only 'Kadima' can save the situation. It represents something real and not slogans."*²⁴ That is, the other parties don't say different things; therefore, essentially there isn't a unique ideological statement here. We should note that in the social-economic topic the statement is even less clear and some of the activists even testify themselves that in this field the position of the party is vague.²⁵

We think that the general statement and vague message are connected, like in other centrist parties, to an approach of pushing towards the consensus, so as to include many opinions and positions:

*"I think that the most important task of 'Kadima' in Israeli politics is to find consensus. I mean that 'Kadima' as a centrist party can gather around it a very wide common denominator from the Israeli public."*²⁶

²¹Dan, appendix No.2:3 (the names of the interviewees are pseudonyms)

²²Samir, *ibid.*:19

²³Dan, *ibid.*: 4; Rachel, *ibid.*: 15

²⁴Rachel, *ibid.*:13

²⁵Dan, appendix 1:4

²⁶Elad, *ibid.*:8

*"To me the political issue is very important. There are those for whom the "green" issue is very important...equality in the burden, reserve duty, ta-ta-ta...in short, everyone with his/her niche and that is the advantage of 'Kadima' that it knows to include all these things."*²⁷

The activists for their part see in this tendency a positive attribute of inclusiveness and agreement. The theoretical literature, as mentioned, relates to this phenomenon as a central indicator of a "Catch-All" party- the attempt to include a wide range of positions with the objective of turning towards a wide electoral group of voters located at the center of the political map, who in any case are less interested in ideology. Another characteristic connected to this issue is the feeling of disgust with the old politics, which is expressed in the words of the activists, and the belief that 'Kadima' will bring to the public debate new norms of engagement:

*"'Kadima' is an alternative, 'Kadima' for me is hope for a better place..."*²⁸

*"Israeli politics is pretty archaic, old-fashioned. Both in ideas and its implementation. It needs a real change...There are many examples of a corrupt bureaucratic political system, that doesn't succeed in ruling and leading."*²⁹

Catch-all parties are also characterized by a tendency to personalization and the focus of the voter on the figure of the politician. This component is expressed very strongly in the views of the activists in the group, primarily towards Tzipi Livni- the relation to her is close to adoration- but also towards others:

*"Q: What does 'Kadima' represent for you? A: Without a doubt- Tzipi Livni. The integrity, personal and public responsibility, unwilling to compromise on principles...these represents 'Kadima' for me."*³⁰

*"Tzipi Livni is first of all- a person. Honest, real, with principles...I believe in her...Tzipi is a symbol. It's very easy for me to identify with her. She is an example and a model. She is faithful to values and not ready for political extortion. She is honest and decent. She will increase her strength and the strength of 'Kadima' in the next elections, you will see."*³¹

The personalization of politics is expressed not only in their statements regarding Livni, but also in the significant emphasis given to the other members of Knesset (MK) of the party in the activities of the group. From our observations it appears that a noticeable part of the group's activity deals with the party's MKs, bringing them to

²⁷Dan, ibid.:3

²⁸Rachel,ibid.:13

²⁹Elad,ibid.:8

³⁰Elad,ibid.:8

³¹Rachel,Ibid.:13-16

the campus, presenting them and their views; almost every activity involves a MK and political figures- Dan Halutz in a panel on prisoners of war, Dichter on a tour of the city, Livni meeting with the group, Bar-On and others.³²

From here we receive the impression that the activity has a very strong commercial approach which works in two directions- to market the party and members of Knesset among the students and to market the group in the eyes of the party and the students. This is expressed in other places, such as the behavior of the activists around their information booths, in "pursuing" students³³, in populist thinking of "making noise"³⁴, and in their expressions regarding the importance of mobilizing, which will be discussed below. To that accompanied much emphasis on strict organization of the group, which is seen in the activities of the group and in the staff meetings.

The role of the group and its activity

From the sayings and behavior of the group's activists we see two clear objectives that they set for the group, both of them strictly connected to the party. The first is mobilization of students to join the group:

"We deal first and foremost with recruitment. This is most important for us... we are in political life and everyone knows what his job is and what the priorities are. We try to recruit as much as possible, this is legitimate and this what every political group does. I must say that every one that I recruit makes me feel better."

³⁵

This is repeated in the words of all the activists without exception. The issue of recruitment is an important point for our purposes since joining the group usually includes also joining the party (!). This is apparently an informal but obligatory norm and all the activists justify it and see in it the true way to influence. Major testimony to this are the enlistment forms the activists carry, which say on them that the activist register via the student group in the Hebrew University³⁶. From here it is reasonable to assume that the group also receives some political recompense for recruiting members and in practice functions as a kind of student faction within the

³²See appendix 3, observation No.1 and 3/This especially shows in the discussions on pages 5-7

³³Ibid, observation No.2

³⁴Dan, ibid: 7

³⁵Elad, ibid10-11

³⁶See appendix No.4

party. Dan, the chairman of the group, notes this point as most significant for the ability of the members to influence:

"There are registered total about 20-30, most of whom, except for two, are also members of 'Kadima', since that is the objective in the final analysis...that we create...I don't know if even a pressure group, but a group that is really ideological...how many register for the parties? 200,000? This is what establishes the slate for the Knesset..."³⁷

The second objective that the group's activists note is "...to bring 'Kadima' to power"³⁸. Here the connection of the activists to the party and its political objectives is expressed, which is much stronger than the desire to serve and represent the student body. These trends are affirmed by observations we held: the running for the head of the student council is negligible in its importance, compared to the demonstration in Tel Aviv promoting the campaign of the party regarding the rising prices of gasoline. From here we can even reach the conclusion that the activists in the group for their part don't see the students as a public they want to represent and promote its objectives, but rather a political market sector that they want to sell to.

The personal motives for membership in the group

"To tell the truth, it is really surprising...I was in the library, our chairman who studies with me international relations, he came and said to me: 'Say what are you doing right now?' so I said that I'm studying something, so he says: 'What do you feel regarding 'Kadima'?' I said to him that I'm OK with it, I didn't have a clear statement at that moment, so he said to me: 'Listen, we are establishing a kind of student organization, would you like to take part?' so just shooting from the hip I said yes and I came."³⁹

It is interesting to see that all the members of the group came to it without a history of political activity- most of them didn't participate in youth groups, pre-army programs or similar frameworks where youth acquire awareness and tools for political participation. They testify of themselves that they weren't members of other political movements and didn't even express much interest in politics before they came to 'Kadima'. Some of them see themselves as coming from a "political home", but this description is usually comes to salon conversations and a general

³⁷Dan, appendix No.2 p.2

³⁸Dan, ibid 3

³⁹Shai, appendix.No.1 pp .22-23

feeling of a push towards involvement by the parents⁴⁰. By some of the activists, the joining of the group was done as an aside, almost by accident- "*I came because a friend of mine called me*"⁴¹. So Dan, the chairman of the group, describes its establishment:

*"In the meeting towards establishment we had a meeting, me and another person, two people, and then on the way to the meeting we saw two more people who study with me, I asked 'what do you vote?'. I knew they vote 'Kadima', so we took them with us and so 4 people, that's how it started."*⁴²

A large portion of activists in the group see in it also a platform for opening a political career and see themselves as dealing in this field in the future. "*We are the next generation; the politicians of today won't be here in another ten, twenty years. Apparently the substitutes will come from us and this is as it should be. I don't see others taking the reins. It's only us*"⁴³. At least one of them, Shai, who came to the group less than a year ago, "*in much of a surprise*", serves today as the assistant of MK Yoel Hason.

In general, it shows from the results, that the activists in the group, and the group as an organization, see themselves as very connected to the party and its activity on the national level. The strong focus on recruitment as an objective, together with the obligation to register to the party; the arrival at the group from a lack of previous involvement and political education, and in some cases even actually by accident; the view of politics as a career in the future- all these illustrate the strong connection of the group to the party, more than to the students and their problems. In addition, they explain the (non-)ideological trends that we presented at the beginning of the chapter: the lack of a clear and unique ideological statement, and the tendency to speak openly about the strive for a common denominator that allows inclusion of as many positions and voters as possible. It appears that the objective of the group from their perspective is not judged at all in local, sectoral terms, but rather primarily in the national political level and the personal level.

⁴⁰So by Elad and Rachel. Two of the founders were activists in Kadima before, but as mentioned were not active before that.

⁴¹Rachel, *ibid* 13

⁴²Dan, *ibid* 1

⁴³Elad, *ibid* 11

Theoretically, we find the prism of the "catch-all" party⁴⁴ as more appropriate to understanding the views of the activists than the prism via which we tried to examine the issue at first, of 'Kadima' as a center party. Not that these contradict, rather it appears that the main innovation of 'Kadima' is not its being a center party, but rather its adopting the form of a "catch-all" party. In this study these characteristics of the party are reflected in an interesting way specifically "from below", from the view of the activist. It appears that the activists adopt this kind of thinking; the messages of the party; the rhetoric of marketing, persuasion and recruitment; the importance of the politician himself; so much, that in response to one of the questions, they presented us with the text of an interview of Livni from the radio.⁴⁵

Another theoretical idea we find to be essential to explaining the views of the interviewees, is the differentiation of Swirski between two types of political activists: 'managers' and 'critics'. In our case, it appears that there is a clear tendency towards "management view", by all members of the group, and as the overall view of the group's activity. Swirski describes the managers as having a technocratic view of politics, and as working in it as "business owners". The student group is to them the entrance channel to political life and therefore the group is in direct connection with the established leadership of the party. They express a great deal of conformism and present themselves with an "adult and responsible" style of talking and appearance. They don't deal with vision or ethical ideas, but rather act out of pragmatic considerations of managing the system. When they are asked about vision they mention principles of action or objectives from the party platform, which generally consist of a series of repairs and reforms to the existing social order⁴⁶. All this is parallel, one by one, to our results regarding the activists in the 'Kadima' group. The main difference that can be seen between Swirski's interviewee and ours is that the critics of then were the ones who proposed withdrawal from the territories, whereas

⁴⁴Kirchheimer, O,(1966). "The Catch-All Party." In The West European Party System. Peter Mair, Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 50-60.

⁴⁵See observation 3, appendix 3: 10

⁴⁶Swirski, Shlomo University, State and Society in Israel (Jerusalem, Mifras, 1982)

today it is the managers who do so. However, we assume that this is not a significant difference, since they do not point to the ethical problem but rather to the Israeli interest in avoiding a demographic problem. Even peace as an objective is not emphasized, but rather "the division of the land". The real change, in our eyes, is that this view has become since the 1990s the mainstream view in Israeli society.

Even if it seems that ideology is flattened, it isn't losing its legitimating power, since few are the interviewees who would admit its absence in front of an outside interviewer. However, we don't get the impression that ideology is the important factor in the motivation of the activists. But this is not because the focus of their activity is local and student-based, but to the contrary, because it is connected to the party.

We think that the results show an interesting combination between these two theories. It appears that the principles of action of a catch-all party create a 'manager' type of politician. The striving for consensus and the attempt to include as many positions as possible, the dismissal of clear-cut ideology and reliance on principles of action rather than vision, bring the party to empty itself of actual content. In this situation, all that is left for the politician to do is to deal with correct management, organization, recruitment, and marketing. These ways of thinking flow downward, due to the strong relation, or actually, the identification, between the group and the party. It creates a generation of activists who view the party as a business to handle and make profit of, rather than a forum for promoting ideology and shaping vision.

Summary

The question that we dealt with in this study was regarding the political perceptions of students involved in political activity on campus and the motivations that drive them. The student group of 'Kadima' interested us in particular for two main reasons: the relations between the students and the political participation on campus and national politics, and the ideological dimension of these activists today, when it seems that ideology is becoming less and less relevant, all the more so when dealing with a centrist party.

From our work with the activists, which included interviews and observations, several trends showed up. The main ones, in our opinion, are the strong connection to the party, and the focus on recruitment as a central objective. Most of the activities of the group were more connected to politicians and issues on a national level rather than to the campus. That is where the activists' attention is directed. This affects their entire being- the marketing view, the generalized message, seeing politics as a profession, the importance of the organizational aspect and the personalization of politics.

We found several theoretical tools that worked well explaining the behavior of the activists. Swirski's category of 'managers' explains the characteristics of the political activist who is affiliated with the central current in politics. We connected between the development of this political activist type and the phenomenon of 'catch-all' party on the institutional level, primarily in the context of replacing vision and ideology with concrete objectives and principles of action taken from the party platform.

We think that these definitions are likely to be useful for other studies in this field, should be investigated in other cases as well: activists in other groups on campus and political activists in general. In this context it would be interesting to examine activists of centrist parties against extremes, right against left, and to see where the 'critics' are located today. Have the changes that occurred on the institutional level in modern democracies led to strengthening of the managerial pattern among politicians? We think that an additional study in this direction can give us a picture of trends in politics, not only from the perspective of the system, but also from the point of view and course of action of the activist citizen, who is, after all, the foundation of democracy in our time.

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