RETURNING TO POLITICAL PARTIES?

PARTISAN LOGIC AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE ARAB WORLD

Edited by Myriam Cafesse and Karam Karam
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EDITED BY
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A RETURN TO PARTISAN POLITICS?
PARTISAN LOGICS AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE ARAB WORLD

M. CATUSSE and K. KARAM*

From the outset, the project to edit a book on political parties in the Arab world faced a double challenge.

The first reveals an analytical question, even a theoretical problem: how should one consider special and unique forms of political organization in contexts where political parties exist as structures within clientelist organizations, as tributaries to communitarian or tribal considerations with little real power over the political destiny of their societies?

The second challenge is of an empirical nature: how should one perceive political activity in a context of scarcity using non-current data? Recent publications devoted to the region’s political parties, all persuasions considered, are few in number and deal with the history of these parties more than their sociology. It is therefore incumbent upon the academic investigator to research the parties in the field and identify their current issues.

In view of the transformations that characterize both the public and the private arenas of the Arab political world, this challenge seems stimulating. Observers of the political changes operating in Eastern Europe or Latin

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America attribute to these processes a decisive role in contemporary democratic transitions. Some authors point out that political parties were closely linked to the emergence of “Western representative democracies”, with the party represented as the “child of universal suffrage and democracy” (Weber, cited in Seiler, 2001). In the Arab world, other types of organizations, notably associations have been put forward in recent decades as prime agencies for regime change. If we refuse to anticipate the democratization of regimes, we do not exclude the hypothesis of a pluralization and liberalization of their political spaces. Instead, we propose an examination of the various relationships between the development of political parties and political transformations – transformation of the regime or within the regime (Albrecht and Schlumberger, 2004).

In the light of these issues, what is happening in the parties of North Africa and the Near East? We made the assumption that in a period characterized by a “crisis of representation”, party organizations are particularly interesting places in which to observe changes in political action, against a caricatured image of a political arena characterized by the confrontation between authoritarian regimes in search of a second wind and Islamist movements, often summarily presented as dissident groups or, depending on the case, simply as non-democratic: “in the absence of viable secular parties, political competition in the Arab world is reduced to a dangerous confrontation between Islamists and rulers” (Ottaway and Hamzawy, 2007, p. 3). On the other hand, a focus on the emergence of partisan life, including its unexplored aspects, its defeats and its pretenses, leads to an examination of the changing patterns of political activism, of political competition and political socialization. It is from this perspective that the first chapter aims to think about partisan politics in the region.

We should note that if we chose to work on six Arab countries – Morocco, Algeria, Lebanon, Iraq, Bahrain and Yemen – we did not, in so doing, envision an Arab “political space” (Camau and Geisser, 2003, p. 19). Our reflection draws upon the six countries but is not confined to the borders of the Near East and North Africa. Nor do we claim to cover all situations in the region either. We seek instead to focus on what we can learn from both similarities and differences observed in these countries: a first common denominator certainly lies in the logic of repression with which political parties may have been confronted and the context of limited pluralism in which they develop and evolve: a “feckless pluralism” (Carothers, 2002) resulting in a disconnection
between the governed and the political elite or a system of “dominant-power politics” (Linz and Stepan, 1996) where participation in political life is relatively closed and where contestation is poorly institutionalized. The high-cost of political activism has led to the creation of specific categories of collective action (Geisser, Vairel and Karam, 2006). Oddly, the academic literature has focused little on this issue.

Several of the cases included in this study emphasize political contests which confront the “sociations” and presuppose partisan engagement. Far from making concessions in the face of a voluntary even if only nominally free collective action, primary social loyalties persist and seems to continue to “saturate” the character of political relations and above all one’s reading of these relations (Picard, 2006, p.46). Are such primary social loyalties an obstacle to the development of a partisan system? Do tribalism, ethnic or community networks, local, national or transnational ‘asabiyyat, including their renewed forms, account more efficiently for the defense of special interests and the demands made of central political institutions? (idem)

The case studies we chose are also characterized by important differences, particularly regarding the conditions for the creation of political parties and the rules of the political game. Some of areas studied emerged from colonial experience and have national movements whose legacy remains central. Others, such as Yemen or Bahrain, were spared direct colonial domination (Burgat, 2005, p. 191). Some, Lebanon and Morocco in particular, following independence established a multi-party system, even if this system in practice is strictly proscribed, limited in its actions and diffuse (Tozy, 1999). Others like Algeria’s National Liberation Front or Iraq’s Arab and Socialist Baath party have been consolidated over several decades, into a single party, or “state party”, intolerant of all opposition or dissent. In Bahrain, partisan activity remains forbidden until this day. For each of these countries, the socialist experience differed also markedly.

It is in light of these preliminary remarks that we propose to organize our thoughts regarding three issues: Are the political parties of these six countries in crisis? How have partisan dynamics been affected by the formation of regional States, and how is this legacy expressed today? Do “new parties” stand out today, especially in the vein of Islamist movements which seem to be reinvesting partisan organizations at many levels?
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ARE ARAB PARTIES IN CRISIS?

The theme of the “crisis of parties” or the crisis of the “partisan system” runs through the literature on these six countries. This fact echoes the general thesis of the decline of “classical” partisan organizations. Depending on the analysis, some highlight the persistence of proto-partisan organizations, while others foresee the development of post-partisan systems, with the study of innovative or alternative modes of collective action, social movements, networking, etc. (Lawson and Merkl, 1988). These issues come under the theme of “crisis of representation” (Catusse, 2004) or the crisis of some parties, notably “secular” parties (Ottaway and Hamzawi, 2007). The presumed death of political parties (or of some of them) or at least their ban, leads first to examine three issues raised within our fields:

On the one hand, what are we taking about? Has the partisan paradigm been (inappropriately) “imported” (Badie, 1992, p. 177), or used as a distorting mirror for political organizations that would not recognize themselves in it?

On the other hand, what are the causes of weakness in today’s parties? Empirically, has the partisan call become blunted? How do anti-partisan feelings and denunciations conjugate? Where, in the end, will one find the partisan “counter-performances”?

And finally, does the rhetoric of crisis, denial or the death of partisanship hide the real place that central political organizations occupied and continue to occupy, the leftist movements of yesterday, the Islamist movements today?

An Object without interest?

For nearly a century in most countries of the Arab world, political parties existed formally as instruments for political mobilization and for the organization of political contests and elections. More precisely, the category “party” (ḥizb) is used to speak of political organization and the regulation of such activity, whereas specific signs are used to speak of “clans” (ʾašīra),

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1 For a critical discussion of this literature, see R. Gunther, J.J. Montero, J. Linz (2002).
“communities” (tawâ‘if), “associations” (jam‘iyât), “political clubs” (endiyya siyâsiyya), enterprises (mu‘asasât), unions (naqâbât), and so forth. Often, it is in the context of the national struggle and following independence that the term has stood out. This is the case of hizb al-Istiqlâl (1943) in Morocco, the Lebanese Communist Party in 1924 (el-hizb el shuyû‘î el-lubnani), and the Iraqi Communist Party (el-hizb el shuyû‘î el-iraqî) in 1934. A generic term used in law, the label “party” is challenged in practice. The names given to “parties” may also take other references: “front” like the FLN (jabhat al-tahrîr al-watanî) in Algeria (1954), “movement” (baraka), “gathering” (tajjamû‘), “current” (tayyâr), “union” (ittihâd), “organization” (tanzîm), etc.

Partisanship was also established (or not) in normative law. Following the “second-liberal era” (Salamé, 1991, p. 319 ff.), independence struggles and the emergence of Arab nationalism, political organizations were repeatedly constrained by laws governing “political association” and subordinated to successive regimes – Morocco (1996, 2005, 2006), Algeria (1989, 1997, 2002, 2008), Yemen (1991, 2001), Iraq (1960, 1971, 1991, 2004 and 2005) – associations (Lebanon, 1909, Bahrain, 2006). Some political organizations are banned as a result of a general prohibition concerning political parties, often out of fear of sedition (fitna). This holds true for regimes emerging from nationalist movements (where the party embodies indivisible national unity), but exclusively. In Bahrain for example, between 1975 and 1999, all partisan activity was prohibited. The 1999 law on communitarian associations (ahliyya) prohibited the formation of partisan religious associations and the 2005 law on political associations refused recognition for political associations with a religious base. In Yemen, as noted by contributors to this book, the reference to “partisan spirit” (al-hizbiyya) was connoted disapprovingly: “in collective representations, the reference to the party is associated with division, corruption and exclusive and narrow allegiances. In the 1980s, the Yemeni contemporary political scene was largely influenced and dominated by the formula of the General People’s Congress out of which, at least formally, the structure of partisan or call to hizb in the name of a solidarity which transgressed and stigmatized the partisan divide.”

In Iraq, with the establishment of the Baathist regime, parties were not able to develop without minimal control from the National Front (al-jabba al-wataniyya). In Lebanon, the Syrian Nationalist Social Party (al-hizb as-sûrî al-qawmî-al-ijtîma‘î) was prohibited from 1949 to 1971. In other cases, on the contrary, as in the Moroccan elections

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3 See the contribution of L. Bonnefoy and M. Poirier to this volume.
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of 1997 and following, candidates without party affiliation are compelled to join partisan organizations in order to run for public office.

The media also contribute to “party” naturalization. The term is employed in a consensual manner to give prominence to partisan activities in their political pages. Indeed, the history of the partisan press and wider partisan media is rich and has contributed greatly to informing political debates and giving voice to public intellectuals and ideologues (Aflaq, 1978, Qutb*, 1990, Qasim, 2005). This is verified in the field, including in censored contexts. Each of the two main political associations in Bahrain has a magazine, the association al-Minbar al-taqadumi publishes the magazine Akhbâr al-minbar, and the association al-'Amal al-dimuqrâti publishes the magazine al-Majala al-dimuqrâtiyya (Al-Murshed (2008)); in Morocco, political parties have their own official organs, such as al-Ittibâd al-ishtirakî and Libération for the USFP, al-'Alem and L’Opinion for the Istiqlâl, in addition to at-Tajdid for the Party of Justice and Development, etc. In Lebanon, the television channel al-Manâr is a media tool for Hizballah, Future TV for the Future Movement, OTV for the Free Patriotic Movement, and so on (Lamloum, 2008; 2009). In Yemen, the weekly al-Sahwâ and al-Madîna are the organs of al-Islâh.

In summary, the object “party” is certainly not itself a “new” object in the Arab world. On the contrary, it delimits and is delimited by a political arena for actors (who create parties or criticize them), which draws on a century of political history (a history which shorter in the case of Bahrain).

And yet, in the region the object “political party” has long been regarded as unworthy of attention, especially from the social and political sciences. It must be said that research on the partisan phenomenon was hampered by the regimes and even by political parties themselves, reluctant to face self-criticism (Malki*, 2008). Despite pioneering work (Waterbury, 1970; Batatu, 1978), there are few recent studies on political parties in the Arab world. Those that have been documented essentially take one of three forms: a history of political thought (Hourani 1962, Abdel-Malek 1969, Al-Douri* 1984, Salamé 1987, Khalidi et al. 1991), biographies of leaders, the fate of the individual often mistaken for that of the organization he led (Abdel-Malek, 1970), and finally, partisan monographs (Darraj and Barout*, 1997, 1999, 2000) which are few in number and frequently end with the years 1970/1980.

Recent growth of political parties and contemporary mutations in Arab regimes,

* References followed by an asterisk (*) refer to the bibliography in Arabic.
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have stimulated a prudent renewal of interest in the political object. Over the past
decade, several works in the social sciences have uncovered new problems and
stimulated a renewal of interest.4 Party monographs or political currents denote
the displacement of interest of the scientific community and political actors
(Eshtay* 1997; Charara*1996; Norton, 1999; Kienle, 1990; Tozy 1999; Mallat*,
1993) with most attention focused on the development of Islamist organizations.
Nevertheless, such studies remain relatively marginal compared to studies that
focus or have focused on political currents5 and more recently on economic elites.

Few studies focus on forms of militancy within party structures, on the
recruitment and sociology of militants (Favier 2004; Bennani Chraibi, 2008),
as if “the parties” were devoid of members and merely vehicles for leadership
of personalized clans or networks. This is the thesis of F. El-Khazen (2003),
in Lebanon, who speaks of political parties “in search of partisans.” However,
an exploration of political staff is informative as to shifting social cleavages
and transformation of the logic of collective action within and around the
parties. This is evident in the recent work of M. Bennani-Chraibi (2007) in
Morocco and his contribution to this volume: they allow the diachronic
and synchronic juxtaposition of militancies that are more often opposed: the
opposition of Islamist versus Marxist militancies, or political versus associative
organizations.

Major trends in the literature (in Arabic as in other languages) reveal two
periods of scientific production on political parties. These in turn, reflect the
role of political parties in their respective sociopolitical contexts. The first period
of high interest on the subject developed in the mid-sixties to mid-seventies,
when the regimes stabilized. It was informed on the one hand by research on
political modernization, and on the other hand by the pluralization of national
politics in the aftermath of independence for several of the countries studied.
The second is more recent: it begins in the nineties, when liberalization is listed

4 Today some publications, recent gatherings and research programs reveal renewed interest
as evidenced by the two REMMM volumes (1998, 2006), the conferences and publications of
the LCPS (2002; 2006) and the research program of the Institute for Strategic Studies, etc. See:
Aboujaoudé, 1985; Malki*, 1993; Eshtay*, 1997; Abdel-Jabbar, 2003a-b, etc.
5 To go quickly, in the 60s, on the national movements see: Antonios, 1938; Berque, 1967;
Batatu, 1984; Al-Douri, 1984). For Arabism in the 1960s and 70s see: Khalidi et alii, 1991, Carré,
1993 or Dawashi, 2003. And finally, for Islamis in the 80s, see: Carré et Michaud, 1983; Etienne,
1987; Kepel et Richard, 1990; Roy, 1992; Kepel, 1993; Burgat, 1995; Abdel-Jabbar, 2003a-b, etc.
at the top of national reform agendas. The issue of political Islam attracted the interest of observers and led to a blossoming of political activity in the fields, either because of the retreat of the single party system (as in Algeria), renewed permission to create autonomous political parties (Iraq, Bahrain, North and South Yemen, etc.) or because of successive divisions (Morocco, Iraq).6

Thus in Bahrain, political activity went from eight political organizations (tanzimat siyāsiyya) not recognized as parties in 1973, to fifteen political associations (jam‘iyat siyāsiyya) in 2007. In Algeria, following the 1988 “Spring of Algiers”, over 60 new parties are registered before some are prohibited in 1992 (first and foremost the FIS). Between 1990 and 1991, with reunification, the number of Yemeni parties grew from single party hegemonic systems that characterized both North Yemen (General People’s Congress) and South Yemen (Socialist Party) to a multiparty system with about forty official and recognized parties. In Morocco, with each election, the number of parties grew to 30 registered parties in the 2009 legislative elections. For that matter, observers of Moroccan politics speak of “scissiparity” and “atomization of the partisan field” (Santucci, 2006b). “New” parties seem to emerge from lengthy “fraternal” dissidence or “filial” frustrations which the party is unable to resolve internally (idem.). For A. Khatibi (1998), the multiplication of political parties, by splitting and successive cloning, expresses the predominance of a pervasive culture of authority that creates the bond of political community through “birthright and patriarchy”, the result of which is a legitimization of any new political party founded on the principle of a “symbolic lineage.”

This cautious return to the party, for both political actors and researchers, is accompanied by a questioning of the relevance of the concept. Thus, not all contributions to the special issue of the journal, Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée (REMMM) devoted to political parties in the Maghreb (Baduel and Catusse, 2006), dealt specifically with party organizations. Thus, M. Djaziri (2006) questions the point of using this concept to describe political organizations in Libya when partisan activity is prohibited and punishable by death. The same question is raised in this volume with respect to Bahrain. Two additional contributions to this special issue focus on political movements that do not take a partisan form. In the case of ‘arch in

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6 For a table representing the divisions inside certain Iraqi political parties, see the contribution of A. Jameel* and F. Abdel-Jabbar (2008) to the project Arab Political Parties Studies: www.appstudies.org.
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Algeria, K. Dirèche-Slimani (2006) considers that we are facing new names, actors and practices that “upset the traditional representations of politics in Kabyle and Algerian milieux”. Indeed, we frequently encounter this problem in the region, where the supply of political organizations is particularly dense and where political parties pale in comparison to advocacy organizations and social movements (Karam, 2006; Bennani Chraibi and Fillieule, 2003; Geisser, Karam and Vairel, 2006). T. Desrues (2006) shows that Moroccan agrarian syndicalism is precisely a kind of mobilization that refused the partisan form: “the corporatist formula which tends to become institutionalized [in Moroccan agrarian politics] provides, without consideration for the risk of political competition and cooptation, a means of professional control as well as a monopoly and a personalization of representation.” We will have the opportunity to re-discuss these two arguments and the questions they raise in relation to other examples.

Yet other cases show that usage of party references is varied and evokes multiple processes. As with European communist parties (Kriegel, 1970), parties are sometimes exalted by capitalizing and singularizing the name: this is often the case where the political landscape is dominated by a single party, and is true in Lebanon today, where the party Hīzbollah is commonly shortened simply to “The Party” (al-Hīzbollah). Nevertheless, the article by Catherine Le Thomas in this book and other authors show that precisely in this case, the label “party” may be simplistic or inaccurate to describe the social and political activities, which is to say religious and military activities, enacted in the haze of “satellite” organizations (Harb, 2005, p. 167) that some authors have characterized as “counter-society” (Charara*, 1996).

North Africa and the Middle East have also been the breeding grounds for a reflection on regional “proto-parties”, a re-actualization of Max Weber’s concept (Camau and Geisser, 2003).7 Thus, the societies examined experienced a blossoming of “parties”, more often described as elitist groups committed to the pursuit of profits and a place of choice among competing channels of cooptation, rather than as groups with committed organizational leadership seeking power itself and building popular support through democratic means.

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7 This designates partisan formations that are still in an embryonic stage, evolving in a kind of partisan proto-history. (before the introduction of universal voting in Europe) as opposed to parties exercising mediation functions, in the name of a certain idea or general interest founded on the free association and not on primary integrated forms. (Camau and Geisser, 2003)
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(La Palombara and Weiner, 1966). More likely, these organizations would make a place for themselves in the political arena by renouncing ambition and the exercise of power. M. Shtuway* (2006) notes that in Jordan the near majority of founders of political parties that emerged after 1992 (the date of approval of political parties and multiparty system) are incumbent bureaucratic elites. Some have sought to create a state party, using these structures to reinvest public institutions in the era of democracy. Such parties have for the most part remained elitist and their membership a reflection of the calculation of personal political gain. In Yemen, the development of the Yemeni Congregation for Reform (al-Islâh) beginning in 1990 (the year when Yemen adopted a multi-party system) played out in waltz-like hesitation with public authorities. As shown in the contribution of L. Bonnefoy and M. Poirier, “discreet, peaceful and intellectual,” the party elite manage their own inclusion into the intricacies of power, “a political scene that pluralizes (through the institutionalization of the opposition) and ‘de-pluralizes’ at the same time (through monopolization of government resources).”

Furthermore, if since 2003 (the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the fall of the Baathist regime), the number of declared Iraqi parties exceeds 200, “few of them have a history or political activity of note so as to be taken into account on the Iraqi political scene. Most of them are simply political slogans. For this reason, it is difficult to classify them, especially as they have no clear activity that could indicate their ideological orientation, no communication, and some of them do not even have local headquarters.”

This raises the issue of labeling and the very construction of the social category “political party”, underlined by the different contributions to this volume. This is particularly interesting given that “the play on words is [certainly] more present in countries in which political organizations have not been yet stabilized” (Offerlé, 1987, p. 7).

These doubts about the uses of the concept and therefore about its scientific value and the obvious risk of conceptual stretching deserve attention. As an analytical category, as a label or stigma in the political competition (ibidem), as an identity marker, as a tool for mobilization and even for manipulation, the “political party” is polymorphic. This pushes us to question seriously the conditions for a

8 See the contribution of A. Jameel* and F. Abdel-Jabbar (2008) to the project Arab Political Parties Studies. www.appstudies.org.
“return to the party” as we propose. The pertinence and usefulness of studying partisan phenomena in the region – if only because political actors organize themselves into political parties – and we here should take such behavior into consideration – is less about rediscovering a “new political object” or giving meaning to an organizational shell devoid of content, than it is about considering the region as the source of an original and plural construction of politics to be analyzed as such.

Failure of the parties

Beyond the question of defining political parties, readings show that not only is the partisan object considered without interest in the region, but that political parties are often left out by the observers. This leads to analyses that are frequently normative and present the disadvantage of implicitly or explicitly disqualifying the object of the study (if this can be justified in the context of actual political action, this is very annoying from a strict approach of social sciences).

The weakness of parties

Indeed, the view most frequently encountered in this volume is that of the “weakness of political parties”. It is about “a common place” that we observe elsewhere (Fretel and Lefebvre, 2004). Such weakness is here aggravated by the extreme limitations on the pluralism in which the parties develop. According to F. Abdel-Jabbar, two elements essentially contributed to the “weakening” of the Iraqi Communist Party: the repressive apparatus of the Baathist regime between 1970 and 1980, and, from 2003, the strengthening of political and militia violence, the confessional conflict and the development of conservative Islamist movements, which have undermined the popular base of the party. Paradoxically, it is against all this that the Communist Party now hopes to strengthen its project. This is the same evidence that M. Ottaway and A. Hamzawi (2007, p. 1) bring forward: “Conditions in most Arab countries are quite difficult for secular parties, just as they are for any political organization seeking to act independently of a government or even more, to challenge a government. But the crisis of secular parties is also in part of their own making.”

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9 See the contribution of F. Abdel-Jabbar to this volume.
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Asserting that political parties are weak invokes a sociological explanation. Many elements however, and we will return to these later, prove that, it is necessary to locate this on a scale relative to political strength or weakness. Such an approach is also an element in the public discourse and the maneuverings of political actors.

The argument is often used by political parties, especially in times of tension and internal crises as evidenced by the Lebanese Communist Party in 2005 in the aftermath of the assassination of Rafik Hariri. At that time a dissident group denounced the line taken by the party that led to catastrophic results, which affected the party and its supporters. “The party’s effectiveness has been reduced and the party is isolated from the people, devoid of intellectual or political influence. The party is weakened, its alliance with groups close to its ideological family utterly defeated”10

Such “anti-party” rhetoric and the discrediting of partisan systems continue to operate and are used as often by “outsiders” as they are by the public authorities. Such discourse is largely fueled by opinion makers.

In the end, the arguments advanced that such weaknesses prevent parties from fulfilling the roles “expected of them,” are numerous: the authors first denounce organizational weakness. Parties are often described as poorly organized, highly personalized, even at the service of a man, a family, or a clan like the Takritis for Iraqi Baathists (Luizard, 1998), or as a confessional or ethnic community as in Lebanon (El-Khazen*, 2002). These papers underscore that political parties are often characterized by a low degree of institutionalization, the absence of militants and fragile resources. Many such parties appear only during electoral periods. Their ideologies are weak. Finally, they would only rarely be capable of securing, monitoring, and controlling effective mobilizations. In other words, according to these authors, parties are mainly empty shells which would explain how it is that many groups are simply personifications of a partisan life constructed around the groups’ leadership activities: the party “said this” or “did that”. This finding is not limited to the fields addressed in this volume.11

10 See the contribution of C. Eshtay* to the project Arab Political Parties Studies, www.app-studies.org.
11 In this we recommend the conclusions on a much larger scale of B. Reilly (2008).
Another critique of political parties in the region is the charge of “dysfunctionality.” The argument is sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit: the party, it is claimed, does not function like a “real” party. Alternatively, parties are said to “no longer be what they used to be” in reference to some golden age often de-historicized, or, to go quickly, the Arab liberal age (Salamé, 1991, 1994).

On this basis, political parties in Arab countries are not always considered as such by analysts. Party organizations are considered elements of authoritarianism, poorly organized for the conquest of power and reproducing within themselves an authoritarian and personalized behavior devoid of civic conscience. The “developmentalist” literature thus made of Arab parties, foreign difficult to transplant in political societies where civil society is challenged by primary social loyalties: family, clan, and ethnic or communitarian groupings. For B. Badie (1989) for example, three party features would be “non-transferable” because shaped historically in a European context: the “sociation” in Weber’s sense of the decline of communitarian societies, the rationale linking the development of political parties to the conquest of power and electoral mobilization and finally, “the partisan game” which would impose itself onto other social divisions (Charaf Eddin*, 2006, and El-Kourani*, 2004).

These arguments are neither empirically or theoretically satisfying. Culturalist explanations (by instance in Islam, a mutual distrust arising from the schism, or the quest for the *Umma*) produce de-historicized explanations. The weight of history on the fragile formation of Nation-States and the stigma of the single-party system are certainly more interesting subjects for discussion. In fact, revolutions and independence movements have contributed largely to defining the political arenas where conflict (and partition) are not institutionalized, where unanimity is incarnate in the independent and revolutionary state as a State party: as in the case of the FLN in Algeria or of the Iraqi *Baath* (Batatu, 1978; Devlin, 1976) where the contrast is strong between partisan excitement following independence – right vs. left, tradition vs. modernity, conservatism vs. progressivism, urban elites vs. new middle classes, pro-west vs. pro-soviet, capitalism vs. socialism, religious vs. secular, etc… – and the total silence that “falls like a lead screed” a decade later (Picard, 1996). The *Baath* party and their leadership “clique” eliminated all forms of contestation even within the party (Luizard, 1998). Can we still speak then of...
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The ambition of a monopolist party is that of power without sharing, without alternating, without competition: “promoted as a basic institution of the state, the nature of the political party is changed. A number of political scientists designate such a state by the term ‘party-state’, and the hyphen is essential. In no way should we consider a party-state as comprised of a system of parties” (Seiler, 2001, p. 7). From the organizational representation of interests and from ideas involved in political competition, it becomes a central hub of the power apparatus, regulating in a total manner the political and social life.

In other cases, if the functioning of parties is not questioned, it is the partisan system itself that is described as dysfunctional: J.C. Santucci (2006b) describes a Moroccan multiparty system as either a purely symbolic system and foil for personal gain or as an instrument of political control. He shows how the recurrent and exponential multiplication of political parties in the country is mere scissiparity feeding a feckless pluralism: While keeping the rotation and the competition for power out of reach for their citizens, public authorities tolerate a form of opposition and political expression that does not question the legitimacy of leadership. This thesis is shared by many authors who believe that the monarchy, in order to better control the political game, “accompanies” the emergence of social conflicts which would otherwise translate as the emergence of a political party. In contrast to what one may describe as a “partisanization” of the political scene in Eastern Europe during the last decade (Heurtaux, 2005), here, the exponential development of partisanship discourages the development of parties. In a game that is becoming loose, they are unable to monopolize the political game. Even in Lebanon, where political life is largely governed by partisan organizations, these are often described as limited by confessional representation, even reduced to organizations in the service of a man or a family.

In sum, the monist and unanimous representation of society and the State as driven by nationalist and revolutionary movements or by the monarchal institutions has, in many cases, discredited partisan representations of political society (or parts of society). Hegemonic parties in Algeria and Iraq that have hindered partisan life are characterized by their grip on society and their “nationalization” of public life. And where multiparty systems developed, these did so essentially as a “limited pluralism” in which real power lies elsewhere than in the partisan arena (at the Palace, in the case of Morocco, in the communities in the case of Lebanon).
The absence of democracy and civil society?

The failures attributed to partisan organizations and systems in the region are often associated with two “failings” endemic to political society: a lack of democracy and a lack of civil society. We will not dwell here on the rich literature that these issues have generated (Bishara*, 1998) nor with the contrasting positions to which they have given rise. The debate, “why the Arab world is not democratic?” (Salamé, 1991) has weighed on the marginalization of political parties for two decades.

We have already noted that parties are generally presented as necessary elements for the emergence and development of representative democracies. The structure and institutional nature of partisan systems contribute to the organization of political competition while the forms assumed by political life in representative democracies promote rational and bureaucratic party structures (Gaxie, 1996). Political practices have been professionalized for the benefit of institutionalized partisan structures. Political parties have succeeded in imposing themselves on at least two privileged arenas: the national Parliament and elections. In these arenas, political parties have imposed themselves as vital to the conception and organization of representative democracy, regulating political life, by affirmation of “political rights” for example, or by legislation of electoral laws, the regulation of political organizations and oversight of public finance. They are also, in theory at least, and as final arbiters for the selection of political personnel, the principal means for channeling national elites.

Such history, anchored as it is in geography and circumstance, is sometimes expanded to explain, by reverse logic, the weakness or dysfunction of partisan systems in other parts of the world, and particularly in the Arabic world (Baduel, 1996, El Kourani*, 2004). Two points are emphasized by these authors: first, the parties could not develop because of the authoritarian characteristic of the system: either because they were banned (the cost of collective action is then exorbitant), or because they are diverted from their purpose. J. Waterbury (1970) for instance wrote that in Morocco, “opposition to His Majesty” became a systematic “segmentarism” in “opposition to His Majesty”. Moreover, for a context in which dissension is risky, the majority program finds itself challenged by a call for unanimity. Secondly, and conversely, the absence of partisanship strengthens the authoritarian regime: “The crisis of secular parties is emerging as a major obstacle to democratic transformation in the Arab world” (Ottaway and Hamzawi, 2007, p. 2). These approaches help to explain how partisan and political systems are narrowly interrelated. However, they are also tautological,
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even simplistic for some; if it can be shown that Western democracies and partisan politics are historically mixed, it remains difficult to make the case that they are necessarily and unequivocally related (Manin, 1996). From this point of view, the undeniably partisan Arab life amply documents the modalities of a multi-party system which is both authoritative and limited (Santucci, 2006a).

Another supposed defect weighing upon partisan life in Arab societies is the difficulty in developing civil society and alternatively, the importance of notables in the political process. Some authors approach the use of “civil society” and related media coverage in Arab countries as mere imported objects without socio-historical roots in the community, or even, as a new ideological tool in the hands of Arab intellectuals confronted with the failure of modernizing projects and the strengthening of the Islamist discourse (Bishara*, 1998, p. 271). In our case, and in view of the escalating demands of civil society and increased calls for action “in the name of civil society”, and in view of the comparative devaluation of party organizations, the debate lies elsewhere. Several authors particularly in a European context have described the emergence of the party system as a transition from a system of parliamentary dominance of party organizations to one in which party organizations dominate parliament (Duverger, 1992): an empowered civil society is perceived as a counterbalance to the power of the elites. Field observers however, frequently insist, not only on personalized political functionality, but on the weak linkages between political society and civil society. If civil society is frequently described as the precursor of democratic transformations, we are less concerned with the improbable or “imported” character of such organizations than we are with the tepid political demands that are presented in the public sphere by associations or movements which call themselves “civil society”.

On the one hand, partisan identities appear fragile and poorly linked to the construction of causes in civil society. This, at least, is what several of the contributions to this volume highlight. Groups have difficulty organizing mobilizations around social cleavages, and even more so, in gelling these cleavages in the words of S. Lipset and S. Rokkan (1967), as indicated by M. Djaziri (1997) in his discussion of political parties in the Maghreb. This is also noted in the sections that follow, the studies of the “Yemeni Congregation for Reform” (al-Islâh) or the Justice and Development Party (PJD) in Morocco. The first gathers tribal elites, merchants, and religious people around a flexible and adaptable ideology. The second tends to euphemize, at least with regard to municipal

12 See the contribution of L. Bonnefoy and M. Poirier to this volume.
professions, its relation to Islam and its social discourse. Proffering a managerial approach and “moral clientelism”, the PJD addresses a heterogeneous electorate\(^{13}\) while C. and F. Eshtay* (2008) show that the contemporary Lebanese Communist Party priority is more concerned with the refusal of sectarian division than it is with the defense of class interests, perhaps because, for Lebanese communists, sectarian divisions would prevent the expression of social cleavages.\(^{14}\)

Political formations are often organized around a single individual and serve that person’s pleasure (Messara 1996). Such individuals include notables, families, clans, groups that adapt and adopt new clothes according to the transformations of the political scene: the Hamula in Palestine (Legrain, 1996), \(tā’ifa\) (communities) in Lebanon [Picard, 1994, Messara 1996], the reinvented “\(\text{\textasciitilde}\text{\textasciitilde}\)\(\text{\textasciitilde}\) asabiyya (Seurat, 1985), etc. According to this perspective, the “politics of the name” trumps “the politics of number” (or of majority). Individual leaders and families; not political parties, eventually monopolize the levers of political mobilization and representation. It occurs for instance among Lebanese political parties, where transmission of partisan responsibility by blood ties (and sometimes in the name of bloodshed) is common. It is also observed in the tribal identification of certain parties.

Whatever it is, these approaches must be nuanced. Recent studies show how individuals and the criteria of notability transform and embrace the changes of the partisan system (Favier, 2003). Parties themselves create their own elites, who are more or less faithful depending on the case.\(^{15}\) At the same time, we see militant activists who speak forcefully and translate social divisions and conflicts, sometimes with heavy repression: in a nutshell, leftist movements yesterday, Islamist movements today.

**And yet they mobilize...**

In summary, the parties in these countries are “misidentified” political objects, suspected of inconsistency, of structural weaknesses, and victims of a type of authoritarian regime developed during the twentieth century. However, as pointed

\(^{13}\) See the contribution of M. Catusse and L. Zaki to this volume.

\(^{14}\) See the contribution of C. and F. Eshtay* (2008) to the project Arab Political Parties Studies, [www.appstudies.org](http://www.appstudies.org).

\(^{15}\) See the contribution of M. Bennani-Chraibi to this volume.
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out by Kh. Suleiman* (2004, p. 436) in a stimulating conclusion of a book on the internal democracy of the Arab parties, the question as to whether or not there are political parties in the Arab world is not in itself very enlightening, “otherwise, what should one call these dozens of organizations that claim body and soul the tribute of political parties?” (ibidem).

The political landscapes of the countries included in our study feature organizations that mobilize and contribute to regulating the political game on behalf of partisan identity. More than parties engaged in an electoral contest – many have distanced, even excluded themselves from electoral politics – they have all contributed to founding diverse activisms.

Despite the lack of credibility or confidence revealed in the studies with regard to the partisan system and growing rates of abstention in the most recent polls,16 as well as other indicators of a “crisis of the parties”, some party organizations continue to provide structures of commitment and leadership, especially at election time. Hence the need to abandon an “objectifying” and unequivocal conception of political parties, in favor of a study of a variety of cases, including parties that are not necessarily in the spotlight, and that may be witnessing the transformations and constraints which face political processes as much as the more studied political groups.

The Path of History

The approach we have adopted in this book favors an historical perspective. To understand partisan transformations one must first understand how the development of political parties and their current metamorphosis are linked to the history of regional State formation. At a comparative level, the concern of historical context allows us to explore recurring forms or innovative features in recent partisan formations.

In view of the complexification of the political landscape and beyond the “democratization” or “crises of the parties” rhetoric, there appear two narrative histories on the partisan phenomenon in the region. Like the studies compiled

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16 Evidently with exceptions, as evidenced by the high participation rates for the 2009 Lebanese legislative elections.
in this book, most contemporary works evoke a recent “transformation” or “change” with respect to an earlier period, that of “old regime”, which should determine, at least in part, a contemporary socio-political context. This is so much so that two historical narratives seem to combine, that of a short time frame of contemporary changes, sometimes attributed to a process of democratization or authoritarian reform, and that of a longer time frame allowed for the formation of political regimes, for the singularity of chosen trajectories, for the reinterpretation of primary social relations and modern political identities. It is in the interlacing of this long history and this short history that the stakes of a metamorphosis of the Arab parties can be understood. The first wears the glasses of comparison with the international reformist agenda; while the second positions parties in their social, historical contexts, and even with respect to specific places.

Short histories that resemble each other

At first glance, the recent trajectories of Arab partisan societies prove remarkably similar. In the six countries of the study, leaders and activists of political parties are engaged in a new deal, with different stakes that vary depending on the case: “Alternance” with the nomination of a socialist Prime Minister in Morocco, the introduction of multiparty politics, the interruption of the electoral process and the search for “civil concord” in Algeria, emergence from the Lebanese civil war, the unification of the two Yemen’s, the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq, development of a “national pact” in Bahrain. It seems that the redefinition of “political pacts” (Leca, 1994) or the development of novel political contracts is at play. This new era for the parties (with possibly new political spaces for action and legitimization) falls at the intersection of three main processes: those of the internal dynamics of parties, those of the changing rules of partisanship, and finally those of international influences.

Internal dynamics

The investigation of what J. Charlot (1989, p. 361) called the “hidden side” of parties, their inner and backstage lives, has not given rise to many studies on our fields. In the case of Turkey, S. Vaner (1985, p. 5) makes the same claim. He explains this by the fact that, in this case, such studies provide little of use to party
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differentiation: most parties in Turkey are “cadre” parties, little inclined to seek new members (Massicard, 2007, p. 8). Such is certainly less evident in the Arab world, at least in our fields of investigation. But, for lack of reliable and detailed data, it is not easy to show, beyond the conventional presentation of political parties.

It is true that the doors to partisan organizations are not often easily opened. In addition to opacity or the withholding of information a favorite strategy for some organizations, access in the field is largely conditioned by the constraints of repressive regimes and the careful reflexes they can generate. Proximity in the field or permission to investigate on the part of the organization is often necessary to maintain an extended presence. Such an approach offers the advantage of access to the party’s inner workings, including familiarity with both tacit and explicit organizational codes. But this in turn can reduce the effective critical distancing necessary for analysis or even lead to different forms of censorship in the restitution of findings.

Based on available surveys, some big common tendencies are distinguished. We will merely point out here those that seem most interesting.

Many partisan formations are seeking a second wind in face of the alienation they suffer and the trend towards professionalization of their activists. In most cases, the number of militant activists has been decreasing even though, paradoxically, the pluralization of the political landscape gives them more leeway as public actors. This translates not only as a high abstention rate, but as difficulty in recruiting candidates and reliance on untrained paid staff. The difficulties are also expressed as fickle a partisan loyalty (known to Moroccans as “partisan nomadism”) which contrasts inversely with the far more radical and committed militancy observed elsewhere. As for partisan activism, it has become more professionalized, salaried even institutionalized. If in some cases this is evidence of a lack of mobilization (benevolent activism would no longer be what it was) in other cases, it is described by observers as well as by militant partisans, as the gage of superior political efficacy: such is the case of the PJD in Morocco, where local officials, and all partisan groups highlight their political virginity (their recent entry into the political fray) but also the professionalization of their elected activities to which they would devote themselves totally.17

Recruitment of political personnel plays an important role in partisan

17 See the contribution of M. Catusse and L. Zaki to this volume.
transformations The centralization of partisan organizations and their personalization continue to be highlighted. The institutionalization of managerial authority however, expressed for example in the organization of pointless and uncompetitive party congresses, is not always the rule. In generational terms, Arab parties management frequently recruited among militants of the 1950s and 60s is today in need of renewal. Thus, most of the papers in this volume reflect managerial tensions between opposing currents, the old guard being sometimes reversed or at least marginalized, weakened as in the case of al-Islāb in Yemen or al-Wefāq in Bahrain or the Moroccan USFP. For new parties, leadership is not always uniform. Unlike the purges or exclusions of the Iraqi and Syrian Baathist parties, the link between the party and its elected officials is quite often fluid and negotiated. Candidate selection is variable and may just as well reflect bargaining or some form of negotiation between the national governing body and the local elite. Such negotiations arise in consultation with the “party base” but are subject to rigorous selection and consistent with the representation the party leadership wishes to impart to the candidate, as in the case of the Moroccan PJD.

Studies of party members and activists are virtually non-existent whence the great value of the work initiated recently by M. Bennani-Chraibi, on the political personnel of Moroccan parties, a necessary piece of scholarship unmatched on the scale of the region. Combining a quantitative treatment of data describing activist career paths with qualitative analysis, the study will apply unpublished and detailed data to examine the process of diversification and political recruitment. In her contribution to this book, M. Bennani-Chraibi reveals how the Socialist Union of Popular Forces is changing its political leadership and how a party of militants has been transformed into a party of notables.

Observers will often confuse the supporter, the member, party executives, militants, even the reader of the partisan press or the client of the local or national political leader. This is more often the case when membership conditions are blurred, informal or poorly defined, or hidden when a party is illegal, or when, as with the Lebanese Hizbollah, and in earlier times, as with certain communist party organizations (Kriegel, 1970, p. 214-220), operating procedures were secretive

18 See the contribution of B. Bennani Chraibi to this volume.
19 See the contribution of M. Catusse and L. Zaki to this volume.
20 See the contribution of B. Bennani Chraibi to this volume.
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and not publicly disclosed. Joining a party may include initiation, but in all cases it produces social and political identities. The chapter of C. Le Thomas in this book demonstrates that the latter emerge in structures of socialization, of controlling or of training that are not strictly limited to narrowly defined party limits.

After inspiring much new work through the 1970s and 80s (Hottinger, 1961, 1966; Gubser, 1973, Johnson 1986; Gilsenan, 1986), studies of party leadership became relatively infrequent. Even if most studies highlighted the often oligarchic organization of political groups, recent work, for example in the Middle East, shows that the leadership figures, or zu'amâ' of yesterday are quite different from those of today. Not only do the inherited relationships between za'im and his followers combine with generational effects, but the institution of zu'amâ', by which a leader ensures the loyalty of the local community in exchange for economic redistribution and defense of community interests, is also changing with the transformations of political economy (Picard, 2001). This translates even within partisan structures, especially when weakly institutionalized, as a search for new resources, strategies, and leadership qualities. This is even more striking when, at the disappearance of a senior member, new leadership seeks to revive not only their social networks within and without the party, but also the charismatic dimension of their power.

Finally, in terms of internal dynamics, problems arising from the use of weapons have proven determinant in several cases: in some cases it has led to disarming militias (for example, in post war Lebanon), transiting from armed modes to peaceful modes of political regulation (as in Lebanon, but also in Yemen following unification); while in other cases, as in Iraq, where partisan activists, whether to protect, impose or oppose, took up arms and radicalized their actions following the fall of S. Hussein.

Beyond that there is the question of partisan resources. As noted by E. Massicard (2007, p.12ff.) with respect to the knowledge of Turkish political parties, it can translate into two dimensions: those of the collective resources of parties and those of the individual capital of their members. Their financial resources are little known. Emphasis is placed on collectively controlled resources, including the conquest or preservation of political posts, (elective or administrative), the social rooting of associations and other structures which serve to advance recruitment and promote party loyalty, and ethnic (as in Yemen) or confessional communities (as in Lebanon or Iraq). For instance, in Iraq following the 2003 invasion, there were created twelve new Christian
political groups, fourteen Turkmen, and four Kurdish formations (Jameel and Abdel-Jabbar*, 2008). In Algeria, the Gathering for Culture and Democracy, while not explicitly Berber, claims a cultural affinity to the Kabyle Berbers.

However that may be, the remarkable introduction of regulatory measures for party finances through legislation governing party formation and elections constitutes a new situation for the partisan life of several of the countries in our survey. Such legislation cuts both ways, however. First, the legislation addresses a concern for transparency in the partisan world and its resources. At the same time, such legislation operates like the sword of Damocles in the hands of public power, who see in this legislation new ways to legally interfere in the internal affairs of political parties, notably their challengers.

Rules of the partisan game

A number of substantially similar reform programs seems to preoccupy contemporary partisan actors. Rather than deal in general terms with liberalization or “de-liberalization” of political regimes (Kienle, 2001), we focused on the evolution of structures of political opportunities (Tarrow 1998) that represent renovations or changes in the legislative framework within which partisan actors are constrained to act. As it happens, such changes have accelerated over the last decade.

Let us first mention the adoption of new constitutions, often with referendums upon which competing political parties took positions (Morocco, 1996; Bahrain, 2002; Yemen, 1990, 1994, 2001; Algeria, 1996, 2002, 2008; Iraq, 2005; Lebanon, 1990). In Lebanon, Yemen and Algeria, constitutional reform was less about pluralizing the political arena than it was about ending civil conflict and endorsing a set of common rules based on a political pact that “sets rather the preconditions for different political supplies to be self-restrained and consistent enough not to be considered by the other party, or parties, as an unacceptable threat that would justify the breach of ‘democratic rules’” (Leca, 1994, p. 36). In other cases, the adoption of this new political framework relates more to the search for regulation of political conflicts arising over the issue of power and of the imagined political community. Iraq since 2003 is the most striking example.
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These countries have also experienced major reforms in terms of “political rights” and of the “right to politics”, the distinction having been suggested by J. Heurtaux (2005) with respect to Poland. Following 1989, what he terms the “partisanization” process is played out in struggles on the codification of political competition, with a strong tendency toward the “juridicization of political activity” and the “politicization of law”. Over the past decade our fields of research have indeed experienced the transformation of law governing political activities – electoral laws, laws on political parties, freedom of the press, public and associative liberties, etc. – inaugurating a kind of “political pluralism”, at least from a procedural viewpoint. The substantial character of this pluralism, however, is challenged by each of the chapters that follow. If Lebanese parliamentarians did not adopt a new law on political parties, the drafters of the constitutional reform which passed the Taif agreement (1990) affirmed the liberal orientation of the existing law. In the other cases, the most recent legislation liberalizes the space of partisan action, while retaining tight even arbitrary oversight by the central government. This accompanies the remarkable growth in recognized political parties that we have already noted.

Constitutional reform and the legalization of multiple parties in Algeria, followed by the suspension of the electoral process in 1991 offers a telling analysis of the hesitant waltz of political reform. The transition to multiparty system for the benefit of reforms “from above” and corresponding mobilizations “from below” seem like an excessively fragile prelude to democratization. Regarding multiparty “false pretenses”, some stress, as in Morocco, that “after all, power remains concentrated in the hands of the same forces since independence, through the institutions that crown or mediate their political preponderance.” (Santucci, 2006a, p. 162). But there is also evidence of the emergence of new political forces in recent decades, supported largely by the legal and political reforms that “opened” the partisan scene: The Party of Justice and Development in Morocco, the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria, Hizballah in Lebanon, al-Islâb in Yemen, the Sadrist Movement or Hizb al-fadîla al-Islâmî in Iraq, etc.

21 The political parties gained a monopoly on political competition despite unfavorable conditions: the form “party” imposes itself on other concurrent forms of political action, for example associative.
The influence of external factors: a domino effect?

Obviously, the short life-cycles that characterize the partisan landscape across the region are intimately linked to transnational processes and especially to the neo-liberal agenda.

Engaged over the years, and even decades for some, in a process of economic liberalization which has accompanied the discourse on democratization (or at least of the need to comply with a number of procedural criteria), regimes are in the process of renegotiating their return to a market economy. These socio-economic changes are not without effect on partisan formations that assume, in a more or less pluralistic and reactive manner, the demands arising from the social cleavages brought about by these reforms (El-Salahi* and El-Maitama, 2008). This raises at least two questions: First, why do socialist parties have so much trouble advocating for social claims which arise in the wake of the neo-liberal steamroller? And secondly, has the development of Islamist parties been nurtured, at all or in part by the new populism and social consequences of precipitous economic reforms? Remarkably, and despite the impending economic question for each of the countries studied, an economic agenda (and controversies that might arise) is virtually absent from most political parties’ programs.

We should note that the Arab regimes on which we have focused display autonomy in coping with what would be an international agenda of democratization; even more so if we consider the process of “partisanization”. In their collective work on political parties in conflict-prone societies, published by the United Nations, B. Reilly and P. Nordlund (2008) do not include any Arab parties, as if these were to be excluded from a collective reflection on the role of partisanship in the process of democratization, mediation of interests and the regulation of conflict. Finally, international assistance programs directed toward Arab political parties are of recent origin and modest compared to the donor assistance provided for the development of civil society, whereas elsewhere, “spurred by the liberalization of previously Autocratic states in African, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America, the international community began to invest heavily in concepts of democratic promotion, electoral support and ‘good governance’ as essential elements of economic development and the creation of stable and peaceful states” (ibidem, p. 5).

In sum, in view of the short history of these last fifteen years, the development of partisan dynamics in the six countries discussed in this
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volume shows a number of remarkable common characteristics: their number increases significantly. They are formally subject to new game rules. Ideological orientations have become more accommodating of strategic considerations, including partisan formations who claim a distinctive ideological identity, notably Islamists. Partisan actors are more inclined to cultivate interdependent relations with regimes and central administrations, be it in terms of co-optation, prohibition, infiltration or distancing. Legal interpretation, arbitrary behavior and public finance for political organizations, for the most part dependent upon public resources (with the notable exceptions of Lebanon or Iraq), place political parties under “probationary liberty”, and the constant threat of legal sanctions and even dissolution.  

Finally, and contrary to the professional militant of the 1960/1970’s, the relation to the party seems precarious: most forms of activism are flexible, fluid, and prone to various “infidelities”. This is measured as much at the level of the militant base as it is among political leaders themselves who change hats or create new parties at will, depending on circumstances and the ability of their own partisan formation to advance their individual careers. What follows is a blurring of labels that confuses even the militant base and reduces opportunities for recruitment. In addition, the political parties generally do not to be key stakeholders in the political process, nor in policy making, especially because of the weakness and marginalization of parliamentary institutions. The relationship of political parties to “civil society” or at least to a vast network of associations, is finally renegotiated: Far from a binary or Manichean scheme between a vulnerable partisan society, and an active and dynamic civil society, analysis of the partisan phenomenon in our field shows, as if proof were needed, the extent to which the spheres are entangled. At times, when partisan activity was prohibited, the political association served as a front, just as the association al-Taw’yya al-islâmiyya (the Islamic awakening) in Bahrain served as a façade for the Islamist party al-Da’wâ at a time when political associations were outlawed. At other times, the association may serve as the party’s operational arm, organizing social activities, guiding and training youth, outreach to certain

22 For example: the Lebanese Forces Party in Lebanon in 1994, The Islamic Salvation Front, FIS (Front Islamic du Salut) in Algeria in 1991, the Bahraini Center for Human Rights in 2004, etc.
23 With notable exceptions: for example the militant base of Hezbollah in Lebanon has shown for two decades, and in different situations (elections, mobilizations, etc.), a solid allegiance to the party and to its leader.
24 For a table tracing the link between associations and political parties in Bahrain see: El-Khawaja and El-Mursheed (2008).
25 See the contribution of C. Le Thomas to this volume.
target populations, at a local level,\textsuperscript{26} in the universities, etc. In other cases, associative and partisan structures compete so that human rights or civil liberties organizations assume the fight for political causes such as scheduling elections or the reform of political laws. It is worth noting that among our various fields of expertise, other forms of interaction come into play in terms of mobilizations and the organization of partisan society: communitarian groups, families, tribes, these are the glue of partisan organizations that are true to their "primary social interests" or undermine partisan mobilizations which transgress their social organization, in the name of class interests or betrayal of the social order.

\textbf{The singular effects of the long history}

Beyond these common features, the singularities of partisan trajectories in all six countries can be explained in large part by the specifics of the history of formation of their States. Three entries allow us to discuss this:

First, the local history of the concept of political party is sometimes very recent and poorly consolidated and at other times, installed and tested. Sometimes the object "political party" is clearly distinguished from other forms of political organizations. At other times it is confused with other types of mobilization.

Next, the history of the major political movements is closely interwoven with that of the formation of nation states. In Morocco or in Algeria, parties led the movement for national liberation. In other cases, parties played a secondary role behind personalities or political and community leaders. The national struggle, decolonization and construction of the nation state gave rise to different political and partisan situations. In Yemen (prior to unification) and in Iraq, there developed the single party or quasi-single party, with a partisan coalition acting as façade. In Algeria, the single-party became a "state party", while in Bahrain, partisan activity is outlawed. In other countries the multiparty system characterized from the outset the formation of a system of consociation, as in the case of Lebanon, or of a limited and feckless pluralism as in Morocco which is ruled by royal institution. In this way and by reading the long history we may distinguish the profoundly different experiences between parties with ideological, parliamentary or governmental heritage, and others that are recent creations and

\textsuperscript{26} See the contribution of M. Catusse and L. Zaki to this volume.
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are only just learning the basics of power sharing. A prior clandestine existence is also a discriminatory experience and has influenced the trajectory of many partisan formations.

Finally, the ideological history – particularly the ideology of developing regimes – highlights the effects of socialist, nationalist and/or revolutionary legacies: particularly in terms of legitimization or de-legitimization of partisan plurality.

NEW POLITICAL OBJECTS, GLOBALIZED AND SINGULAR?

If preceding developments call for a re-conceptualization of the analysis of political parties in the Arab world, it seems equally important to us that we should reexamine their typology, or even to review new evidence for their understanding and classification.

Various typologies of “Arab parties” have been produced. In particular, B. Badie (1989) distinguished a number of party types in the “Muslim” world, from “single parties” like the Algerian FLN to political parties defining themselves through the “outlines of a political ideology” such as the Baath party, parties that are used as a vehicle for “promoting the legitimacy of a leader” like the Tunisian Neo-Destour party, parties that are themselves constituent elements of the regimes they support, especially in the “traditional monarchies”, “pressure parties” that are also constituent parties but function in a latent manner like the Egyptian Wafd or the Moroccan UNFP parties, and finally, parties that perceive their agenda from the standpoint of a “counter legitimacy” advocating the construction of an alternative political system. Now let us look at how such typologies are inoperative.

Among French authors, P. R. Baduel (1998) attempted adaptation of S. Lipset’s and S. Rokkan’s (1967) system of analysis, in order to classify Arab parties according to various established dualities: “religious vs secular”, “center vs periphery”, “owners vs workers”, “State vs civil society”. Here again the criteria are questionable. M. Camau and V. Geisser show for example that the four cleavages of S. Lipset and S. Rokkan are not easily extensible to describe the Tunisian partisan landscape a finding that may be generalized to other countries in our study. These cleavages are present in these societies to be sure, but political organizations follow a logic that can be far more decisive: “it is in fact, from a strategy of equivocation regarding social cleavages that they intend to draw
their partisan legitimacy, not from the exacerbation of differences. Thus they contribute to improve the externality of the political order in relation to societal issues “(Camau and Geisser, 2003, p. 248).

We may also, like F. El-Khazen (2003, p. 613) in the case of Lebanon in the 1990s, distinguish “loyalist”, “authorized” or “forbidden” parties. The first have been represented in parliament and government since 1992, the second have no representation in political power and banned parties are systematically tracked, directly or indirectly by government authorities. Given the evolution and pluralization of partisan landscapes, this classification hardly reflects contemporary dynamics where the blurring of boundaries between ruling and opposition parties is progressively becoming the norm: either because of government alternance (see, for example the 1998 “Alternance” in Morocco); or simply because the very notion of opposition may itself refer to highly differentiated political strategies, including for the same context and where opposition can be constructed as against the regime or in concert with the governing coalition (the case of Lebanon and the after-war is striking from this point of view).

Several of our authors have chosen to adopt other classifications. In Yemen, the parties are classified as “clan” (‘ashâ’iri), “tribal” (qaba’il), “confessional” (mazhab) “traditional” (taqlid) or “modern” (hadîth) (El-Salahi and El-Maitama, 2008). In Iraq, they are sorted according to leadership and may be “religious” (dînî), “traditional” (taqlîdî), “clan” (‘ashâ’îrî) or “nontraditional” (gheyr taqlîdîyya) and may overlap with modes of bureaucratic, charismatic, military, Leninist or elitist organization. These classifications useful to describe the partisan landscape, may however have the disadvantage of freezing it into rigid categories, not helpful in understanding the dynamics that are today reshaping partisan organizations.

In the end, it seems that two processes deserve particular attention in describing the linkages between contemporary partisan logic and regime transformations: the processes by which public debate and action are politicized and de-politicized, and the generational effects of activism.

**Politicization and de-politicization of the partisan landscape**

The transformations of the political landscapes of the six countries of our study, raise issues concerning politicization, de-politicization and over-
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...политизации и последствий для сторонников партийного движения. Пропаганда "доброго правления" и "нового управления" в сочетании с режимом перемен, требует знаний, технического образовательного подхода, прежде всего в формальном плане. Политическая правильность все более определяется критериями "доброго управления". Одновременно, с анти-партийным дискурсом становятся устоявшимися, проблемы политического представления переходят на вторую плоскость и мэрия и парламентские аренны бросают вызов (Baaklini, Denoeux and Springborg, 1999; Dupret and Ferrié, 2008; Salem*; Krayem and Antoun, 1998; Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, 1999, 2002a). В этом анти-политическом логике, развитие ассоциаций происходит "сверху и сбоку" пола партии (Zaki 2009), или даже "отсутствия" партии (Karam, 2006). В ответ, настаиваются на "открытии" степени политизации институтов, актеров, ассоциаций, технократов, экспертов, и т. д. Эта учащаяся тенденция, выделяющая поддержку партии, предоставляет ей новую политическую вестернечность.

Это вызывает два вопроса: насколько изменение перехода от старого режима к новому влияет на потенциал политических партий, то есть, их способность к возвращению в политическую борьбу, производить коллективные идентичности, посредничать в общественном пространстве? И как меняется воинственность в их среде?

**The old and the new regime**

В рамках этого перечисления партийных динамик для шести арабских режимов, наши разные вклады основываются либо непосредственно, либо непосредственно на историческом подходе, который отличает "до" и "после", "старый режим" и "новый режим", отражая уважительно появление "новых партий". Это заслуживает более глубокого рассмотрения. Как мы видели ранее, партийный процесс включает в себя элементы стабильности и устойчивости в сочетании с элементами инноваций. Входя в политическую сферу, это можно разбить на несколько областей.

Переход от крепостнической легальности оказывает влияние на отношения между партийными организациями и гражданским обществом, которые могут в свою очередь предоставить убежище в периоды репрессий или когда партийная организация оказывается в конкурентной борьбе. Обеспечивая широкую политическую конкуренцию, легализация может просто испытать ранее запрещенные партии, или партии, которые прежде не имели оснований для легализации. Эта учащаяся тенденция, выделяющая поддержку партии, предоставляет ей новую политическую вестернечность.

The transition from clandestinity to legality affects relations between partisan organizations and civil society, which could in turn provide refuge in times of repression or when a partisan organization finds itself competing but in a subordinate position. While ensuring broad political competition, legalization may simply test previously banned parties, or parties that were heretofore merely
tolerated, especially as legislative agendas may require a revision of strategy, of discourse, of modes of action and mobilization and even the accumulation of new political resources.

The transition from opposition to government has also produced complex opportunities and constraints for competing parties. The movement from radical and exclusivist positions (which can go so far as to deny the legitimacy of the other, whether opponent or ruler) to the formalization of political pact, based on the rejection of violence and the formalization of a compromise on the minimal rules of the game, resulted in the participation of the near-majority of political parties in the most recent elections, and even their participation in government. Again, this is a test and an expensive test not just for the governing parties. The parties who abandoned their status as “historic opposition” to participate in a governing coalition were obliged to renounce modes of action and legitimization that until then were paramount to their conception of the competition for power. This was the case for the Moroccan USFP, whose members, leaders, activists and voters found themselves with resources, social position and political legitimacy diametrically opposed to what had been their lot for over three decades. In Yemen, al-Islâh finds itself divided between a tendency toward emancipation with respect to the regime under whose tutelage it could easily develop and become institutionalized, and its role as an opposition party in the context of a multi-party although hardly pluralistic system.

The end of ideologies?

Another recurring issue is that of the mutation or even the erosion of ideology. In reality, the decline of nationalist and class ideologies seems at first to be compensated by the excitement and discourse of primary identity. Partisan organizations then become a forum for the representation of Muslim identities, Sunni or Shiite, especially for “Islamists” parties, but also for communitarian or ethnic parties (Krayem* et al, 2007).

The decline of class identity is matched by the displacement of the lines of cleavage between secular and religious movements. The crisis of the social state and the shrinking of the redistributive capacities of regimes that turn to private companies or associations to satisfy their social obligations have encouraged the return of notables, both at the local and the national level. It
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may be observed in the entry into politics of businessmen, traders or employers who are active in labor and corporatist unions, but also in municipal councils, parliaments and political parties (Catusse, 2008).27 Even if new ideologies and group identities may thus be drawn, the main trend identified is that of the “decline of ideology” in favor of strategic politics: the ideological characteristics of the parties become blurred because of strategies and political arguments (to participate or not in government, to build coalitions, etc.). This is reflected by the resemblance and weak consistency of political platforms of parties, especially at election time. Should we, on this point, advance a secular politics against Islamist parties, while hypothesizing that the weakness of the former is tied to their difficulty to develop a clear vision? M. Ottaway and A. Hamzawy (2007, p. 18) emphasize that “political parties competing in elections do not always have to have a vision, but they need at least a message about what they will do if they win the elections.” In our field, the Islamist message is also vague and eventually not particularly ideological. It tends however, to “couple the religious appeal with social services for their constituencies, never taking them for granted” (idem).

Such variability in the program is accompanied by a clientelisation of militants, which is to say, it would be less the ideology than the provision of services that make supporters loyal. This is what PJD elected officials expressed in our Moroccan research. These characterize their relationship to Islam and the Islamic content of their programs in the most euphemistic of terms, preferring a discourse on their willingness to help their electorate and the citizens of their circumscription. This is also what L. Bonnefoy and M. Poirier show in Yemen where the plasticity of the doctrinal and programmatic structure of al-Islâh and the eclecticism of its surroundings – at the same time Islamist, commercial and tribal – are tools to favor client relations but also “partisan nomadism”. In Algeria, A. Boubaker (2008) stresses that the development of the Salafi movement, in the context of ad-Da'wâ as-salafiyya, responds in a way to the neutralization of the political vocation of Islamist parties, namely that they be banned or radicalized and equipped with weapons, or that they have exchanged their ideological fervor for positions of power, as in the case of Hamas or en-Nabda.

27 See the contribution of M. Bennani-Chraibi to this volume.
What partisan militancy?

We would like to conclude this passage on contemporary partisan dynamics with a few remarks regarding militancy. If work on collective action has appreciably developed over the past decade, advancing original and innovative theories (Bennani-Chraibi, Fillieul, 2003; Karam, 2006; Favier, 2004, Vairel, 2005, etc.), virtually none of this work has been on contemporary partisan militancy. If the study of partisanship is opened to the study of militant careers, would that not be because militants move from party to syndicate, passing through associations and other places of engagement? It appears to us that the partisan militancy deserves attention of itself. For this reason, the study of militant trajectories should include a blind but central angle. We shall limit ourselves to pointing out to several lines of analysis.

First, the arena for public mobilizations is reforming, as we have repeatedly emphasized. If nostalgia for the “second liberal era” (Salamé, 1991, 1994) reaches here and there, lamenting that militancy is no longer what it used to be, others have shown instead how such expertise and the militant experience move and transpose from generation to generation in different partisan structures. Could it then be a conversion from leftist militancy: if some are disengaging, others (sometimes Islamists) are investing new partisan (Burgat, 2007) or associative (Bennani-Chraibi, 2003) arenas. A framework analysis but also analysis of the social environment and networks of engagement can greatly enrich a field about which little is known and for which there is not much documentation. Such an investigation would include data to confirm or refute the thesis according to which the actual political and electoral resources of most Islamist parties reside in a militant approach which if not exceptional is at least innovative: existing studies stress the discipline, expertise and dedication of Hizballah militants in Lebanon and to a lesser degree, PJD militants in Morocco (Fawwaz, 2004; Harb, 2005; Chaib, 2008), compared to other political formations. In the field, the gaps between partisan ideology, even if vague, party slogans and militant discourse are often striking, raising in this way questions about a party’s ability to provide a framework for their militants.

Next, militant partisan trajectories cannot be understood without regard to the transformations of the arenas of mobilization, and most notably, to the development

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28 See the contribution of M. Catusse and L. Zaki to this volume.
of social movements and vast network of associations. Far from observing an opposition of civil society and partisan society, or even, civil society at the service of partisan society, we find at least four moving configurations: first, in Lebanon, in the civil movements (Karam, 2006), and Morocco as well (Vairel, 2005), party structures are circumvented by alternative arenas. Militants engage or reconvert their militancy into associative structures for lack of anything better: for want, they say, of a political party able to represent their interests and political vindications. For such cases associations as antechambers to political organization become potential competitors. Analysts of professional and trade syndicates show these may also serve as places of refuge for vested interests when the transition to partisan life is blocked or proves to be particularly onerous (Gobe, 2006; Bianchi, 1989). Further, associations develop out of service to a political party, as “social institutions”, in the words of contributing author, C. Le Thomas, in relation to the schools “of” Hizbullah. As places of mobilization and socialization, they are also places for the dispensation of social services, creators of loyalty or at least, of familiarity, as demonstrated by L. Bonnefoy and M. Poirier in their discussion of the charitable association, al-Islâh (Jam‘iyya lil-Islâh al-ijtima‘i al-ikhârîyya): although officially independent of the party, al-Islâh nevertheless contributes to the dissemination of party ideas and contributes much to the party’s popularity. In a third case, the associative and partisan structures neither compete nor are they directly intertwined, they simply represent different structures in the process of militancy which are often accumulated as places and causes of engagement (this may be the case now for a number of human rights associations that welcome among their ranks the abused opposition of left parties, lay militants and even Islamist militant, and for the most part those without party affiliation.) Finally, a fourth possible configuration as in Bahrain, but also in the emblematic case of the association al-‘Adl wa al-îhsân in Morocco, the associative space serves as a alternative space for potential political parties formally excluded from electoral competition and political representation.

Finally, if we stressed earlier that militancy would professionalize and would assume the contours of management, generational effects on militant structures remained to be explored. A number of studies show that partisan frameworks continue to age and that for some of the organizations, the leadership dates back to the founding generation. Such studies also show, as in the case of Bahrain, that divisions emerge in or around the political groups in the course of generational renewal. It would also be particularly useful to continue work on the many facets of party engagement: cadres, elected representatives, professionals, militants, combatants, voters, brokers (muftah intikhâbî), sympathizers and readers all maintain very different relationships to the party and deserve recognition.
CONCLUSION

This volume therefore calls for release from purgatory of research the object “political party”. The chapters which follow reflect the variable linkages between partisan development and the transformation of regimes in Morocco, Algeria, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen and Bahrain. Based on unpublished data and a field approach, these chapters discuss many facets of partisan life in political societies characterized by their limited pluralism and reputed alternatively as being either authoritarian or undergoing democratic transition.

L. Bonnefoy and M. Poirier’s chapter on the difficult construction of an alternative project for the Yemeni Congregation for Reform, M. Hennad’s chapter on the Algerian FLN and H. A’boushi’s chapter on the re-conversion of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces, concern themselves primarily with the effects of mutations of the partisan game, the consequences of the transition from underground to legality, from opposition to cooptation, from state party to multi-party system. They pay attention to the institutional and legal framework in which partisan activity takes place and to the links between “the right to politics and political rights”.

The following chapters look into the life of the parties, the renewal of the elites and their modes of selection, on the preferred forms of militancy, on the internal party conflicts and on the variety of their activities, notably social. Thus, A. Mirza El-Murshed outlines the internal dynamics at the al-Wefaq in Bahrain, paying particular attention to generational effects within this association in search of a partisan system. C. Le Thomas looks at the process of political socialization at work, in schools operated by the Hizballah movement in Lebanon. In Morocco, M. Bennani-Chraibi examines the parliamentary “notabilization” of a “party of militants”, the Socialist Union of Popular Forces, and M. Catusse and L. Zaki study the transformation of profiles and practices of the local representatives of the Justice and Development Party.

Finally, two last short chapters, that of F. Abdel-Jabbar’s chapter on the Iraqi Communist Party and that of R. Tal’at Jawhar on the Turkmen Front in Iraq, bring to light some reflections on the reshaping of irakian partisan system, underlying the production of identity and political allegiance within the Nation State. The paradigm of a single party has, in the name of defending the integrity of the nation state, undoubtedly influenced the ordering of authoritarian and hegemonic regimes in the region. But the development of ethnic parties,
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Communitarian and confessional parties and infra- or supra-state parties is also one of the recurring characteristics of regional political arenas.

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The Yemeni Congregation for Reform (al-Islâh): The Difficult Process of Building a Project for Change

Laurent Bonnefoy and Marine Poirier*

The Yemeni Congregation for Reform (al-Tajammu’ al-yamanî lil-Islâh), commonly known as al-Islâh, was established on September 13, 1990, a few months after the unification of North and South Yemen and the legalization of a multi-party system. It was created at a time of profound changes in the Yemeni political system, which went from a single-party system in each of the two Yemens (the General People’s Congress in North Yemen and the Yemeni Socialist Party in South Yemen) to a political project in a unified Yemen who regarded itself as openly democratic. Opposition parties were then allowed (except based on regionalist or sectarian grounds) and within a year, 20 political parties were accounted for. Partisan and independent press also emerged, elections were organized, and a new constitution was drafted. Though sudden, the transition was initially rather painless and free of major violence or protest, even within the two former single parties.

Al-Islâh is often described as the Yemeni branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. It does, however, encompass diverse religious, ideological and sociopolitical tendencies*. Members of the Muslim Brotherhood are largely associated with

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a traditionalist and “tribal” wing (less directly ideological (al-Abdali*, 2007)) as well as with business elites who do not fit in either category, some of whom with close ties with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf monarchies².

When it comes to relations between political rulers and Islamists the Yemeni case study Yemen is quite enlightening. It gives us the opportunity to understand the development and patterns of mobilization of various movements or parties in an environment that appears to be only slightly repressive when compared to other countries in the region. Here, the various Islamist tendencies have been allowed to develop, debate, structure and position themselves (on democracy, multiparty systems, foreign policy, etc.) without being directly exposed to state repression. In order to introduce and facilitate an in-depth study of al-Islâh party, the subject of this chapter, we shall begin with some facts on the original “Yemeni political formula”.

Historically, the “republican revolution” of September 26, 1962, which overthrew the Zaydi Imamate in North Yemen, only managed to establish itself after eight years of civil war, following a peace agreement between republicans and royalists. The compromise led to a peculiar balance of power, whose basic mechanism has endured even after the unification of North and South Yemen, even if subjected to various pressures and becoming the reason for contentions. The balance was based primarily on the rejection, albeit incomplete, of the denominational cleavage between the Zaydis (a Shiite minority predominantly found in the northern highlands and clearly distinct from the Twelver Shiites found in Iran) and the Sunni Shafeis. Hence, even within the republican framework built in opposition to the Zaydi Imamate, all presidents of North Yemen and later of unified Yemen were of Zaydi origin. Yet none of them laid direct claims to their identity; instead they encouraged to look beyond inherited religious identities (Bonnefoy, 2008).

² Such close ties are not without consequence. The mobility of major Islamist figures and their presence in Saudi Arabia, where they studied, worked or found refuge, resulted, according to some of their opponents, in a form of “Wahhabization of the Muslim Brotherhood”. ‘Abd Allâh Hâshim al-Sayânî, a Yemeni Zaydi intellectual, observed that adaptation to the specific Saudi context had an influence, for example, on the positions of the Yemeni branch of the Muslim Brotherhood (some of their leaders, such as ‘Abd al-Majîd al-Zindânî and Muhammad al-Yadûmî, had lived in Saudi Arabia for long periods of time) on women’s rights and political participation. According to al-Sayânî* (2002), the close ties with Saudi Arabia explain why Yemeni positions on these issues are more conservative than those professed, for example, in Egypt or Lebanon.
Led by military inspired by Nasserist ideology, the revolutionaries of September 26, 1962 engaged in a long civil war against a royalist stronghold, made up mainly of Zaydis from the high plateaus of the northwestern region of North Yemen and supported by Saudi Arabia. Progressively, the violence and determination of the Egyptian-backed military failed, and the revolutionary group began to fall apart. In December 1994, historical figures of the Yemeni Free Movement – including Muhammad al-Zubayrî and Ahmad Nu‘mân, mayor leaders of the revolution (Douglas, 1987) – denounced the corruption of the ruling power controlled by Colonel ‘Abd Allâh Sallâl. At the end of 1967, the Royalists surrounded Sanaa for 70 days and appeared to be in a position to reinstate the Imamate. At that time, the Republicans had lost the support of the Egyptian army, busy elsewhere and defeated on the Israeli front. In order to end the North Yemen deadlock, a compromise was drafted that aimed at reintegrating tribes (not just Zaydi tribes) and the pro-royalist Zaydi religious establishment more systematically into state structures. Beyond bringing peace to the country and stabilizing the republican regime, the compromise led to a purge of some “left-leaning” servicemen and the co-optation of some royalist political leaders.

For more than 40 years, the foundational compromise of contemporary Yemen’s political formula (in which former South Yemen has been engaged since 1990) has enabled participation to power of different political forces with various ideological tendencies (leftwing, republicans, Arab nationalists, traditionalists, the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafi) or multiple identity referents (Zaydism, Sunnism, tribalism). Therefore, regime leaders have gained recognition by drawing, whether simultaneously or alternately, on various registers.

As early as November 1967, ‘Abd al-Malik al-Tayyib, a Muslim Brotherhood leader (a largely informal and illegal structure at the time), was appointed Minister of Education and Information of the Yemen Arab Republic. During the 1970s, ‘Abd al-Majîd al-Zindâni, a former companion of al-Zubayrî and a member of the conservative branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, was entrusted with religious education in North Yemen through the Bureau of Orientation and Guidance (Maktab al-tawjih wa al-irshâd). In dire need of educated personnel, the education sector recruited many Egyptian and Sudanese teachers who were reportedly close to the Brotherhood. Some ended up teaching in the Scientific Institutes (al-Ma‘âbid al-‘ilmîyya), a parallel education system financed through a substantial Saudi donation. Though clearly controversial, this system
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contributed to moving beyond Zaydi and Chafei religious identities during the second half of the 20th century and creating a more global identity. Such movement shielded the Yemeni society from sectarian stigmatization, even if it re-emerges every now and then, as with the Saada War which began in 2004 between the Yemeni army and the Believing Youth (al-Shabab al-Mu’min), a group professing Zaydi revival led by the al-Hûthî family (Dorlian, 2008). The Yemeni national army also reorganized partially around individuals who were close to Islamists of various tendencies. In 1982, the General People’s Congress (GPC, al-Mu’tamar al-sha’bi al-‘âmm), a partisan structure aiming at uniting all political movements, was established in North Yemen. At the time, in addition to President ‘Alî ‘Abd Allâh Sâlih’s autocratic inclination, the GPC also expressed the President’s wish to postpone the legalization of the multiparty system.

The participation of various political movements exemplifies the capacity of integration characterizing the regime of the Yemen Arab Republic and explains why the North Yemeni society, which constitutes about 80% of the overall population of unified Yemen, had not experienced any violent and profound cleavage between state power and traditional tribal and religious members on the one hand, and Islamist movements on the other hand, until well into the 2000s. Although real, dissidences such as the guerilla movement of the National Democratic Front, financed by South Yemen in the 1970s, have remained essentially peripheral, and, in any case, have not led to any massive state repression.

In his analysis of the Yemeni Congregation for Reform, Renaud Detalle declared in 1997 that one of the major stakes in Yemen’s political future was “the Islamists’ emancipation from state tutorship.” Over ten years later, have Islamists in general and al-Islâh in particular managed to free themselves from the power in place? Does the party still represent a “restrained” (Burgat, 1999, p. 241), “discreet, peaceful and intellectual” (al-Yamani, 2003, p. 55) opposition, or has it evolved into a real political opposition force with a plausible project for change?

Our study of al-Islâh deals primarily with the evolution of the party in its Yemeni context. How are al-Islâh’s strategies, resources and mobilization affected by the context’s changes due to internal and external factors (increasing monopoly of President Sâlih and the General People’s Congress, and “Global War on Terror”)? How can al-Islâh’s destiny, forever oscillating between pro-power and
opposition strategies, symbolize the paradoxes of a political landscape that is
both “gaining” pluralism (through the institutionalization of the opposition)
and “losing” pluralism (through the ruling power’s hegemony over resources)?

We shall first examine the impact of political and social structures on al-Islâh. How
does the party fit into a landscape shaped by institutions, political, social
and religious identities, other parties, and ideological debates? How does the
cause defended by al-Islâh interact with other agendas and identity referents?
Subsequently, we shall look into al-Islâh’s resources and repertoires in an effort to
understand, in our final segment, the strategies aimed at achieving emancipation
and building a project for political change.

**Al-Islâh: A Party Embedded within the Yemeni Context**

**Gathering and institutionalization of preexisting movements**

Ever since it emerged in 1990, al-Islâh party has had little difficulty in
representing a credible political power within the particular framework of the
“Yemeni formula” and the political system in post-unification Yemen. It has
been regarded as an alternative power despite the close relationship between
some of its founders and the ruling regime. For almost two decades, the party
has played on this ambiguity, both inside and outside of the political regime.
When they established their party, the leaders were no beginners in politics;
they had long been active in the field: ‘Abd Allâh al-Ahmar, sheikh of the
Hâshid tribal confederation, who chaired al-Islâh until his death in December
2007 had been, since the 1960s, a key figure in the interaction between the
republican power, the tribal system and Islamism. Al-Ahmar was considered
as instrumental in rallying leading Zaydi tribes from the northern highlands
to the republic during the 1960s. When the General People’s Congress was
established in 1982, he was appointed as a permanent council member.3
Consequently, al-Islâh’s emergence on the political scene in 1990 made possible

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3 For further information on this key figure of contemporary Yemen, refer to his biography: Al-Hadrâmi*, 1998; as well as his autobiography, published a few weeks before his death: Al-Ahmar*, 2007.
Returning to Political Parties?

the institutionalization of various pre-existing political forces such as, among others, the Muslim Brotherhood branch, which operated at the time either within the framework of the ruling General People’s Congress, or in a non-institutional even semi-clandestine fashion through militias fighting against the socialists in the 1970s and 1980s. The various tribal, Islamist and commercial components of *al-Islâh* seem to have rallied around symbolic figures such as ‘Abd Allâh al-Ahmar, Muhammad al-Yadûmî and ‘Abd al-Majîd al-Zindâñî, as well as around more political slogans, such as the preservation of traditional tribal and religious values, the refusal to share power with socialists as imposed by the unity agreement, or the fight against corruption. The three wings that make up the party do not systematically compete with one another; they coexist generally and agree on these issues. Each wing, however, uses different repertoires and mobilization methods, which may reflect a potential division of political tasks. Hence, the tribal component is made up of a pool of men and voters who seem to influence the relation between the ruling power and *al-Islâh* more often than not. The Islamist component contributes their ideology and activists, whereas the commercial component contributes their networks and respectability. Less than three years after it was created, *al-Islâh* results during the 1993 legislative elections, ranked ahead of the Yemeni Socialist Party and second to the General People’s Congress of President ‘Alî ‘Abd Allâh Sâlih.

Early on, *al-Islâh* derived much of its legitimacy in North Yemen from the tribal system prevailing in the highlands (the role of sheikhs, the legal system, the code of honor (Dresh, 1993)) and from the historical contribution of Islamist movements throughout the numerous founding stages of contemporary Yemen, especially during the 1962 revolution. Therefore, ever since it was established, *al-Islâh* was able to represent a significant political force capable of challenging the ruling party directly. Even though the republican regime had also based much of its legitimacy on the mobilization of traditional groups and symbols, *al-Islâh* had done it even more systematically and more ostentatiously. In the former South Yemen areas, the pressure put by state institutions on traditional (tribal and religious) elites during the socialist period led to a conservative reaction, after the 1990s unification, reminiscent of the reaction that occurred in the former Soviet republics of

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5 Even though *al-Islâh* won more seats than the Yemeni Socialist Party (63 seats to 56), it still had fewer votes in its favor than its competitor (17% compared to 18.5%).
Central Asia (Petric, 2002) at that time. This reaction, in turn, encouraged the development of Islamist movements (the Muslim Brotherhood, Sufis in the province of Hadramout, for instance, or Salafis) on which the party could capitalize (Mermier, 1997).

Moreover, the party’s official denomination, the Yemeni Congregation for Reform, directly reflected the integration of the party structure into the debates and references that characterized the post-unification political system in Yemen. In fact, the word “party” implies a negative connotation specific to Yemeni history and associated with division, corruption, and exclusive allegiances. During the 1980s, the political scene in contemporary Yemen was largely influenced and dominated by the General People’s Congress, who broke away – at least formally – from the party structure and their call for a biżb (party) for the sake of a solidarity that transcends and stigmatizes party divides. Since the 1980s, the Yemeni Salafi movement led by Muqbil al-Wâdi’î has brandished a founding principle based on rejecting biżbiyya (partisanship), i.e. partisan structure and electoral participation (Bonnefoy, 2008). In spite of their relatively marginalized position, they managed to initiate a debate and stigmatize the very concept of parties. Mistrust of partisan politics was reinforced by the fact that the socialist period in the South between 1970 and 1990 is frequently referred to as “ayyâm al-hizb” (i.e. the days of the party). In collective imagination, the word “party” thus refers primarily to the Yemeni Socialist Party, and the term “tajammu” (congregation) adopted by al-Islâh seems, in effect, much more positive.

Al-Islâh also managed to play a significant part in the Yemeni political landscape by capitalizing on the historical role of the Muslim Brotherhood or other reformist groups close to them (including some of the Free Yemenis led by Muhammad al-Zubayri) in the process of building the republican compromise, achieving the goal of bringing together religious identities and moving beyond primary Zaydi and Chafei identities by recruiting, ever since the party was created, members of both groups without discrimination. The Muslim Brotherhood participated directly in the early phase of the process of political and social modernization; indeed,

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6 In spite of this strong aversion for the concept of party, various formations that were established in the early 1990s used the name “party”, particularly the al-Haqq Party, which was established by the partisans of the Zaydi revival.
Returning to Political Parties?

as mentioned earlier, the history of the Muslim Brotherhood in Yemen did not begin with the establishment of *al-Islâh*. They were involved in the first revolution attempt in 1948 when they delegated Algerian revolutionary Fudhayl al-Wartilâni. In an attempt to lay the foundations of the republican project, Muhammad al-Zubayrî, described by his companions as a member of the Muslim Brotherhood⁷ and later assassinated in 1965, created in 1964 a “Party of God” (*Hizb Allâh*) (Burgat, Camberlin, 2002), thus asserting his conviction that religion was the only referential authority capable of reconciling the republic with a highly conservative rural society where royalists were recruiting. The “tribal-Islamist” alliance later played a part in the republican movement and in defending the regime against protest. For example, many of today’s *al-Islâh* leaders, including Muslim Brotherhood member Muhammad Qahtân, were active during the 1970s in the armed struggle (then financed by the government of North Yemen⁸) against left-wing movements and Arab nationalists, who were supported by the socialist regime in the South.

An Islamist party?

The diversity in the backgrounds of *al-Islâh*’s leaders, elected representatives, voters and activists, revealed in the many studies published on the party over the past 15 years, raises the issue of its ideological structure and its designation as an Islamist party as well. *Al-Islâh* cannot be reduced to the sole offspring of the Muslim Brotherhood. Both rural and urban, the party is not quite elitist yet not a true mass party; therefore identifying one typical sociological party member profile seems doomed to failure. Although activists and leaders have Zaydi and Chafei backgrounds, they are clearly different, on the one hand, from movements inspired by the Zaydi revival, which began in the 1980s under the leadership of clerics, such as Majd al-Dîn al-Muâyyyâdî and Badr al-Dîn al-Huthî, and parties, such as *al-Haqq* Party, and on the other hand, from *Salafî* movements who reject political involvement and systematically stigmatize the Zaydis’ Shiism. Under the dual supervision of its tribal and Islamist components (a phenomenon described by P. Dresch and B. Haykel

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⁸ Interview with a member of *al-Islâh*’s Consultative Council, January 10, 2009.
The Yemeni Congregation for Reform (al-Islāh)

(1995, p. 410) as “patronage” relations), al-Islāh placed the party directly at the heart of Yemeni political culture yet made it harder to identify and explain a cause for the party to defend. As a result, the first electoral victories of al-Islāh candidates in some districts were due as much to the strength of tribal allegiances and support of local notables as to the recruiting ability of Islamist ideology. The flexibility of al-Islāh’s doctrine and program and its mixed leadership have thus promoted clientelist relations and partisan “nomadism”.

The case of ‘Abd Allâh al-Ahmar’s sons is a good example of this trend: over the years, four of his sons were elected to the Parliament, two of them (Hamîd and Madhhaj) on al-Islāh lists, and the other two (Husayn and Himyar) on the General People’s Congress’ lists; meanwhile, Sadiq, his oldest son, was appointed to the Majlis al-shûrâ (the Consultative Council) as a member of al-Islāh. Likewise, several intellectuals, including Nâsir Taha Mustafâ and Fâris al-Saqqâf, moved from al-Islāh party to the General People’s Congress in the late 1990s. Indeed, relations between individuals, tribes or regions frequently took precedence over party loyalties, which were no longer an issue when it came to being appointed as civil servants, being elected or serving in a commission. While this state of affairs may have encouraged pluralism, it is challenged today by the obvious monopoly of the General People’s Congress over resources and its increasing control over institutions and positions, including low-ranking civil servants and teachers. Accordingly, al-Islāh’s attempt to gain more autonomy – as we shall see below – may be the result of a decreasing pluralism. Indeed, such attempt exemplifies the limits of a patronage-based system which tries to contain the opposition but is no longer able to satisfy all its potential followers.

While al-Islāh may be labeled as an Islamist party, it does not have a monopoly on the denomination. On the contrary, it is part of a varied landscape where multiple references compete, condemn and sometimes overlap and complement one another. These groups include the Muslim Brotherhood (who represent the ideology-oriented branch of al-Islāh), “jihadist” fringes, Salafis, Sufis, and Zaydi revival groups. Each group has their own opinion on four key issues, namely participation in partisan politics, loyalty to the regime, violent confrontation with the rulers, and stigmatization of other religious and political identities (Bonnefoy, 2009).
Table 1. Summary of the strategies adopted by the various typical Islamist ideals in contemporary Yemen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical Islamist ideals</th>
<th>Key figures and organizations</th>
<th>Direct participation in party politics and democratization process</th>
<th>Automatic loyalty to the republican ruler</th>
<th>Significant episodes of violent confrontation with the State</th>
<th>Significant episodes of violent confrontation and stigmatization of other religious and political identities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Muslim Brotherhood</td>
<td>al-Islâb</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Jihadi” fringes</td>
<td>Groups affiliated with al-Qaeda</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salafis</td>
<td>Muqbil al-Wâdi’î (died in 2001)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufis</td>
<td>Dar al-Mustafa</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaydi revival</td>
<td>Al-Haqq Party; Husayn al-Hûthî (died in 2004)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The strictly “Islamist” field is not al-Islâb’s only competitor; the religious repertoire is predominantly based on consensus and regularly exploited by partisan groups on the Yemeni political scene.

The designation of al-Islâb as an Islamist party (in the broad sense of the word, i.e. as a party whose aim is to “speak the Muslim language” and, as François Burgat says, “resort in a privileged and sometimes ostentatious manner
to a rhetoric borrowed from the Muslim culture.” (Burgat, 2005, p. 15)) may also be challenged based on the rather heterogeneous nature of its leaders and members, on the diversity of positions they hold (Bonnefoy, Ibn Sheikh, 2002) and on the regime’s ability to use the same rhetoric in addition to religious symbols. Nevertheless, the party’s platform, positions, practices and repertoires are largely consistent with Muslim culture and are clearly part of a conservative framework (defense of traditions and tribal values, distrust of modernization often perceived as synonymous with westernization, support for Islamic causes); as a result, al-Islâh shares common characteristics with other Islamist parties in the Middle East and yet, at the same time, it deviates from the dominant rhetoric of the regime based on the democratization process, economic development and security. For example, in 1991, al-Islâh activists drew general attention when they criticized Article 3 of the new constitution which stipulated that the Sharia was the primary source of legislation rather than the only one, as the Islamists wished. In 1994, following the war between the ruling regime in the North and the southern secessionists, a constitutional amendment was adopted and al-Islâh won its case on this controversial issue.

At the same time, it seems that at least some of al-Islâh’s founders refuse to use their religious identity as a factor of distinction, division or opposition to other political formations. In 1993, ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Anisi, then-secretary general of al-Islâh, declared: “We chose to be called the Yemeni Congregation for Reform rather than the Islamic Congregation, because we do not want to be identified on the basis of Islam. We believe that the Islamic project in Yemen is not that of a particular group or party, but rather the project and choice of all constituent groups of the Yemeni people. Yemen is very different from other Arab and Muslim countries, because Islam here is not a contentious issue: No political force or party – not even the Yemeni Socialist Party – can claim that they steered away from Islam.” Through a fairly consensus-oriented position, al-Islâh has, to a certain extent, based its political platform on a principle of integration into decision-making circles and loyalty to the power in place rather than rupture from them. Therefore, its position as an opposition member, rekindled during electoral campaigns, and their wish to project itself as a political alternative, are very ambivalent.

Such refusal to stigmatize the regime based on religion is definitely characteristic of al-Islâh’s ambiguous position and places the party at the heart of the implicit framework of the republican compromise. Consequently, since its creation al-Islâh

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9 Quoted by Lefresne, 1993.
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has emerged as both a full-fledged component of the political system and an objective ally of President ‘Ali ‘Abd Allâh Sâlih’s power. As a result, the image of opposition party fostered by the party leaders as well as observers may be awkward, and, as we shall see further, the choice of breaking away and building an alternative option (a position underscored when the party was created in 1990 and concretely embraced as of 1997), is not very convincing and not well accepted by everyone in the party.

In this context, the partisan cause endorsed by al-Islâh seems unpredictable or hard to define. From a limited point of view, it may be perceived as a means to defend the interests of some party leaders, including ‘Abd Allâh al-Ahmar until 2007, who have close relationships with the president and are even sometimes patronizing. Under the circumstances, criticism of the regime (largely theoretical through the denunciation of corruption or the inefficiency of leaders in general) is tolerated only when the access to that same power by key party figures is not fundamentally challenged. Therefore, we could say that the development of al-Islâh which was extensive during the 1990s and rather limited in the past few years, has actually made it possible for the regime to dominate a large part of the opposition and prevent them from playing their role to the fullest. The illusion of true pluralism was kept up and rulers were spared the full-blown consequences of an open political game.

A more comprehensive approach reveals that the party has several programs and strategies based on the ideological, social or generational diversity of al-Islâh members, especially with reference to the role of ‘Abd Allâh al-Ahmar’s sons. Those programs include a compromise with power for the sake of preserving interests and positions10, militant social action and virulent criticism against the very foundations of the regime or against its alleged corruption in the name of the Muslim Brotherhood’s doctrine11, as well as the (often depoliticized) attempts

10 Even though he is a member of the so-called radical branch of the Muslim Brotherhood as well as a prominent figure of al-Islâh, ‘Abd al-Majîd al-Zindânî, who was accused by the United States of having close relations with Usâma bin Laden, seems to have escaped repression by edging closer to President Sâlih. On ‘Abd al-Majîd al-Zindânî’s position vis-a-vis these accusations, see: al-Sharq al-Awsat, n°10069, June 23, 2006.

11 As an example, refer to the recorded sermon of Muhammad al-Anisi, titled al-Wâhda [*Unity*] (in Arabic), in the early 1990s, in which this member of al-Islâh (and secretary-general of al-Imân University) challenged directly the terms of unity with the socialists. In another tape made public a few years later under the title Tâmur ilâ al-ta’lîm fi al-Yaman [*Plot against Teaching in Yemen*] (in Arabic), al-Anisi launched a particularly virulent attack on the government’s educational policy for neglecting Islamic teaching.
The Yemeni Congregation for Reform (*al-Islâh*)

to produce local notabilities as alternatives to the General People’s Congress’ candidates. Consequently, the idea whereby *al-Islâh* is merely a bogus, fake opposition party is not relevant. Given the inclusive formula of the Yemeni political system and the characteristics of the republican compromise, *al-Islâh*’s emancipation from its various legacies or sponsorships (whether ideological through the socialists’ stigmatization or social through tribal and political allegiances based on their alliance with power) can only be understood as a long process. *Al-Islâh* definitely has multiple resources and can achieve self-sufficiency and autonomy from the ruling party and smooth the way for an openly admitted opposition.

**RESOURCES AND MOBILIZATION**

An analysis of *al-Islâh*’s resources and mobilization patterns is interesting for a number of reasons. On the one hand, it sheds light on the particular position of the structure within the Yemeni political system; that is to say it shows the mobilization of varied resources within the framework of limited pluralism. On the other hand, it reveals the relation between directly politicized mobilization patterns (via Islamist ideology or adaptable protest) and other less explicitly political resources (sometimes even described as apolitical) associated for instance, with tribal, economic or patronage allegiances. Obviously, the two types of resources are inextricably linked. However, it seems relevant to differentiate between the “rental” resources linked to the party’s regional or tribal allegiances representing a support base that can be mobilized beyond the realms of ideology or programs, and mobilizations related with the party’s active participation in the community charities, education and religion, which are more obviously part of other Islamist parties’ activities elsewhere in the Middle East.

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12 In early 2008, the inhabitants of a town in the region of al-‘Ansîyyin, near the city of Ibb, were evicted from their village by Muhammad Ahmad al-Mansûr, a local sheikh who was a member of the Consultative Council (*majlîs al-shûrâ*) known to be close to the president. The inhabitants received active support from *al-Islâh*, especially through the human rights organization HOOD. *Al-Shâr’ā’,* n°39, March 15, 2008 or electronic version of the *al-Islâh*-affiliated *Sahwa* net, March 26, 2008: [http://www.alsahwa-yemen.net/view_news.asp?sub_no=1_2008_03_26_62340](http://www.alsahwa-yemen.net/view_news.asp?sub_no=1_2008_03_26_62340) (retrieved on February 5, 2009). See also HOOD’s website: [http://www.hoodonline.org/det.php?sid=2005](http://www.hoodonline.org/det.php?sid=2005) (retrieved on February 5, 2009).

13 Or “pluralized authoritarianism”; refer to Phillips, 2008.
A tribal and economic “rent” based on identities

Since the early 1990s, *al-Islâb*’s double Islamist and tribal affiliation has been used to consolidate the party’s presence on the political and electoral landscape. The “rental” resources described further, may seem, a priori, depoliticized and non-ideological. However, they are ambivalent because, by nature, they limit the party’s autonomy. In fact, they give the party a seemingly efficient mobilization capacity with a quasi-automatic base of voters, elected representatives and activists and they make possible the creation of strongholds. However, at the same time, the party’s independence as a whole becomes contingent on the strategy – sometimes even on the interests – of the figures who symbolize these resources primarily based on tribal or regional allegiance networks and on charismas that can be described as traditional and that some *al-Islâb* leaders rely on for mobilization purposes in certain areas. These “rental” resources are not necessarily based on political projects or programs designed to convince voters and activists; rather, they are linked to the special positions held by some leaders (local or tribal notability, historical role, wealth from trade, etc.).

In addition to the al-Ahmar clan led at first by ‘Abd Allâh, and since late 2007 by Sâdiq, the Abû Luhûm family led by Sheikh Sinân from the region of Nihm (one of the main figures of the Bakîl tribal confederation) plays an important role in this particular mobilization process. For instance, Târiq Sinân Abû Luhûm is one of the founders of the Charitable Society for Social Welfare (*Jam‘iyâ lil-islâh al-ijtima‘î al-khayriyya*), that is officially independent from the party but contributes nonetheless to spreading the party’s guiding principles and ensuring part of its popularity.

Such resources have inevitably led to regional disparities, and, since the early 1990s, to the creation of electoral strongholds, especially in some tribal zones to the north of Sanaa where the local sheikh is affiliated with *al-Islâb* (in the governorates of ‘Amrân and Hajjah for instance). Nevertheless, this mobilization system proved fragile, and the party lost many “tribal” districts during elections (in 1997, then in 2003), which led it to promote a more autonomous strategy. *Al-Islâb* then created other electoral strongholds, which now seem more enduring. Increased reliance on the party’s ideological message brought in additional votes in Lower Yemen (*al-Yaman al-Suflâ*), in the governorates of Ibb and Taiz, as well as in major cities where tribal allegiances play only secondary roles and where international observers help
The Yemeni Congregation for Reform (*al-Islâh*)


The Yemeni Congregation for Reform has been successful in rallying support beyond tribal allegiances and expanding to commercial ventures and networks. In the southern regions where tribal organization is less influential, emigration and economic success – particularly in Saudi Arabia and Gulf countries – have produced family notabilities that are all potential voters for *al-Islâh*’s. In the 2003 elections, ‘Abd al-Khâliq bin Shayhûn, born into an important family of tradesmen settled in Saudi Arabia, was elected on *al-Islâh*’s ballot in a district of the Yâfî‘ region (northeast of Aden).

Indeed, businessmen are often described as *al-Islâh*’s third component. They provide means and financing and grant the party privileged access to conservative elites. One obvious example is the commercial empire of the al-Ahmar family, which includes printing presses, travel agencies, restaurants, transportation, etc. Hamîd al-Ahmar’s is the owner of the Sabafon mobile telephone company which makes it possible to broadcast different slogans (*via* SMSs sent to all users), especially in support of Palestine, or to call for boycotts of certain items (of Danish products for instance, following the 2006 controversy over the caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad) or non-Muslim holidays (e.g. Valentine’s Day). During the 2006 presidential election, the mobile telephone operator stopped short of calling directly for voting in favor of Faysal bin Shamlán, the candidate sponsored by *al-Islâh*, but did convey information via SMS on meeting locations and dates of the opposition’s campaign. Likewise, Sabafon relayed in July 2008 the news of the establishment of the Virtue Authority (*Hayat al-fadhila*), an individual initiative led by religious scholars with close ties to the party, including ‘Abd al-Majîd al-Zindânî. Moreover, the conference establishing it was held at the Apollo Center, a complex owned by the al-Ahmar family.

This privileged access to means of mobilization (through allegedly non-

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14 SMS received by Sabafon customers on February 20, 2008: “Yemeni religious scholars call for boycotting Danish products due to the drawings insulting the Prophet.”

15 Interview of the person in charge of the media campaign for the Joint Meeting during the 2006 elections on February 19, 2009: “We did not take advantage of it. We paid for sending the SMSs about the opposition gatherings. Sabafon was the only company who accepted to send them, all others refused.”

16 On the Virtue Authority, see Anahi Alviso-Marino, research to be published.
political commercial companies) has made it possible for al-Islâh’s members or sympathizers to network and create common references. Accordingly, even if nonexclusive or systematic, a contract signed with Sabafon rather than its competitors may sometimes be perceived as a political act and a sign of allegiance to al-Islâh in particular, and also to the opposition in general. While other companies, especially those established by Hâ’il Sa’îd (al-Tadhâmun International Islamic Bank, Abû Walad Biscuit Factory) apparently do not supply direct financing to the party, they remain close to it and support its social base by building mosques (especially in Aden in the mid-1990s) and buying advertising spots in various publications close to al-Islâh (al-Asima or al-Sabwa) or to Islamists in general (al-Muntadâ).

Community action

These “rental” resources are completed and most probably reinvested in community action through more direct mobilizations. From charities to mosques to schools, al-Islâh’s wide range of resources and repertoires, resulting from its members fervor, helps strengthen the party’s influence and ensures its popularity and visibility on the Yemeni political landscape. The party is actually surrounded by a cluster of actors performing in various fields, including charity, education, mass media, religion and human rights. In order to understand the scope of al-Islâh’s diverse, numerous mobilizing resources one cannot ignore this large collection of social networks; they are not always coordinated or even institutionalized, yet they create a team spirit and share a number of references and objectives that define the political and ideological principles of the party.

The Charitable Society for Social Welfare (Jam‘iyya lil-islâh al-ijtima‘i al-khayriyya) also known as al-Islâh charity, established in 1990, represents a major resource for the party (Alviso-Marino, research to be published). Financed by traders, probably subsidized by Gulf countries and funded by substantial individual donations17, the society is active in charity works for the benefit of the underprivileged (poor neighborhoods, orphans, handicapped people, areas hit by natural disasters, Somali refugee camp in Aden, etc.) and is one of the best developed and most efficient in the country. Members of the society and members of the political party all consistently deny any relation between the

The Yemeni Congregation for Reform (al-Islâh)

two organizations. However, their affiliations are inextricably linked, and the activities sponsored by the charity are undeniably beneficial to the party (Clark, 2004; Phillips, 2008, p. 144). Al-Islâh’s members, frequently involved in charity works (Grabundzija, 2003, p. 129), use the organization network as a reservoir of sympathizers easily mobilized at election time. What’s more, charity activities are performed in areas conducive to protest because they lack state aid. Yet, the CSSW also has followers outside the sphere of underprivileged people.

By soliciting donations and organizing protests in support of Palestine, particularly those coordinated with the al-Quds International Institution (mu’assasa al-quds al-dawliyya), whose vice-chairman was ‘Abd Allâh al-Ahmar and whose actions and solicitations were relayed by SMSs to Sabafon customers, the Charitable Society for Social Welfare has gained support from the masses who associate such mobilizations with the party’s dynamism. For instance, during the protests in support of Gaza in December 2008 and January 2009, al-Islâh emerged – even in the opinion of a member of the Socialist Party – as a “clearly active force” and a major mobilizing party whose activities were far more significant than those organized by the General People’s Congress.

Education is another field of local action favored by al-Islâh, who – throughout history – has infiltrated the social fabric by way of the Scientific Institutes (ma’âbid ‘ilmîyya). Established in the mid-1970s to counter the ideological offensive of the Socialist Party in South Yemen border areas and initially financed by Saudi Arabia, the parapublic teaching network offered religion-based education. The network was independently managed by the Direction of Scientific Institutes and led by individuals close to the Muslim Brotherhood - such as Yahyâ al-Fusayîl, who later became al-Islâh’s secretary general - which helped spread the party’s ideals throughout the country and made the recruitment of new members easier (al-Saqqâf*, 2004). Placed under the government’s authority in 2002, the Institutes merged with the public education sector and were administratively and financially integrated into the Ministry of Education, which caused an important wave of protest among party members.

18 Interview with a university professor close to al-Islâh, February 19, 2009.
Returning to Political Parties?

The al-Imân University is another branch of the education network where al-Islâb is involved. Established in Sanaa in 1993 by al-Islâb Consultative Council member ‘Abd al-Majîd al-Zindânî, the university, which hosted over 4,000 students in 2006, specialises in a religious curriculum (Johnsen, 2006). Although it is officially independent and free from government control, it is widely associated with the party and constitutes a reservoir for rallying young people and religious elites in Yemen and abroad.

The same holds true for the University of Science and Technology (Jâma‘at al-‘ulûm wa al-tiknûlûjiyâ) in Sanaa and its various branches in all major cities. Established in 1994, it was built on land donated by ‘Alî Muhsin, a public figure close to President Sâlih and the military commander of the northern region, a land it shares with an important mosque built by Sheikh Sinân Abû Luhûm. Although the university curriculum, generally regarded as first-rate, is not religion-based and although the structure as a whole is not affected by charges of support to terrorism formulated by the US government against al-Imân and its president, al-Zindânî, the university is fully integrated into al-Islâb’s vast network. Al-Islâb’s connections with major tradesmen and figures close to the party contribute indirectly to the university’s good reputation and profile. Indeed, the University of Science and Technology Hospital, whose board of directors is chaired by Târiq Sinân Abû Luhûm, is regarded as one of the best in the capital city, which helps cement the university’s local roots and image of modernity and efficiency, in opposition to the underdeveloped and difficulty-ridden public universities and hospitals.22

Al-Islâb also relies on a large media network as another mobilization tool. A wide-ranging press helps the party spread their views and take part in processing information. The network includes al-Sabwa and al-Asima, two weekly newspapers affiliated with the party, al-Maisdar and al-Nâs, two independent weekly publications with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, and al-Nâr, a monthly magazine previously named Nawâfîdh. These publications expand the party’s presence within the social fabric by speaking on behalf of the “Islâhî” cause and its variations. The politically-oriented press is supplemented by a publishing network with partisan political and religious markers: printing presses (such as al-Afâq, owned by the al-Ahmar family), and specialized bookshops and shops selling religious DVDs and tapes (such as tasjîlat al-Imân) are all indirect mobilization tools used by al-Islâb.

Moreover, al-Islâb benefits from religious, institutional and informal structures.

22 See the hospital’s website (http://usthyemen.com/) and the university website (www.ust.edu.ye).
that help develop its local presence and influence. Friday sermons are perhaps the most obvious mobilization tool, and their openly political orientation is a great asset for the party, all the more so as the domination – even the control – of mosques and training institutes by religious scholars close to the Muslim Brotherhood has been increasing in the South (notably in Aden) since 1994 and in traditionally Zaydi areas since 2004. Under the supervision of al-Islâh members, Koran courses for children taught in the afternoon or during the summer and literacy courses for women in rural regions, in addition to regular participation in prayers at the mosque all help create social networks that are beneficial to the party. This is particularly true in predominantly feminine circles. Indeed, political socialization seems less easy for women (men are invited to take part in political debates at a young age during qat sessions) and is mainly done through social structures linked to charity action, as mentioned earlier, or to religious teaching. As is the case for charitable activities, Koranic societies create mobilization networks. For instance, women’s religious meetings including comments on the Holy Koran and debate on religious issues are not just a tool for the militant “re-Islamization” of society. According to Janine Clark (2004), these nadwât (forums) are a way to bring together women more or less in favor of the “Islâhi” cause, and introduce them to political ideas and encourage partisan commitment. These meetings are actually an efficient mobilization tool to infiltrate the social fabric as well as a recruitment channel.

Finally, the field of Human Rights provides high visibility to the party, even if only recently developed. Indeed, the activities of the non-governmental organization HOOD (The National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms - al-Haya al-wataniyya lil-difa‘ an al-huqûq wa al-huriyyât), are consistent with al-Islâh’s principles. Mobilization slogans focus primarily on Guantanamo Bay and the defense of Yemeni prisoners. Such activities unite a large portion of the population around problems and issues that do not affect the regime directly and are unanimously agreed upon. Yet the issue of arbitrary arrests or disappearances, particularly those linked to the Saada War, is also discussed. Although there is no direct link, public opinion generally associates these

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23 On this issue, refer to “Al-shatât al-Ta’lîmi” (The Educational Confusion) [in Arabic], Al-Thawra, April 7, 2005.

24 Qat is a light narcotic chewed daily and in groups by a large proportion of the Yemeni population during the maqyal. Qat is chewed fresh; its use has spread across the country thanks to the development of road infrastructure, and has become an important element of the Yemeni national identity.
activities with the party, and is familiar with HOOD activists’ political leanings, especially with the positions of the organization’s founder, Muhammad Nâjî ‘Allâw, or attorney Khâlid al-Anisi (who left the organization in 2009) or party members Ahmad ‘Amrân and ‘Abd al-Rahmân Barmân. The same is true of Women Journalists without Chains (Munazama sabafiyât bilâ quyûd), an association whose president, Tawakkul Karmân, is a member of al-Islâh’s Consultative Council. The affiliation undeniably brings the party many political benefits.

Taiz humorist Fahd al-Qarni uses another inventive mobilization method. His satire of the ruling power spread by audio tapes was immensely successful during the 2006 presidential campaign. Since then, he has frequently participated in events organized by al-Islâh and opposition parties. His caricatures of the president, of the General People’s Congress and of Prime Minister Bâ Jammal led to his arrest in July 2006, and to his imprisonment for a few months. The incident helped the Islamist party boost their image as defenders of freedom of expression and take control of the large solidarity network formed around the artist, especially through the action of the HOOD organization.

al-Islâh obviously has no qualms about using all available means and tools to publicize its doctrine and recruit sympathizers and activists. In terms of mobilization, the party clearly benefits from varied resources that make up its solid local base and important followers’ networks.

As a result, members of al-Islâh are just as likely to participate in strictly political activities as they are to be involved in socioeconomic or religious activities that are more or less connected to the party. The reasons for loyalty between the various leanings and the political parties are not always easy to identify; however, they do exist and provide an explanation for “Islâhî” activism. The relationship between these “targeted” segments of population (sympathizers, charity beneficiaries, readers, voters, etc.) and the party varies according to circumstances that depend on their expectations as well as on the types of capital and arguments used to mobilize them.

26 Interview with a university professor close to al-Islâh, op. cit.
In this respect, *al-Islāh*’s membership is complex, because it is based on diverse forms of relationships with the party and commitment towards different objects and fields. Nevertheless, these networks are inextricably linked because they represent solidarity and community networks with common religious beliefs. Therefore, social fabrics are not unified, but rather bridged together by these common values that ease mobility and transfer from one field of action to another. If, as sources close to *al-Islāh* believe, the party constitutes the largest partisan structure in Yemen, it may realistically be considered as a popular party, if not as a mass party. Beyond political divisions, recruitment is based on religious references largely shared among the population. In addition to patronage and solidarity networks, the party’s support is founded on a social and religious conservative position, which may be regarded by some as the “interpreter of the Yemeni society’s culture.”

Besides a substantial base of activists, *al-Islāh* is privileged to have a national and local organizational structure far more developed than its competitors (al-Yamani, 2003, p. 52). Local branches add dynamism to a partisan life often portrayed as elitist. Strong management provides coherence to these heterogeneous networks. Indeed, while *al-Islāh* is made up of different groups who sometimes hold opposing opinions, its internal “pluralism” is offset by the influence of the party leaders, who seem to exert rigorous control over party members. That’s why *al-Islāh* followers often boast about the richness of their party, anchored in the variety of positions expressed within the party, and reject the fact that such richness may be a source of internal divisions, since the decisions taken by the General Secretariat or the Consultative Council are respected and supported by the masses. In fact, despite the internal diversity of the party, positions are generally endorsed by all members, who are less inclined to publicly display their disagreements than Socialist Party members for example. The authority emanating from the relatively closed circle of the party’s political elite may be explained by “the charisma of the leadership” or by the existence of an allegiance mechanism, whose functionality is strengthened by the fact that many members view their commitment to the party through a religious prism.

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27 *Idem.*

28 Interview with an *al-Islāh* member, February 11, 2009.

29 Interview with a university professor close to *al-Islāh*, op. cit.
THE DIFFICULT PROCESS OF EMANCIPATION: BUILDING AN ALTERNATIVE FORCE

Since the late 1990s, al-Islâh’s leadership has endorsed a strategy of alliance and cooperation with other opposition movements, and particularly with their historic enemy, the Yemeni Socialist Party (Browers, 2007). How do Islamists negotiate their merger with the opposition? What are the consequences of relinquishing a system based on loyalty? The final part of our study will focus on the realization of al-Islâh’s emancipation potential, mentioned earlier. How are resources converted and mobilized to re-create a concrete opposition project?

The party from 1990 to 1997: between alliance and opposition

Following the Yemeni unification in 1990, President Ali ‘Abd Allâh Sâlih was confronted with socialist elites from the former South Yemen, who – even if destabilized – were to rule the country with him in accordance with the unity agreement. In an effort to change the balance of forces, Sâlih turned more overtly to al-Islâh and other Islamist groups, including Salafis and other groups linked to the movement of Zaydi revival. By co-opting them in place and stead of his socialist “partners”, he altered the boundaries and territories of the opposition.

Between 1993 and 1997, the Yemeni government was composed of al-Islâh ministers representing the various leanings of the party. They held relatively important positions, such as Education, Religious Affairs, Justice and one deputy prime minister. In October 1993, President Sâlih appointed ‘Abd al-Majîd al-Zindâni, who had been living in Saudi Arabia for several years and was entrusted with Islamist mobilization in Afghanistan in the 1980s, to the five-member Presidential Council. Al-Islâh was thus introduced in the institution, whose task was to provide the president with assistance and which had been, until then, composed of three members of the General People’s Congress and two socialists. Moreover, the 1993 election of al-Islâh chairman ‘Abd Allâh al-Ahmâr to the office of Parliament Speaker was carried by the votes of the ruling party. The cooperation between the ruling power and al-Islâh reached a climax in 1994 during the brief war between the armies and political elites of the two former Yemeni entities. Paradoxically, the war was also to help speed up its decline.

Al-Islâh Islamists provided theological legitimization for the war and took
part in combat operations with armed militias trained for this purpose by tribal factions and other militants recently returned from Afghanistan. During the fighting, al-Islâh member ‘Abd al-Wahhâb al-Daylamî, who was later appointed minister of Justice immediately after the war, issued a fatwa equating secessionists with impious individuals (Schwedler, 2004, p. 217). The president benefited from his partnership with al-Islâh during the struggle between northern and southern elites for political hegemony in unified Yemen. However the partnership was no longer of use when the North achieved military supremacy over the South and the Yemeni Socialist Party, brought down to its knees, was compelled to rebuild itself around individuals who had rejected secession. The alliance game of the General People’s Congress changed with the quasi-total disappearance of its socialist rival. Although al-Islâh was granted nine ministerial portfolios in October 1994, the Islamists’ influence was progressively limited, while the authority of the General People’s Congress increased. Al-Islâh was gradually excluded from decision-making circles, even though the elites of both parties maintained a close relationship.

The first visible, albeit incomplete, split occurred in 1997. In keeping with their ambiguous position vis-à-vis the ruling power, the party leadership signed a declaration of cooperation with the Higher Coordination Council for the Opposition\(^\text{30}\) in August 1996, and a vast majority of its MPs boycotted the 1997 budget vote. However, they were not quite ready to relinquish their alliance with the General People’s Congress. They published a statement in October of the same year, to emphasize their wish to maintain a strong relationship with the ruling party (Schwedler, 2004, p. 221). On April 27, 1997 however, the parties were unable to reach an electoral agreement, which resulted in GPC candidates running against al-Islâh’s, in addition to several candidates from minor parties. al-Islâh emerged as the new – and almost unique – opposition party, in the absence of socialists who boycotted the elections; they won 22% of the votes, but lost 10 seats compared to 1993, while the General People’s

\(^{30}\) The Higher Coordination Council for the Opposition (al-Majlis al-a’lî li-l-tansîq) encompasses the Yemeni Socialist Party, the National Arab Socialist Baath Party (Hizb al-Ba’th al-’arabî al-isti’âakî al-qawmî), the League of the Sons of Yemen (leftist liberals, Hizb Râbita Ibnâ’ al-Yaman), the Nasserite Popular Unionist Organization (Tanzîm al-wahdawî al-sha’abî al-nâsîrî), the Yemeni Unionist Congregation (lay leftist movement, Tajammû’ al-wahdawî al-yamanî), the Union of Popular Forces (liberal Zaydi party, Itihad al-Quwa al-Sha’abiyya), the al-Haqq Party (conservative Zaydi party) and the Constitutional Liberals’ Party (liberals close to the Yemeni Socialist Party, Hizb al-Ahrâr al-Dusturi).
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Congress gained 60 extra seats, dominating parliament by a wide margin\textsuperscript{31}. Following the relative defeat in the elections, probably aggravated by various voting irregularities, \textit{al-Islâh} was also excluded from the government, as no portfolio was granted to the party members in the new cabinet. The role of political backup, once held by \textit{al-Islâh}, was then briefly played by the small Zaydi \textit{al-Haqq} Party, whose Secretary General Ahmad al-Shâmi was appointed Minister of Endowments. The co-optation of a firm opponent to the Muslim Brotherhood was implicitly aimed at undermining the party’s position among religious or educational institutions, particularly the famous Scientific Institutes (\textit{ma’âhid ‘ilmîyya}).

Yet, the break between \textit{al-Islâh} and the ruling power in 1997 was not quite clear: The threats of boycotting the legislative elections, waged by some \textit{al-Islâh} figures in the partisan press, were never carried out. The party never used the name of the president in their statements and criticism, however virulent. Furthermore, ‘Abd Allâh al-Ahmar was reelected as parliament speaker with the support of General People’s Congress MPs. It seems that a head-on confrontation with the ruling power of Ali ‘Abd Allâh Sâlih was the red line that \textit{al-Islâh} was ultimately unable – or simply unwilling – to cross during the 1990s. Therefore, the party did not enter any candidate for the 1999 presidential elections. Najîb Qahtân al-Sha’bî, a member of the GPC, ran against President Sâlih in an attempt to give a touch of credibility to an election where the incumbent president won with more than 96\% of the vote (Wedeen, 2008).

**Progressive rallying to the opposition platform**

As the party leaders began to explore the possibility of cooperation with opposition parties, particularly with socialists, \textit{al-Islâh}’s change in strategy occurred progressively when their political situation evolved: agreements were found when \textit{al-Islâh} was excluded from political decision-making circles. The party’s survival and credibility were at stake when they joined the opposition platform. Yet, the shift in allegiance and the internal reform made it possible for the party to remain “in the game.” Does this reveal a surge in pragmatism among Islamists? The answer is yes, insofar as efforts are made to forego historical

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Al-Islâh} retained 53 parliamentary seats (more than 17\% of MPs), while the GPC dominated the Lower Chamber with 189 seats out of 301 (more than 60\%) compared to 54 seats for independent candidates.
ideological rivalries between Islamists and socialists to the benefit of these new forms of cooperation. We cannot ignore, however, that while a partnership with the General People’s Congress seemed rather “natural”, it was also primarily tactical and dependent on the leaders’ personal interrelations.

Al-Islâh’s opposition strategy emerged at the same time as the process of cooperation among opposition parties led by the Yemeni Socialist Party. The latter, in an effort to restructure itself around reformist figures such as Jâr Allâh ‘Umar 32, chose to renew a dialogue with the ruling elites and return to the political arena after the 1997 boycott. The socialists, who had worked since 1995 at bringing together opposition parties into a Higher Coordination Council for the Opposition, reached out to al-Islâh’s. Numerous contacts were made and forums were organized, such as the Political Development Forum (muntadâ al-tanmiya al-siyâsiyya) led by ‘Alî Sayf Hasan, with the participation of reformist elites from both parties; as a result a common platform was institutionalized. These bridge-building efforts revealed the increasingly pressing need for opposition parties to develop long-lasting mechanisms of cooperation against the backdrop of a shrinking political stage (Burgat, 2000).

During the 2001 local elections and referendum, al-Islâh was all the more committed to the opposition’s campaign as the General People’s Congress criticized and publicly accused the party of “electoral terrorism.” (Browers, 2007, p. 570). Opposition parties reached agreements among themselves in an attempt to secure a maximum number of seats in local councils and fight against a number of constitutional amendments. The campaign failed, amendments were ratified by referendum with close to 75% of the votes, and the General People’s Congress prevailed in local councils. The defeat was as much the result of a lack of transparency in the elections and probable ballot-rigging as it was the result of a poorly coordinated ineffective opposition campaign. Nevertheless, the episode was an important step in the bridge building process between al-Islâh and the leftwing and the validation of the party’s new role amid the opposition. al-Islâh denounced the fraud and insecurity - violent clashes marred the campaign and the voting process - and for some time refused to acknowledge the results published by the government 33.

32 On the role played by this individual, see: Carapico, Wedeen, Wuerth, 2002.
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The post-9/11 era gave al-Islâh members the opportunity to consolidate their opposition strategy. While Yemen was heavily criticized by the international community and accused of providing a safe haven for groups affiliated with al-Qaeda, President Sâlih took a stand in the war against terrorism, and confronted al-Islâh with a security-oriented position. A victim of this criminalization process, al-Islâh leadership, particularly the more Islamist oriented wing, intensified their efforts to build up the opposition platform and took part in the establishment of the Joint Meeting Parties (Ahzab al-liqâ‘ al-mushtarak). The Meeting, whose successful breakthrough on the political stage only materialized in 2005, took part for the first time in the 2003 legislative elections. Agreements were then reached between al-Islâh and the Yemeni Socialist Party in more than half of all electoral districts in an effort to avoid fragmenting anti-government votes (Schwedler and Clark, 2006; Carapico, 2003).

In November 2005, the opposition was further unified by the publication of the “Unified project plan for a comprehensive national and political reform” by the Joint Meeting. The program, which set the political agenda of the unified opposition, was cosigned by al-Islâh, the Yemeni Socialist Party, the Nasserite Popular Unionist Organization, the National Arab Socialist Baath Party, al-Haqq Party and the Union of Popular Forces (two small parties with Zaydi referents). Parties of the Joint Meeting agreed on supporting a single presidential candidate for the 2006 election and organized the opposition’s first ever presidential campaign. The joint platform was then created, in spite of the reluctance of some members (some even regarded an alliance with “atheist” socialists as treason and opposed the platform). The unified opposition supported the candidacy of Faysal bin Shamlân, a former Oil Minister and an independent public figure, despite his southern roots indirectly associated with socialists. Al-Islâh Islamists saw in Shamlân the opportunity to end the conflict that riddled the Joint Meeting leadership at the time. While his integrity and honesty most likely appealed to the opposition regardless of individual party political principles, the candidate’s position was identified by al-Islâh as close to the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed, Shamlân had participated in 1990 in the establishment of the Yemeni Free Platform (al-Minbar al-yamani al-hurr), considered as the counterpart of the Muslim Brotherhood in the South, before returning to the political stage as an independent figure. Regardless of the lock that guaranteed reelection of Sâlih, Shamlân’s relative success (22% of votes) gave the opposition new prospects. Al-Islâh had invested a great deal in the campaign (more than any

(retrieved on February 5, 2009).
other party of the Joint Meeting), and made their political resources available to the coalition (mobilization networks, press, experience, etc.) (Poirier, 2008). *Al-Islâh* publications were now primarily dedicated to the program of the Joint Meeting, a complete change in the party’s political identity. The party was frequently criticized by reluctant members, who considered that *al-Islâh* no longer supported their own political program, but rather the general program of the Joint Meeting.

**Al-Islâh’s identity repositioning**

*Al-Islâh*’s commitment to the Joint Meeting made it necessary to put aside some forms of embedded sectarianism, and give up stereotyped visions of socialists and, to a lesser extent, of Zaydis as well. As we mentioned earlier, *al-Islâh*’s political program had long been fueled by the split between Islamists and socialists. This stigmatization, demonstrated by discriminatory positions, was for some time less symbolic and became very direct in the early 1990s. The Yemeni Observatory for Human Rights, whose close ties with the leftwing were no secret, reported no less than 155 assassinations of socialist figures by religious and paramilitary organizations, mostly between 1990 and 1994 (Rougier, 1999). A large majority among Islamists condemned these acts of violence, but they continued to be perpetrated as evidenced by the December 2002 assassination of Jâr Allâh ‘Umar, then deputy secretary general of the Yemeni Socialist Party, during *al-Islâh* General Congress he was attending as a guest. The Islamist party was therefore compelled to give up their allegation that socialists, because of their secular political leanings, were “unbelievers” working for the West and importing western “impious” practices. It became necessary to put an end to religious discrimination against socialists and call attention to the piousness of some, such as Jâr Allâh ‘Umar, and – more generally – to give up a strictly “Islamic” position and focus on socioeconomic

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34 For instance, Mansûr, 2007.
35 Interview with a university professor close to *al-Islâh*, op. cit.
36 This political assassination, perpetrated by an Islamist activist, led to many rumors and controversies and was perceived by some members of *al-Islâh* as an attempt sponsored by the security services at undermining the rapprochement between the Islamists and the leftwing see Yahyà, 2003.
37 On the stigmatization of socialism by the Islamist, and more particularly the Salaîfist, movement, see: al-Wâdi’î*, no date.
criticism. Along these lines, Yemeni Socialist Party leader ‘Alî al-Sarari emphasized “al-Islâh’s important role in putting an end to propaganda against socialists.” Vis-à-vis the Zaydi partisans of al-Haqq Party or the Union of Popular Forces, al-Islâh gave up their claim that the latter were regarded as enemies of the Republic seeking to re-establish the Imamate overthrown by the 1962 revolution.

The change in al-Islâh’s strategy following their involvement in the opposition platform clearly included a trend reversal from techniques of stigmatization to the promotion of common references. It hasn’t been easy, however, to give up sectarian reflexes, especially in the context of social unrest in the South since 2007 and the Saada War since 2004. Indeed, stigmatizing attitudes, encouraged and fueled by the ruling power, may actually be relevant again. In the South, the Retired Military Movement, which expanded beyond the boundaries of the socio-professional group led to a resurgence of regionalism and even to secessionist positions among a more radical faction (Mermier, 2008). Since 2007, southern identity, in general, and the concept of national unity have been the subject of many debates actively attended by al-Islâh. Muhsin Bâ Sura, al-Islâh’s leader in the former South Yemen province of Hadramout, expressed the population’s mounting antagonism towards unity and threatened to support secession if necessary reforms were not put in place. In 2004, the army launched the Saada War against al-Hûthi members of the Believing Youth (accused of paving the way for the reinstatement of the Imamate with the support of the Shiite regime in Iran), which led to renewed attacks against Zaydis, especially Hashemites; such attacks have expanded to a large portion of the political landscape, including some intellectuals close to al-Islâh (Dorlian, 2008).

Moreover, al-Islâh profoundly reshaped their political image nationally and internationally by promoting a moderate, reformist elite. The movement, led by political intellectuals close to the Muslim Brotherhood, distanced itself from ideology in favor of pragmatism or, at least, from a direction based on ideological differences in favor of practical interests. Muhammad al-Yadûmî, ‘Abd al-Wahhâb al-Anisi and Muhammad Qahtân were the outstanding “asâtîdîb” (teachers) of this movement (Browers, 2007, p. 575). Muhammad al-Yadûmî, a former member of the security services and a former al-Islâh secretary general, has been the chairman of the party since the death of Sheikh ‘Abd Allâh al-

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Ahmar in December 2007. Former Deputy Prime Minister ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Anisi was the party’s secretary general, while Muhammad Qahtân was one of the ten members of al-Islâh’s Higher Committee (al-Hay’at al-ʿuliyya). The three public figures, who united their efforts in the dialogue with the Yemeni Socialist Party and acted in favor of a joint action by opposition parties, played a major role in the establishment and consolidation of the Joint Meeting. While maintaining a conservative branch, al-Islâh has used the press, among other tools, to launch onto the political scene young actors such as Saʿîd Shamsân, Ibrahim al-Haʾir, Muhammad ʿAbd al-Salâm or Saʿîd Thâbit, with liberal ambitions, modernist policies and a commitment to the “democratic” partisan system. These young men have joined the ranks of al-Islâh’s reformist wing⁴⁰.

While they may not represent the opinion of the majority, these individuals have become the party’s spokespersons during gatherings and protests of opposition parties or international conferences. Furthermore, they have managed to soften some of the party’s positions, especially with regard to women’s participation in political life. Although al-Islâh refused to nominate female candidates for the elections, the debate on the role of women in politics upset the status quo among party members and leaders, even if no clear position was taken on the issue. The debate led to a slow promotion of women: indeed 13 of them, approximately 10% of elected representatives, joined the Consultative Council following the 2007 Congress. During the opening session held in the presence of many independent journalists and observers, Tawakkul Karmân, a young female activist, delivered a speech directly supporting the Joint Meeting process.

With the emergence of new elites, the party opened up to the international scene particularly through ties maintained with the National Democratic Institute and the National Endowment for Democracy which provide respectability and new sources of political support to the party. In an effort to strengthen their position amid their international networks, al-Islâh has been forced to redefine their ideas and projects in order to comply with the agendas imposed by some organizations. Consequently, in addition to promoting the development of reformist elites, al-Islâh has launched a full-fledged communication campaign in an attempt to emerge as a centrist party committed to democracy and to a moderate Islamic project. This position, associated with the new constraints of the international arena, has also led the party to take a more active part in the opposition.

⁴⁰ On the new generation of party members, see also: « Al-Islâhiyyûn al-judud » (The new reformists) [in Arabic], Abwâb, August 2008, p. 32-35.
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**Should the active participation in the opposition lead to alternation?**

In this context of reshaping their political allegiances and partisan identity, what role can *al-Islâh* play as an opposition party within the Joint Meeting? We shall now examine the evolution of the tactics adopted by the opposition coalition, which seem to have switched from dialogue to boycott, as well as the ambivalent positions taken by the party.

So far, the Joint Meeting’s strategy has been based on their participation in the instituted political game. During the 2006 presidential elections, the coalition thus rose to prominence as the legitimate opposition. The new configuration directly affected the customary lack of electoral transparency and forced the General People’s Congress to review their electoral practices and political platform. It is worth noting that the president was forced to make many concessions to his rival by using the same campaign themes as the opposition, such as fight against poverty, unemployment and corruption, education reforms and improvement of public services.

The Joint Meeting’s credibility as an opposition force to the ruling power was confirmed when they were included as a GPC’s “partner” in the reform of the electoral law and the Supreme Commission for Elections and Referendum (*al-Lajna al-`uliyya lil-intikhâbât wa al-istifâ‘*), an institution created in 2001 to organize and monitor the elections. While GPC and Joint Meeting representatives agreed on the need for these reforms, the stormy debates and incompatible positions defended by the parties led to intense battles of wills during the autumn of 2008; the Joint Meeting refused to attend a number of parliamentary sessions and threatened to boycott the parliamentary elections scheduled to take place on 27 April 2009. The Joint Meeting gambled on the support (and pressure) of foreign institutions and defended the transition from a First Past The Post voting system in single electoral districts to a party-list proportional voting system in

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multiple districts. An agreement was finally reached in February 2009 following major negotiations between the General People’s Congress and the Joint Meeting Parties: The elections were postponed until 2011 and extensive reforms were promised in order to introduce the party-list proportional system.

Although al-Islâh was officially involved in the process of establishing the opposition, they seemed willing to let their partners appear in the spotlight, notably Yassin Sa’îd Nu’mân, secretary general of the Yemeni Socialist Party, featured many times in the partisan and independent press. Al-Islâh members took a rather reserved stance on events that were wreaking havoc in the country (terrorism, economic crisis, challenges to the North’s hegemony over the South, the Saada War). The contrast was striking between their discreet mobilization on the Southern issue on the one hand – especially in light of the repressive steps taken by the government, the release of political prisoners, or the Saada War and its consequences, and, on the other hand, the efforts they made to boost the boycott campaign of Danish products or the support for Gaza. This attitude of taking a back seat to their partners, no matter how little representative they may be, is undoubtedly a legacy of the 1990s and shows how difficult it is for al-Islâh to achieve emancipation. The talks about amendments to the constitution and the electoral law, and the forthcoming parliamentary elections are expected to be an interesting challenge to the strategy of head-on opposition and alliance, officially embraced by the party.

In addition to their cautious behavior, al-Islâh is divided by contrasting ambitions. A significant number of party members are not really willing to get involved in electoral battles and undermine their alliance with the ruling power.

43 The members of the Joint Meeting rallied around the project of reviewing electoral districting and the methods of electoral registration and agreed to the proportional voting system, but the coalition was divided over promoting women’s participation in political life. While the socialists heralded the idea of a quota for women (whether directly in parliament or on electoral ballots), al-Islâh partisans proved reluctant on the issue.

44 M. Poirier, 2009. Newsyemen, February 25, 2009:


46 Sarah Phillips (2008, p. 163-166) described this attitude as “standing under the tree and waiting for the fruit to fall.”
Refusal to break away from allegiance to the president also has affected and weakened the unitary movement begun by the party in 2006. For example, on the eve of the presidential elections, \textit{al-Islâh}'s chairman ‘Abd Allâh al-Ahmar declared his personal allegiance to President Sâlih which delegitimized Faysal bin Shamlan the party’s candidate (\textit{al-Shuja*}, 2007). Many sheikhs of the Hâshid tribal confederation then followed suit and supported the incumbent president. On the whole, traditional affiliations and personal allegiances have endured and to some extent undermined the party’s efforts to establish its autonomy. A branch of \textit{al-Islâh} still rejects political games for the sake of preserving consensus and protecting themselves from government repression at the same time. For example, ‘Abd al-Majîd al-Zindânî has not overtly supported his party’s shift to the opposition. He refrained from making any public declaration of allegiance in 2006 and remained silent about the opposition-backed candidate; as the chairman, he hosted the president’s visits to al-Imân university at the beginning and near the end of his electoral campaign. Competition has also come from groups that favor an apolitical approach, particularly the \textit{Salafi} movement (\textit{al-Hikma} in particular).

Despite profound changes, \textit{al-Islâh} leadership does not seem willing to break free from their former loyalty to the power in place and do without their “rental” resources. Therefore, the reformist wing could just be a showcase of their commitment amid the Joint Meeting and coexist with more conservative movements. When the party chairman, Sheikh ‘Abd Allâh al-Ahmar, who symbolized the historic alliance with President Sâlih, died in December 2007, the party had a major opportunity for emancipation. However, al-Ahmar’s death did not lead to any significant break. \textit{al-Islâh} MP Hamîd al-Ahmar, in spite of his strong anti-establishment position and support of Faysal bin Shamlân during the 2006 electoral campaign, later seemed to hesitate between recanting his position by adopting a more conciliatory attitude, and calling for new presidential elections and advising president Sâlih to step down, as he did during an interview on al-Jazeera in August 2009. His brothers, Sâdiq and Husayn, himself a member of the General People’s Congress, stood by ‘Abd al-Majîd al-Zindânî when he created the Vice and Virtue Committee (\textit{bayat al-fadhila}), a sort of religious vice squad, in July 2008. Such positioning was considered by some analysts as part of a renewed alliance between the ruling power and al-Ahmar’s sons\textsuperscript{47}.

Indeed, ideological concessions and outward pragmatism do not have unanimous support among party leaders or members (\textit{al-Daghshi*}, to be

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Yemen Times}, n°1144, April 5, 2008.
published. Changing affiliations and rhetoric and partnership with the Yemeni Socialist Party have led to various clashes about the way many partisans view the “Islâhi cause” even if the party’s predominant public position is openly in favor of the Joint Meeting. The rhetoric of stigmatization of socialists or Zaydis and the opposition to al-Islâh’s new trend remain a reality and continues to reflect the party’s internal diversity.

**CONCLUSION**

The issue of al-Islâh’s moderation and its relation to the party’s participation in government were the subject of an important research by Jillian Schwedler (2007). Based on a comparative study with the Jordanian Islamic Action Front, Schwedler’s work focuses on the complicated process of opening up and breaking away from radicalism. The author concludes that al-Islâh’s participation in the government between 1993 and 1997 and their close ties with the country’s ruling elites have had little effect in terms of moderation, defined as the capacity to accept multiple perspectives. Yet al-Islâh’s commitment to the Joint Meeting, largely described throughout our study, seems to challenge Schwedler’s theory. Indeed, the quest for autonomy, though difficult, is now generally accepted by the party leadership. It involves more radical criticism of the ruling power on themes of corruption or authoritarianism, and a capacity to cooperate with various political groups, primarily with socialists.

Since its creation in 1990, al-Islâh has shown a remarkable capacity to adapt, by striking alliances with the ruling power in some cases while successfully preserving its position as an opposition party. This ambivalent strategy made it possible for the party to be spared both by repression and marginalization. The party’s numerous resources, whether “rental” or the result of efficient local action, are a real asset for mobilization. Taking advantage of these resources to create an alternation project remains a hypothetical and fragile process still far from completion. Changes in alliances, constant transitions from co-optation to emancipation, from consensus to criticism, all al-Islâh’s trademarks, make the study of this highly rich and complex party both interesting and inspiring to study this highly rich and complex party.

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The National Liberation Front in Algeria

Mohammed Hennad*

The National Liberation Front (FLN) is a party worth studying not only because it is the oldest party but also because of the capacity it has shown to survive. It has now risen again to the political forefront following a relatively long period of recess between 1988 and 2000. The FLN is no longer content with winning the majority of seats in the Algerian parliament, municipal councils and provincial councils, as it has become the locomotive of the so-called “Presidential Alliance” and as an organization that very nearly allocates roles on the national political landscape. Very often, the FLN seems to be involved in some kind of political brokerage. As such, this party has aroused the interest of many researchers, especially thesis writers. Moreover, several party leaders have published books on the National Liberation Front, most of which, however, were controversial (Bouchama, 2008). Another reason justifying the interest in this organization is its close connection with the political system that has been in place in Algeria since the country’s independence in 1962, so much so that it has become a kind of a power stake. It would be, therefore, no exaggeration to assert that the fate of the political life and the desired democratic transition in Algeria remain, to a great extent, linked to way the National Liberation Front develops, including the possibility of “putting it in the museum of history”, something many people have been calling for since the adoption of political pluralism in the country.

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The National Liberation Front: From a Liberation Movement to a “Ruling” Party

Birth of the party

The National Liberation Front can be characterized by the way it was born. For the way it was born constitutes something like a genetic code that explains its conduct ever since Algeria’s independence.

It is a well-known fact that the FLN did not start out as a political organization, but rather as a liberation movement against the colonizing power following the multiple failures of the various factions of the National Movement since 1954. These factions had tried time and again – albeit unsuccessfully – whether individually or collectively, to get the occupation authorities to change their treatment of the Algerian people, especially with regard to those dreams of emancipation stipulated in the Atlantic Charter of 1941 and to the winds of liberation that picked up toward the end of World War II, even if these dreams were subsequently crushed by the Cold War.

Hence, one can say that the National Liberation Front was not established on a political basis and for the sake of political action; rather, it was – in a certain way – apolitical. Despite the rhetoric that has been prevailing since independence, the FLN did not come as a “synthesis”1 to the National Movement - the various factions which had started to emerge in the early twentieth century - as much as an abrupt and violent interruption to this pluralistic movement, which lacked maturity and a better understanding of the need for collective action in order to serve the national cause.

During the period of colonization, Algeria witnessed partisan pluralism that spanned across the political spectrum. It was, thus, home to a radical party, a liberal party, a reformist Islamic party (which, however, described itself as an association) and a communist party. Numerous attempts had also been made at laying the foundations of joint action, and they were stepped up both during and after World War II. However, the response of the colonial administration

1 According to several Algerian historians specializing in the Algerian War of Independence, in keeping with the official version. For instance Chikh (1981).
each time proved that it was simply not ready to reconsider the terms of the relations between the European settlers and the indigenous population, with the exception of some “cosmetic” aspects.

The organization that emerged in the autumn of 1954 under the label of the “National Liberation Front” thus spelled the end of the then-known national parties. It also came after an initial attempt in 1947 to form the so-called “Special Organization”, the armed wing of the People’s Party-Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties, an attempt that was soon squashed by the colonial administration.

The secret organization composed of the National Liberation Front and the National Liberation Army came to light at a time when the National Movement needed some breathing space to overcome its crises, reorganize itself and adapt its struggle to the new realities following World War II. Hence, as has been previously mentioned, this organization imposed a *fait accompli*: no option was left to the existing parties (or to any person, regardless of his past militancy, for that matter) but to join the nascent organization, strictly as individuals not party members. Otherwise, its members were accused of high treason once the first victims started being deplored.

The various factions of the National Movement were, at the time, looking for ways and means to mend their image and regain initiative on the level of the colonial administration and the Algerian people alike. Such an initiative was all the more necessary back then, following a series of failures in the pursuance of the national cause. The most serious of these failures was the events of May 1945\(^2\), when Algerians, in the east of the country, went out to celebrate victory in World War II in their own way, albeit with the aim of drawing attention to their cause as payback for the part they had played in ensuring this victory. The settlers, however, countered them with bullets rather than dialogue. Setbacks then kept rolling in, including the failure to initiate reforms and the rigging of the 1947 elections, as well as subsequent efforts to deprive the Algerian population of representation after denying it full citizenship. These failures, which brought things back to square one every time, spread a sense of despair and had a negative impact on the peaceful actions. It is worth mentioning, here, that around this same time, the largest civil party – the People’s Party-Movement

\(\text{2 Most of those involved in the struggle for Algeria’s independence say that their national conscience started developing in the wake of these events.}\)
Returning to Political Parties?

for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties – started witnessing sharp internal conflicts that forced its leadership to yield to the demands to create an armed wing, known as the “Special Organization”, as has previously been mentioned. This demand was brandished by many youths affiliated with the party who had lost patience in light of the repeated failures and who subsequently formed the core of the Liberation Front.

In any case, there was an effective national movement that represented the main currents in the country. The factions composing this movement complemented each other, even if this complementarity was not necessarily explicit and intended. The Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto (Union Démocratique du Manifeste Algérien, UDMA), a mostly liberal party, called for democracy, respect of human dignity and the right to share in the benefit of civilization. The Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars devoted itself to upholding the language and religion underlying the identity of the Algerian people. The Algerian Communist Party, which was slowly starting to reduce its dependence on the French Communist Party at the time, was trying to adapt to the Algerian struggle within the framework of a wider context of liberation. The Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties (known as the Algerian People’s Party) was the most important and most popular of the abovementioned parties and was fighting for political and social democracy, which would ultimately lead to national independence. This national movement could very well have achieved victories had time been on its side and had it not been for the emergence of the National Liberation Front, the founders of which campaigned for immediate independence, through armed struggle, without any prior preparation.

This short overview of indigenous politics and the activities of the National Movement in general prior to 1954 shows how each civil party was seeking – each in its own way and sometimes in cooperation, however difficult, with the other parties – to provide Algerian society with the necessary conditions to establish a solid political entity out of colonization, and perhaps, somehow, because of it. This entity would be led by experienced national elites capable of initiating a genuine national dynamic and of affecting the fate of the Algerian people in the long run. Even the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars, which was labeled as “conservative”, joined this drive. Indeed, how could it not do so, keeping in mind that it was very influenced by the values of the Arab Islamic Nabda (Renaissance), which advocated a minimum of rationality in managing the affairs of society³.

³ Many of the ideas expressed here were quoted from an analysis piece I wrote in: al-Yawm, 23/3/2003, p. 11.
Development of the party following independence: the notion of “apparatus”

It is worth mentioning that the 1962 independence only served to consolidate the unilateralism that had grown stronger during the Liberation War, making the timid attempts to restore some kind of political pluralism, as had been the case under the colonization period, totally useless. But the struggle was never about restoring such pluralism inasmuch as it was about the legitimacy of the ruling power within the framework of the FLN’s unifying structure. This struggle sought to reach a balance of forces among the competing parties back then. Hence, had some kind of political pluralism been adopted when Algeria gained its independence, even if within the FLN itself, the country would be enjoying today a more mature and credible national elite and political parties (Hennad, forthcoming).

In any case, it seemed clear right from the start that there was no hope of returning to the political pluralism prevailing under the period of colonization, and this was further compounded by the 1963 law banning political parties. This was due to the fact that the armed struggle had imposed a culture of prevalence of military action over political action, which only served to complete it. Several domestic leaders had previously held a conference, known as the “Soummam Conference”, in 1956 in an attempt to consecrate two essential principles: the supremacy of domestic leadership over external leadership and that of politics over the military. Nevertheless, neither the balance of forces nor the development of the war on the domestic level (the leadership had been forced to flee the country following a wave of arrests) allowed the consecration of these two principles, which remained ineffective. Moreover, the party leaders – except for the leader and supporters of the People’s Party – who joined the National Liberation Front were never decision makers. Rather, it later turned out that many of them were mere diplomatic tools and a showcase for negotiations with France in case the two belligerents agreed on initiating self-determination negotiations. This was the case with the transitional government, which negotiated and signed in the name of the National Liberation Front in March 1962 the Evian Accords on self-determination and on the nature of future relations between the two countries in various domains. After independence, it was as though this government had served its purpose, and its members lost their influence in the nascent state, except for some non-decision-making positions bestowed by the new leaders of the country.

The second reason behind the victory of unilateralism over pluralism has to do with the situation in the country back then, which was as follows: First, the political
leadership was so riddled by divisions that the country almost drifted into civil war. Those who were not keen to take up dialogue and consultations prevailed. Second, there was a dire economic situation and empty state coffers. Third was the departure of the bulk of colonists who controlled almost all activities. A complete overhaul of the situation was needed and everything was waiting to be organized.4

Hence, one can say that the difficult circumstances prevailing in Algeria at the time were in favor of the single-party notion as the “only way” to return to normalcy and achieve progress in the country. This party could have been no other than the National Liberation Front since it was the one that “liberated the country”.

What was, then, the FLN’s status in the official texts of the nascent state?

Five texts are involved: The 1962 Tripoli Program, the 1963 Constitution, the 1964 Algiers Charter, the National Charter of 1976 and its 1986 amendment, and the 1976 Constitution. These texts remained in use as a “reference for the revolution” until the adoption of pluralism and the adoption of the 1989 Constitution. All these “founding” texts stressed the role of the National Liberation Front, using almost the same words to assert the same principles, albeit in a perhaps more moderate tone, from the 1965 coup to the succession of President Houari Boumediene, who died in December 1978.5

The National Liberation Front thus transformed from a unifying liberation movement to a single party used as an exclusionary tool and as an “apparatus promoting a political system rooted in the army, the executive authority and the administration… Despite being the only party, the FLN became an empty shell, albeit one that was necessary for personal ambitions, as no one could secure his or her career without wrapping him or herself in its cloak.”6

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4 In an interview I had, on October 5, 1985, with Benyoussef ben Khedda, a National Movement leader before the war and the second premier of the Provisional Government during the war, he told me that each of the participants in the Tripoli Conference in June 1962 believed that “we achieved victory thanks to our unity and that this unity should be preserved in order to address the problems of underdevelopment. This led to the emergence of the single party, which later on took its definitive shape”.


6 Chérif Ouzani, « Où va le FLN? » (“Where is the FLN going?”), in Jeune Afrique, n° 2464-2465, April 3-April 12, 2008, p. 64.
The first Algerian constitution, adopted in September 1963\(^7\), dedicated a section to the National Liberation Front (articles 23 to 26) in which it described the organization as “the only vanguard party in Algeria”, tasking it with “drafting the nation’s policy, acting as a source of inspiration for state action and [monitoring] the National Assembly and the government”, since it embodies the people’s ambitions to establish “socialism in Algeria”. However, this constitution remained valid for only about a month due to the war with Morocco and to internal conflicts. The situation remained volatile until the June 19, 1965 coup\(^8\), which suspended the constitution under the pretext of giving precedence to building socialism and eradicating underdevelopment in the country. Constitutional legitimacy was formally reinstated only eleven years later. This comeback, through a National Charter adopted, in 1976, by referendum as an ideological reference for the regime, led directly to the drafting of a constitution during the same year\(^9\). Even though the principle of the single-party system and the FLN’s vanguard role were emphasized on every occasion, the party remained trapped in a vicious circle of endless reorganization (Hennad, 1992, p. 114).

Throughout this whole period, the FLN remained an “apparatus”\(^10\) with three main functions: First, providing political propaganda for the ruling regime and its revolutionary project. Second, political recruitment by selecting candidacies

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7 This constitution was strangely worded because it was drafted by a group called the National Liberation Front, rather than by the Constituent Assembly, which had been elected for this purpose. This assembly was called upon to merely pass this constitution officially.

8 Meanwhile, the Algiers Charter was adopted in April 1964 in order to settle the scores pending since independence and to impose a new balance of forces. Likewise, this charter seems to have been drafted by educated figures who tried to join the requirements of that period and the balance of forces prevailing at the time. This is proven by the fact that they did not heed caution against the dangers of drifting “… into dictatorship, into a bureaucracy by using the organization to promote its own interests, or into an individual dictatorship where the party would merely play the role of a political police organ. These dangers remain to this day!” This is easy to understand in this period of sharp conflicts over the management of the country, as proven by the June 1965 coup. The National Liberation Front was described as a single vanguard party that worked to “preserve the benefits derived from the Liberation War, to ensure that the revolution goes on” and to prevent “the emergence of multiple harmful parties that may be infiltrated by the ‘enemies of the people’.” (Refer to Section Three under the title of “building means” in which the charter touched on the FLN in addition to other mass organizations.)

9 Both the National Charter and the constitution were issued in the FLN’s name.

10 The phrase “government organ” was an official denomination.
for elected councils and cooptation of individuals to higher positions (being a member of the FLN was actually regarded as a sign of loyalty to the regime, keeping in mind that such a cooptation was never the work of the party inasmuch as the work of the secret services). Third, exerting control over the people, especially by expanding across municipalities, neighborhoods and workplaces, thus making the party similar to a political police force. The FLN was also used as a means to settle political scores, particularly in the early 1980s, when former ministers who had served during President Houari Boumediene’s were excluded from the party leadership, hence from power altogether. As for the traditional function known to parties (contribution to political life, political stability and political socialization) the FLN performed them, only within the framework of the abovementioned three functions.

It is worth noting that the return to constitutional regime did not have much effect on the status of the party, which remained an organ of government used by the ruling regime, as though the provisions of the 1976 Constitution in this regard were merely alluding to some party that had yet to be established. It is also worth mentioning that, unlike the National Popular Army, no separate chapter was earmarked for the party in the constitution; rather, the FLN is mentioned in the section dedicated to “the fundamental principles pertaining to the organization of Algerian society”, and ten articles tackled it in the chapter pertaining to the “political function” (articles 94 to 103). Therefore, one can say that Article 94 (“the founding system in Algeria is based on the single-party principle”, i.e. the National Liberation Front) – much as it confirmed the party’s role – aimed to confront the opposition, prevent pluralism, distinguish the supporters of the regime from its opponents and fill in vacant positions. According to Article 102, “decisive positions in the state are ascribed to members of the party leadership.” The same article also confirmed the principle of unified leadership in the party and the state in order to achieve a “unified vision”. In other words, the party cannot draft the country policy unilaterally, thus driving many analysts at the time to describe the political situation in Algeria as a “regime with a party” rather than “a party with a regime”. Others described the FLN as a “party-state” or a “party-nation”.

By and large, President Houari Boumediene (1965-1978) did not show much interest in ensuring the FLN’s participation during his term because he did not care

11 See the series of interviews with Ahmed Ghazali, the then-minister of Energy, who regained his standing within the political establishment, attaining the premiership following the suspension of the elections in 1992 (Echorouk, March 2008).
about political building inasmuch as he was interested in socioeconomic issues aimed at improving the country’s agricultural, industrial and cultural production as proven by the “three revolutions” in these fields. With the exception of advertising these revolutions, the FLN was kept busy with an endless process of reorganization under the pretext of seeking to build a qualified vanguard party. Yet emphasizing this objective at every turn only served to indicate how hard it was to attain, not to mention that the administration was not excited about the party’s interference in its affairs. FLN leaders themselves did not seem to be up to the task, and Mustapha Lacheraf (1978) described them as “false militants and true notables”. Throughout this period, the party was unable to organize a single congress and seemingly supplied state institutions, all this while, with competent individuals.

Following the death of President Houari Boumediene in December 1978, things changed for the party somehow; it gained a more important presence, and the president started holding many meetings with its leaders in his capacity as the FLN’s secretary general, stressing on every occasion his affiliation with it. This trend is best symbolized by the fact that the party’s headquarters were transferred, in the mid-1980’s to the headquarters of the Governor-General (the central authority) under the French colonization. The party gained greater coverage in governmental media coverage, started holding congresses and meetings of its Central Committee and Politburo, and issued lists and recommendations on the major issues regarding the nation’s present and future.

During this period, the FLN came to be referred to as a “party” more than as a “front”. The fact that it was referred to as the National Liberation Front Party during the 1980s was an indicator of its emergence as a party, and of its ambition to be at the forefront of the political system and to differentiate itself from the regime rather than keeping to its role as an organ of political propaganda and recruitment. This endeavor also benefited the regime as such since it masked its military aspect, even though the military maintained an official presence within the party’s leadership. The FLN was probably aiming to reach a status similar to that of the then-ruling Baath party in Syria and Iraq.

Still, the National Liberation Front – especially its leadership and political platform – did not seek to renew itself and anticipate the course of events.

12. This can be interpreted as an attempt by the president to curb the army’s role in national politics, even though he was a colonel himself.
Returning to Political Parties?

Instead, it highlighted its achievements in Algerian society, which was burdened at the time by a stifling socioeconomic crisis due to mismanagement and dwindling oil resources. The crisis was even more acutely felt given the noticeable amelioration on the level of political awareness and the evaluation of the regime’s legitimacy and good performance (nowadays referred to as good governance). This was due to the emergence of a new, educated generation that cared less about how the country was liberated from colonization and more about its own fate, the country’s fate and the country’s management. Instead of the necessary renewal process, the party thus started building itself. For instance, a few years prior to the 1988 October events, the party held its Fifth Congress in a very difficult context, and issued an “organizational resolution”, in which it stressed that “following a period full of achievements, efforts and positive results since the Fourth Congress [in 1980], which led to a new start in the life of the FLN [although it remained unclear how!], the party has proven for three decades that it is the only real force that was capable of mobilizing and organizing the masses.” It also continued narrowing the scope of the political landscape even further, focusing every time on “the consolidation of the party’s leadership role by making participation in the struggle [for independence] a necessary condition for one’s appointment to important positions in executive bodies.”

Moreover, it tightened its grip on civil society organizations, which were referred to at the time as “mass organizations”, especially with regard to the most important of all, the General Union of Algerian Workers. This document even praised the popular national army for “its various efforts aiming to provide cadres and soldiers with political and ideological training [so blatantly worded!]”

Accordingly, the 1988 October events must have come as a surprise for the FLN, which was the primary target. Several of its headquarters in major cities were vandalized, particularly in the capital, because it was held responsible for...
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the deteriorating situation in the country and probably because it claimed to be the ruling party in Algeria, whereas it was, in reality, otherwise. Following these events, the party tried to clear its name.

FROM THE “APPARATUS” TO THE “OPPOSITION” PARTY

Following the bloody events of October 1988 and the ensuing political crisis, the regime undertook constitutional reforms that seemed more simulated than real in order to alleviate the tension while waiting for the situation to clear. The only noticeable change with regard to the party was the replacement of its leader, Chérif Messadia, a true apparatchik, by Abdelhamid Mehri, a man of vast political education with an established reputation from the time of the National Movement until today.

These events led to divisions within the party, and a “broad discussion was launched regarding two main issues: (1) Who has had the actual power since independence? In order to define what we may call “historic responsibility”; (2) What status can the party have within pluralism? How is the party to be structured? And what is the fate of groups within it? … Two divergent points of view emerged: The first was that of a group which did not come to terms with what had happened and saw these events as a conspiracy against the party, while the second came to ‘believe’ that change has become inevitable” (Meghish, 2003, p. 70 and after). In other words, the split was between what was called at the time “conservatives” and “reformists”. Yet the new secretary general managed to bring about reforms in order to enable the National Liberation Front to emerge as a normal party that is autonomous in relation to the regime, one that enriches the national political landscape and seeks to take over power through democratic means. In truth, this choice benefited both the party and the regime, ensuring the former survival while granting the latter some credibility or, at least, the benefit of the doubt.

The course of events dictated the prevalence of partisan pluralism at the expense of those who wanted to make do with “forums” within the FLN. The February 1989 Constitution actually allowed it differently, as it referred to “associations of a political character” rather than to “parties”17 (Article 40). The law on political

17 In reality, all civil society associations, especially in a country like Algeria, can be described to a certain extent as having a political character since their action implies that they have to cooperate with state authorities.
Returning to Political Parties?

parties, promulgated the same year, stipulated that fifteen founding members only can establish a political association and benefit from financial aid. Many thus rushed to establish parties, and several came from the FLN itself. Hence, many of the new parties were merely FLN clones. They even had recourse to far worse practices than their original model sometimes. This spelled the demise of the very concept of pluralism, which, in the end, had less to do with different political visions and platforms and more with transforming parties into organs used by their founders in order to get closer to power through elections and other means. This pluralism also allowed individuals to achieve their political ambitions, which would have been otherwise trapped in narrower confines in the context of a single-party system. In addition, this pluralism led to the dominance of one particular current, namely the Islamic movement represented by the radical Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which conducted itself far worse than the FLN before it. Accordingly, the remaining parties came to evaluate their strength, not in comparison with that of the regime, but with that of this nascent party.

This evolution from a single-party system to a multi-party system should have started with the legitimization of underground parties (there were three or four of these parties, which more or less represented the political spectrum). Nevertheless, it seems that the regime refused to stop there since it wished to avoid a direct confrontation with parties that had been involved in the struggle for the country’s independence and sought to hamper their action by having recourse to “microscopic parties” (as they were called at the time). Another reason behind the failure of the multi-party system lies in the fact that the new parties did not abide by the quite reasonable conditions set by the new constitution and the law on political parties in order to ensure the success of the nascent pluralistic experience. Likewise, the state authorities did not force these parties, particularly the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), to respect the provisions of the law in this respect and abide by the constraints of public order.

During the first two to three years after the October events, the National Liberation Front was somewhat hesitant about defining the shape of its relation with the regime. This hesitation on both sides was meant to avoid the sharp criticism leveled at them by the political parties and private newspapers that emerged thanks to this new experience. Moreover, the party often accused the political regime ruling the country since independence of failure for merely regarding the FLN as an annex organ. The regime, in return, berated the FLN for failing to live up to its historic responsibilities after the liberation of the country, and, in its opinion, for acting as a force that hampered development
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in several cases under the pretext of preserving “the benefits acquired from the revolution” and the “national constant principles”. In any case, and regardless of its previous notoriety, the FLN remains responsible, at least historically, for alerting the regime to the need for reforms, whenever such reforms are needed.

In 1991, the government decided to take another step leading it further apart from the National Liberation Front Party when it said that its program was never that of the party; rather, it is a program of reforms dictated by the prevailing political and economic circumstances. In so doing, the regime exonerated the FLN from the repercussions of the structural reforms the International Monetary Fund had requested Algeria to initiate when it was heavily indebted. A short while afterward, the president announced his resignation from his position as the party’s secretary general, thus putting an end to the principle of “unified command in the party and the state”, which had been prevailing until that date.

The party also ended its sponsorship of mass organizations and professional unions. Months later, it went on with this process when army representatives withdrew from the party’s leadership bodies so that “the military institution can focus on its constitutional duties”, as though these duties had not been an issue before.

Despite this hesitation, which seems – in hindsight – to be due to political calculations to a certain extent, one can say that the National Liberation Front – thanks to its new secretary general, Abdelhamid Mehri – managed to persuade the various political forces that it aimed to be a party like all others, not one that lived on past glories and fed on its relation with the ruling regime. In so doing, it ensured its survival and secured seats – albeit just a few – in the municipal elections of 1990 and the legislative elections held later that year.

In reality, the party managed to convince the public at the time that it had not been seeking to hold on to power by any means, and that it rather wanted to help

18 For this reason, many believe, especially within the FLN, that the October events may have been unleashed deliberately to undermine the party primarily.

19 Still, more proof in how difficult this separation is lies in the fact that the president was never able to relinquish the party completely as he became its “president” after having been its “secretary general”, knowing that the FLN’s articles of association never mentioned the position of party “president”.

20 On this separation process, see: M. Dayf (1999, p. 144-145).
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bring about a successful and peaceful transition from a single-party political system to partisan pluralism in Algeria with guaranteed results. On many occasions, it looked as though history was calling on the FLN, once again, to undertake a national mission it could perform better than others. This was best expressed by one of the party’s key leaders in an article titled “Pleading for the National Liberation Front”, in which he said that criticizing the party as “an organ and means of government” must not overshadow the fact that it “represents the conscience of the nation and its search of liberty and prosperity.”

FLN Secretary General Abdelhamid Mehri was aware of this trend among party leaders even if he did not necessarily agree with it. This is best expressed by his clear vision regarding the methods and mechanisms used in a democratic system. During his term, the National Liberation Front strived to establish strong relations with the other parties, especially the Islamic Salvation Front and the Front of Socialist Forces, which were the most prominent parties at the time. The secretary general’s statements were sometimes highly critical of the ruling power, as he urged it to differentiate between resolving the crisis of the political system and resolving that of the ruling regime, which he had come to refer to as the “actual authority”. The secretary general did not stop at criticism, rather joining words to action as he moved from criticizing the regime to explicitly opposing it. He did not content himself with expressing his opposition to the suspension of the elections following the first round of the legislative elections in December 1991. When this suspension was decreed, he met with the leaders of the two parties who won the highest number of seats, the Islamic Salvation Front – which achieved a landslide victory – and the Front of Socialist Forces in an attempt to come up with a collective initiative aimed at the authorities in order to preserve the country. The response of the authorities was, however, that the solution they proposed had come in too late. Still, Abdelhamid Mehri continued his efforts. The FLN thus submitted to the Higher State Council (the presidential committee formed following the president’s resignation and the suspension of the elections) a memorandum on November 28th, 1992 followed by a second one approximately

21 In an article titled “Pleading for the National Liberation Front”, La Tribune, October 20, 1995. Regardless of any political considerations, the issue at stake pertains to a belief that is fairly prevalent among the older generation. Therefore, it seems that the wanted change hinges on the retirement of this generation, especially considering the age factor.

22 The results of the first round of the elections were as follows: Out of 420 seats, 188 went to the Islamic Salvation Front, twenty-five to the Front of Socialist Forces and fifteen to the National Liberation Front.
two months later, stressing the need to initiate a dialogue among all influential sociopolitical forces about ushering in and facilitating the transitional period. These documents also emphasized the need to “reach an agreement on the national level on resolving the multidimensional crisis [and on scheduling various election dates] in conformity with the constitution adopted by the people on February 23rd, 1989.” (Belkasem, 1993, p. 375). Strangely enough, the ruling power turned down this initiative but went on holding, according to its own vision, consultations that culminated two years later with the organization of the National Consensus Conference in the absence of the political forces that should have attended it, i.e. the three parties that won the elections held on December 1991.

The national consensus conference, involving only the participants in it, did not prevent the abovementioned three parties from pursuing their joint action, which later extended to other forces. It thus staged a gathering in January 1995 in Rome under the aegis of the Catholic community of Sant’Egidio. In this meeting, the participants came out with a “national contract”. This contract put forth the conditions for sound political practice in the country, according to democratic principles, especially the rejection of violence as a means to attain or remain in power, in addition to respecting the principle of free and fair elections and the principle of power alternation based on the results of these elections.

Throughout Abdelhamid Mehri’s tenure at the party’s helm, he never recanted his positions, nor did he participate in any consultative or executive committee formed by the ruling power. Moreover, he did not take part in the presidential elections organized toward the end of 1995, which he described as a mere solution for the crisis of the “actual authority” rather than one for the crisis to which the political system as a whole was confronted.

Summing up the political line adopted by Abdelhamid Mehri, a key party member, former minister and former university professor once said that Abdelhamid Mehri “wanted to convince the ruling power that the National Liberation Front is an ordinary party with its own rules, regulations and militants, and that it does not want power and authority to be given to it as alms. Indeed, it is content with the role of the opposition party until free democratic elections grant it the share earmarked to it by the public… At a decisive time in the history of the country, the ruling power decided to ‘recover’ the FLN…”

RETURNING TO POLITICAL PARTIES?

FROM THE “OPPOSITION” PARTY TO A KEY MEMBER OF THE “PRESIDENTIAL COALITION”

The most noticeable streak in the FLN’s behavior is its inability to sever the ties linking it to the ruling power. This connection to the ruling power is what has prevented it from evolving into a genuine ruling party under the single-party system. It made do, instead, with being an organ of government – as it was called – despite the attempts made in the 1980s, which were foiled by the October 1988 events. Prime Minister Mouloud Hamrouche (1989-1991) commented that the FLN, “like any other party in the country, is a party formed of clans, i.e. of groups which cannot even imagine themselves existing outside the ruling faction, regardless of its nature. Unfortunately, the same observations that can be made with regard to the army and the formal power can be made about the party, as these clans extend into the National Liberation Front.” The results of these ties reflected on the positions of party officials who described the attempts spearheaded by Abdelhamid Mehri – the party’s secretary general between 1989 and 1996 – to free the FLN from these binds and take part in standard political competition as “a public wrecking of the party’s future”. This is due to the fact that the party’s political culture, which took shape under the single-party system (and perhaps even since the days of the Independence War), did not enable it to assimilate the democratic formulas and find anything more elaborate than temporary solutions for its internal problems. Years after he was removed from his position as secretary general, Abdelhamid Mehri revealed in an interview that “the political change in the country should have transformed the National Liberation Front into a party like all others, i.e. one that is independent from power rather than a part of it. Yet this idea was turned down because they wanted the party to remain part of the regime.”

Immediately after the National Contract was issued following the aforementioned Sant’Egidio meeting (this contract was wholly rejected by the ruling power), Abdelhamid Mehri started facing difficulties as the party’s secretary general, especially after he denounced the organization of the presidential elections in November 1995 and refused to have his party take part in them, since he considered – as has been mentioned before – that these elections were

24 See the article published in the al-Haqîqa Magazine (which has been banned for many years), November 1-7, 1995, p. 15-17.

a tool used by the “actual authority” to resolve its problem in an attempt to acquire a semblance of legitimacy.

Only days before the presidential elections, Algerian newspapers\(^\text{26}\) started running stories predicting the implosion of the National Liberation Front Party due to internal divergences over the elections and to the prevalence of the pro-election camp within the party. Since then, the FLN was kept busy with internal disputes, and some of its leaders started making statements expressing their concerns for the party’s fate due to its “deviating” from course. From this point onward, the days of Abdelhamid Mehri at the party’s helm became numbered, particularly after the emergence on the local stage of a prominent member of the party leadership. This former Algerian ambassador to Iran had returned to the country to make some contacts, some of which were kept secret, with parties within and outside the FLN\(^\text{27}\) in order to foment what was ironically referred to, at the time, as the “scientific coup”. This maneuver lasted a few months, but the secretary general would not be drawn into the maze; rather, he went about his activities as usual until the party’s Central Committee (the deliberation committee) decided to remove him from office in 1996, putting an end to what it called “staking the fate of the National Liberation Front”.

In light of the nature of the Algerian regime and of subsequent developments (especially when the FLN returned to the fold), the opposition stance by which the party abided between 1989 and 1996 can be described as being closer – albeit not necessarily intentionally – to a “functional” opposition than to a normal one. This opposition allowed the regime to gain time, and served its interests (and those of the conservative wing of the FLN), as the public and political forces perceived it as tangible proof of the regime’s true intentions to change. Summing up Abdelhamid Mehri’s experience as the FLN’s secretary general, one can say that the main positions expressed in the party’s name at the time were not those of the party’s leadership as a whole, but rather the positions of the secretary general and a few of his aides who adhered to his political line\(^\text{28}\). As for the others, they remained in waiting since they were not used to operating outside

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27 These include, of course, intelligence services, which Abdelhamid Mehri referred to in the aforementioned interview as follows: “Security services in our country think they are responsible for the management of politics and the media under the pretext that this is necessitated by the situation. This is no secret for anyone.”

28 Interview with the party’s governor in the capital, April 28, 2008.
the framework of the ruling power. It is worth reminding that this came at an ambiguous time when constitutional proceedings were suspended. No sooner had the regime declared its intention to return to constitutional life by organizing presidential elections in November 1995 than Abdelhamid Mehri started facing fierce opposition for refusing to allow the party to take part in them.

Naturally, the FLN did not witness a total change of political course immediately after its secretary general’s removal in 1996 and the appointment of a figure who can be described as an apparatchik. Between 1996 and 1999, the party adopted a stance midway between opposing and supporting the regime. One can even say that it was, at the time, in a state of confusion and expectation against a backdrop of important events in the country, mainly:

- The consequences of the National Consensus Conference (1994-1995), which the party – under the guidance of Abdelhamid Mehri – refused to attend, arguing that it was not serious. This conference culminated in an agreement among all the participating political forces that took part in it on a joint platform.

- The amendment of the constitution in 1996 against a backdrop of the “national tragedy” – as it is called nowadays – resulting from the acts of violence in 1992.

- The amendment of the law on political parties in 1997 in order for parties to be in conformity with the new constitution, especially with regard to banning the use of religion and cultural considerations in politics.

- The complete resumption of political life through legislative elections set to be held during the next year.

- The foundation of the then-called the Administration’s Party, i.e. the National Democratic Rally (RND), the leaders (including ministers) and base of which had resigned from the FLN in preparation for the elections.

29 This person is Abdelhaq ben Hamouda, who had held several high-ranking state positions since independence, including one as minister of Finance.

Finally, President Liamine Zeroual submitted his resignation in 1998 for reasons yet to be determined, even if he claimed that his sole motivation was to allow “the power alternation”, keeping in mind that this principle does not mean leaving office before the end of the presidential term. Moreover, this resignation did not lead to the anticipated elections according to the constitution; rather, the outgoing president remained in office until decision-makers designated his successor.

The National Liberation Front was thrown into further disarray when the RND won the majority of parliamentary seats even though it had been formed only a few months before the election. In contrast, the FLN came in third place after the moderate Islamic party Hamas. The results of these elections were widely contested by the public, including the FLN, which deemed itself the primary victim of rigging. These results were meant to serve the interests of the new party rather than those of the FLN which had not yet returned to the regime’s fold, considering that the victory of any other party was unfathomable. Because the circumstances prevailing at the time were not in favor of the FLN returning to the forefront before a reasonable amount of time had elapsed led to making do with a substitute party while waiting for things to settle down. This is precisely what happened in the ensuing elections in 2002, as the National Liberation Front won the absolute majority, whereas the National Democratic Rally receded to third place behind another Islamic party. The same thing happened again in the 2007 legislative elections in which the FLN maintained its lead, albeit with fewer seats in parliament. Throughout this period, it sought to mend its relation with the ruling power, welcoming its decisions and taking part in the various elections and governments.

Hence, the return of the FLN to power started with the 1997 legislative elections. The 1998 meeting of the Central Committee (Benuoub, 2001, p. 86) went on with isolating those who opposed this new political line, including key figures such as Mehri, Hamrouche, Bouhara and Ahmad Taleb Ibrahimi, and rehabilitating former key figures, such as Yahiaoui, Cherif Messaida, Bitat and Belhouchet. This process culminated in the 1999 presidential elections in which the party abstained from presenting a candidate of its own, supporting instead the “consensus candidate” in his capacity as “one of the sons of the National Liberation Party”. This held especially true since this candidate’s campaign manager was a leading figure in the party and was appointed by the president-elect immediately after the elections as his chief of staff, then as prime minister following his election as secretary general during the party’s Seventh Congress.
in 2001. The president, however, fell out with him later on, and the two men ran against one another in the presidential elections organized in the spring of 2004.

President Abdel Aziz Bouteflika was a historic figure of the liberation movement and held ministerial positions in consecutive governments following independence until 1979. His election in 1999 outlined the beginning of a transformation in the political landscape, which resembles the return to the single-party formula under the guise of a formal pluralism. This new political map was based on two essential principles. The first one pertains to backing the “clemency” policy initiated by the former president in order to allow a chance for “repentance”, considering that those who resorted to armed violence had made a mistake with respect to their own people and that many youths were fooled by leaders who wanted to take over power by force. This step was followed up with the “civil concord” then the “national reconciliation”, which were implemented following a popular referendum. The second principle was based on the conviction that there was an unreasonably high number of parties (around sixty of them) that unsettled and undermined the political process, thus prolonging the crisis.

Naturally, such an endeavor required an organized political force that would buoy it instead of its contenting itself with a vague popular backing. Likewise, due to the difficulty the regime was confronted to with regard to observing democratic principles, this force could be no other than the FLN. But this time, it sought to convince the other parties to join this process in accordance with the distribution of parliamentary seats resulting from the 1997 elections, hence the formation of the “Presidential alliance”.

In fact, this “presidential alliance” was an artificial reduction of the political landscape in Algeria based on the assumption that it is essentially composed of three main currents: the “patriotic” current (the National Liberation Front), the “democratic” current (the National Democratic Rally) and the “Islamic” current (the Hamas Movement). Ministerial seats were distributed among them. Still, this reduction failed to shed a light on a particular paradox: Are “democrats”

31 The premiership is still held to this day alternately by the National Liberation Front and the National Democratic Gathering. The leader of the Hamas Movement was only allotted the position of minister of State without any specific portfolio. This was undoubtedly meant to retain control over the situation.
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not patriotic? Are “patriots” not democratic? Are “Islamists” not patriotic and undemocratic in a system that strives to be patriotic and democratic? Are both the “patriotic” and the “democratic” current secular? This goes without mentioning that every alliance gives rise to the following question: In favor of and against whom is this alliance forged?

Regardless of the wish to put an end to the partisan chaos, this alliance aimed to extend the monopoly of executive power over the country’s political life and strengthened the ties of the FLN to the ruling power. Yet this time, it was not alone; rather, as has been previously mentioned, it led an alliance of two other parties, which also sought to continue allotting state positions as benefits that are not always distributed according to the election results. It is a form of what is referred to in political analysis as “patrimonialism”.

THE ABILITY OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN ALGERIA

Before tackling this issue, it is necessary to provide a summarized description of the current situation of the National Liberation Front with regard to its militant base, its relations with society and its internal dynamics.

The FLN’s current situation

The FLN’s militant base

Firstly, it is necessary to say that this base, especially in major cities, is still emotionally linked to the history of the party ever since its inception as a liberation movement. In other words, it still looks up to the FLN as the party that ousted the colonizing power and restored the dignity of the Algerian people, which was held as being of little value during colonization. In the public’s perception, the National Liberation Front remains the party that is most knowledgeable about preserving this precious independence since it achieved it in the first place. Therefore, affiliation to this party is always a matter of emotional ties, at least for the common militant, rather than merely a tool of political competition. Those members with political ambitions, particularly within the party leadership, undoubtedly exploit this fact.
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On the number and distribution of militants according to the usual sociopolitical variables, three observations can be made: First, this matter is always shrouded in a veil of secrecy; second, as has become the fashion in nascent pluralistic regimes, the numbers that are submitted are always exaggerated for understandable reasons; and third, it seems that the party has not managed to gain total control over the statistics mechanisms. This goes without mentioning the volatility among the party’s bases, especially as elections draw near, keeping in mind that come polling time, many do not care about partisan loyalty inasmuch as they care about winning a seat in elected bodies.

According to statistics published in the 1980s\(^{32}\), the number of militants aligned with the party rose by approximately 210,000 between 1981 and 1989 to 577,000; an annual growth rate of 8% between 1981 and 1986, of 13% between November 1986 and December 1987, and of 50% in the two following years! Strangely, this growth increased in times of tension during which the legitimacy and competence of the political system as a whole was being questioned. This was confirmed by the events of October 1988 and their consequences, which primarily paved the way for the emergence of political pluralism, leading to a massive withdrawal from the FLN in order to establish new parties. The results of these statistics can be interpreted as an attempt to cover up reality.

According to the non-detailed document issued by the party’s central headquarters, the current number of party militants is as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Overall number of militants} & \text{Number of female militants} & \text{Percentage} & \text{Number of those under 35} & \text{Percentage} & \text{University graduates} \\
\hline
189,272 & 12,532 & 8.38 & 61,241 & 33.17 & 39,790 \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

Hence, the total number of FLN militants amounted to around 1% of the overall number of voters in the 2007 legislative elections.

The following table (synthesis) shows the distribution of militants – according to province, since the party’s organization is parallel to the administrative division of Algeria – in the ten most important provinces in terms of the numbers of militants, from top to bottom:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Number of militants</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Number of militants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algiers</td>
<td>10,979</td>
<td>Tamanghasset</td>
<td>6,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batna</td>
<td>10,422</td>
<td>Chlef</td>
<td>6,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Msila</td>
<td>9,280</td>
<td>Sétif</td>
<td>6,013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Médéa</td>
<td>8,875</td>
<td>Béjaïa</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relizane</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>Souk Ahras</td>
<td>5,610</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table shows that FLN militants have a limited presence in major cities, starting with the capital, which came in first place only because it has a population of 3 million inhabitants. The high number of militants in the province of Batna – which is almost equal to that of the capital, even though Algiers is four times more populated – can be explained by the FLN’s wish to retain this symbolic region, as the first sparks of the Liberation War started there.

The low rate of women representation (8.38%) is also striking, and militants who are less than 35 years of age represent only one-third of party members. Yet the strangest fact of all is that university graduates represent approximately 20% of the overall number of militants, keeping in mind that the National Liberation Front is a “mass” party known for its reliance on workers, farmers, employees, tradesmen and craftsmen. At any rate, statistics seem inaccurate, even though the party’s organization is computerized. Furthermore, the number of militants is subject to variation.
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The FLN’s finances

The finances of the National Liberation Front under the one-party system were naturally covered by the state with virtually no other resources. Membership fees as such, though of insignificant value, were not tantamount to a contribution in the party’s finances inasmuch as they represented a token of the militant’s loyalty. The party was finding it difficult to collect these fees, which amounted – as declared by the party – to around 48 million dinars in 1987, whereas the “allocated” budget exceeded 6 billion dinars.

The FLN’s budget under the one-party system was also characterized by ambiguity. The party’s statutes adopted during the Fifth Congress held in December 1983 stated: “The financial resources of the party are composed of membership fees and other sources [sic].”

Ever since the adoption of partisan pluralism and the formal severance of the party’s ties with the state, state resources were officially discontinued and the FLN became self-reliant, even though it was, in all likelihood, still receiving state aid under the table. Similarly to other parties, the FLN also does not think twice about exploiting state resources on the local level wherever it controls the majority. This is particularly manifested in electoral campaigns, where it is difficult to make a distinction between serving the interest of the party and that of local government. Nowadays, the party’s budget seems to rely on the following sources: membership fees, donations, MPs’ contributions (one month salary per annum) and state aid in proportion to the number of seats won in various elected bodies. It is worth noting that the party’s patrimony (including real estate) has not been cleared yet since the party officially separated from the state in 1991.

The FLN’s relation with society

The FLN still “reads the current history [of the country] according to its own birth certificate” and perceives society as a bloc where the community takes precedence over the individual and where conflicts are not exploited as a driving force toward further progress. Still, it is compelled nowadays to adapt

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33 This was the case more than 25 years ago and it still holds true to this day. See: Harbi (1982, p. 125).
its activities to developments on the national level following the adoption of partisan pluralism, as well as on the international level after political systems started adopting explicitly – even if only in theory – the common principles of freedom and human rights (political, social and cultural rights) and involving civil society associations in making public policies.

Under the one-party system, the party could not conceive of its existence as a “vanguard” party without the “mass organizations”, which were considered as “transmission belts” between the leadership of the revolution and the popular base.

Despite the adoption of partisan pluralism, remnants of the one-party system still overshadow the party’s philosophy regarding its relations with society today. It is, thus, attempting to establish associations in various fields, taking care, however, to maintain excellent relations with notable organizations and unions under the one-party system. These include, first and foremost, the National Mujaheddin Organization and its branches, which were established in light of partisan pluralism – the Sons of Martyrs’ Organization (mnaazama abnâ al-shubadâ’) and the Sons of Mujaheddin Organization (mnaazama abnâ al- Mujaheddin) – in addition to the General Union of Algerian Workers (whose secretary general is an FLN militant), the National Union of Algerian Farmers, the National Union of Algerian Youth, the National Union of Algerian Women, etc. It seems that these associations currently serve political aims, namely gaining support and win the elections, rather than as part of a civil society providing efficient forums of expression and communication within the framework of good governance.

The FLN’s conflicts

The FLN can be considered a special case as an organization that was based on conflicts in the first place. Indeed, it emerged as an armed organization aiming to put an end to pluralism and forcing all political organizations to rally behind it. Since it is labeled as a front, it is no strange fact that it encompassed a variety of divergent opinions. The FLN witnessed many conflicts during the Liberation War between the “Frontists”, i.e. “those who triggered the revolution”, and the “centralists”, i.e. former members of the People’s Party-Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties, who were the first to join the National Liberation Front after seceding from their leader, whom they accused of authoritarianism. However, these conflicts were by no means the most
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important ones; on the contrary, the confrontation among these factions seemed to take a somewhat easy turn in general since the “Centralists” did not want to be implacable political rivals. Moreover, the “boys” who triggered the war were members of the same party before seceding from it in order to pursue armed action. The most important conflicts during the war, some of which resulted in physical liquidations, took place between internal and external leaders, between “military men” and “politicians”, and between the supporters of the Provisional Government upon independence and those military High Command (EMG) stationed along the border with Tunisia during the war.

After independence, and due to the imposition of the one-party system, the conflicts moved within the party and took a different, more ideological turn. By and large, there are three main currents: the leftists, the “nationalists” and the supporters of the Islamist trend. The latter two currents being closer to one another than to the leftists, the political mood prevailing at the time reduced the three currents into two: the “progressives” and the “reactionaries”, or Left and Right.

In contrast, the conflict evolved at the time of the transition (in 1989) to pluralism into one between the supporters of maintaining ties with the ruling regime and those backing the party’s autonomy and modernization. This issue has yet to be settled, even as the FLN has progressively returned to the regime’s fold since 1996. The conflicts that occurred between 2003 and 2004 against the backdrop of the presidential elections did not denote a wish to achieve the party’s autonomy, but rather to confirm the abovementioned ties. The majority who supported the candidacy of the outgoing president instead of the party’s secretary-general’s wanted the same relation between the party and the regime to continue. Clearly, the party has yet to free itself from being a political stake.

The party’s internal conflicts on the occasion of the presidential elections held in April 2004 led to sequels so dangerous to its existence that it has yet to recover from them. This goes without mentioning possible maneuvers initiated by members with connections to the army (specifically) who wanted to get rid of the president at the time, suffice it to say that the FLN put on quite a show, and the situation grew worse after its Eighth Congress in March 2003. Party headquarters were taken by storm, and there were heated arguments. Some members who were prejudiced by this congress questioned its legitimacy before the authorities, calling on them to intervene in order to abrogate its results. The
authorities did intervene, allowing opponents to hold a “corrective” congress of their own in 2005. Despite the appearance it seeks to project currently after the “corrective congress”, the FLN is still locked in a phase of inactivity, and many organizational issues remain pending in several divisions and provinces, which are having various difficulties with reshaping and rejuvenation.

The FLN’s ability to contribute to the democratization of the political system

In truth, this issue is hard to settle, but one thing is sure: the National Liberation Front must be taken into consideration and involved in any initiative aiming to modernize political practice in Algeria due to the party’s contribution to the country’s independence and its involvement in the management of the country’s affairs ever since independence. It looks as though the evolution of the political system in Algeria hinges on that of the FLN, and this includes its potential demise in any way for one reason or another. One such possibility would be its transformation into “a joint heritage for all Algerians” like Islam, Arabism and the Amazhig heritage, or – according to some – “its relegation to the museum of history”.

In principle, the FLN is never opposed to the democratization of political practice in Algeria. On the contrary, it is enthusiastic about it even if it is probably more rhetorical than practical. Nevertheless, this position entails two main problems: Firstly, the FLN is not content with contributing to the democratization process like any other party; rather, it wants to be the driving force of it according to its own perception of democratization. In other words, it wants to remain the carrier of a “historical message” and act as a “big brother”, i.e. to return once again to the idea of the “vanguard party”, which had been all too common under the single-party system. If the party considers itself entrusted with such a historical message, it actually has to elaborate and implement it with the other political forces equally, not as a leader distributing roles. Secondly, the FLN is finding it difficult to modernize itself and continues to rely on a bygone legitimacy, citing the “November 1st Revolution” to justify everything instead of seeking to build up its legitimacy for the present and future. Furthermore, the party seems to understand political pluralism under the current circumstances merely as electoral competition, thus turning – as its leaders admitted – into an electoral machine. During the first half of the 1990s, then between 2003 and 2004, it tried to wean itself from the ruling power and sought to renew
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its political doctrine and inject new blood into its leadership. However, these attempts remained fruitless, probably because the party found it difficult to get over its status as a political stake linked to the ruling power.

The progress of political process, whether within the FLN or on the level of the political regime, remains linked, first and foremost, to the emergence of a reformist, innovating wing within the party. At the same time, other parties and political forces have to regain the initiative, and improve their organizational and political performance.

CONCLUSION

Speaking of the FLN in Algeria is not just speaking of any party; it is rather about a political system and a whole generation imbued with a certain political culture. The generational issue is not a matter of age inasmuch as it is a matter of “universal vision”, which – regardless of political exploitation and shocks resulting from the colonization period and the Liberation War – still maintains a strong presence in the collective imagination of the Algerian political elite. One would almost think that the country is still colonized!

One striking fact is that the FLN leaders from the post-Liberation War generation have yet to find – or to manage to impose – a method to rid the party of its historical defects so that it becomes a modern party instead of remaining attached to the historical message with which it attributes to itself. For instance, the relatively young former attorney Ali Benflis, the party’s former secretary general (2001-2004) and a former member of the National Human Rights Commission of Algeria (established in 1987, prior to the adoption of pluralism), said in an address delivered before the members of the Central Committee that “the National Liberation Front Party will never recant its natural role [emphasis added]: that of a lamp lighting the nation’s path.”

History may never forget the merit of the FLN after independence, as it probably contributed to securing a modicum of sociopolitical stability (both

34 The National Liberation Front Party (documents), address delivered by Ali Benflis before the members of the Central Committee, September 20, 2001 (upon his election as the FLN’s secretary general in replacement of an old-time party leader).
under the single-party system and afterward). Nevertheless, one must admit that oil revenues played a major role in guaranteeing this stability, and this is proven by the sharp deterioration of the situation once oil revenues dwindled in the mid-1980s. The FLN has not been much successful in playing this stabilizing role because of its being stagnant and unable to adapt to domestic and foreign events, and to its adamant assertion that everything is always fine in Algeria. It thus became a force defending the status quo, rather than a force for change.

This study leads to the following conclusions:

Based on the experience of the FLN in Algeria, one finds that a liberation movement will almost inevitably become a single party after independence. Yet this evolution is confronted with its own set obstacles, including the extension of former conflicts that started in the days of the armed action, the continued reliance on bygone legitimacy instead of seeking to acquire a new legitimacy after independence, and the need to maintain ties as an annex to the ruling power.

Political practice is impoverished by the single party’s propensity to act as a conqueror under the pretext that it achieved independence and by its refusing to admit that another political force has the right to participate in power. Moreover, in order to satisfy the greatest number of citizens, it is forced to adopt a populist tone without taking responsibility for any specific political philosophy and without abiding by stable political positions. These positions actually change with each secretary general whose supporters immediately take over party bodies. This propensity undoubtedly accrues in a country that relies on oil revenues.

The process of having a single party transform into a pluralistic party is a very difficult one, as it entails relinquishing formerly acquired positions (against a backdrop of generational conflict as well) and adopting new political values. Even after the adoption of pluralism, which it is bound to reject from the outset, the single party seeks to ensure the continuation of the single-party system, one way or another, within the framework of pluralism, as though it aims to be “more equal than others”.

As a matter of fact, one wonders if the FLN is not, actually, sick of its leadership and Algeria sick of its FLN.
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The interest in the political party as a subject for scientific knowledge has remained limited in Morocco, especially during the last decades. The same can be said about the Arab world, where scientific interest remained focused on the inclusiveness of its political systems. This leads us to inquire about the reason behind the rarity of studies and research on the party phenomena, especially in Morocco. Is this rarity due to the awareness of its non-central role in the political system and the limitations of its effectiveness and the weakness of its capability to act in political life? Or is it due to the nature of the Moroccan political system, which is based on the existence of a ruling Monarchy? The outcome is that most studies about the Moroccan political system either start with the monarchy as a central subject (Robert, 1963), especially the Amir al-mu'minîn or Commander of the Faithful (Waterbury, 1970; Mou’tasim, 1988) and chapter nineteen of the Constitution, or end up about it. This is true even if the study is about one of the constitutional institutions like the Parliament or the Cabinet (Naciri, 1984; Agnouche, 1986); the King and the monarchal institution become the central subject in political studies and everything is explained by reference to the political and religious authorities of the constitutional King and Commander of the Faithful.

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1 Chapter 19 of the Moroccan Constitution states that the “King, Amir al-Mu’minîn and the sublime representative of the nation and the symbol of its unity, protector of religion and the dutiful watcher over the respect over the constitution and the constitutional institutions”.

2 It is noted in this regard that many results of the studies about the monarchy are employed by the monarchal discourse in its political strategy that aims at building, maintaining and renovating its political legitimacy. Does all this scientific over occupation with the monarchy help maintain the saying that political science in Morocco is the science of the monarchal institution and Commander of the Faithful?
If the study of political parties in their entirety has methodological importance, in the sense of knowing the political behavior of partisans and the opposing strategies adopted in building and maintaining their legitimacy, the approach of studying one particular party provides the researcher with important knowledge by following the track of one political party, including its emergence, evolution and interaction with other political bodies, one can find preludes to explaining the extent of effectiveness of the party constituent and its functions. This explanation is on the institutional level (especially the work within the parliamentary institutions), the social level (education, cadre formation and awareness) and the political level (contribution to democracy transformation). In order to achieve this, the Socialist Union of Popular Forces party (in French: Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires, USFP) was chosen. This choice, which is not random, begs two methodological questions. Why the USFP as a case study? What is the theoretical and conceptual frame for this study that relies in its approach on a particular party?

The importance of choosing the USFP as a new model for study and research is due to many elements that can be summarized as follow:

The USFP is considered to be one of the most important parties of the national movement. It constitutes a necessary and principal equation in the Moroccan political system, in the sense that it has affected Moroccan political life ever since it split off from the Independence Party (Istiglal party) in 1959 as the National Union for Popular Forces (UNFP), especially after the extraordinary party convention in 1975 in which it changed its political and ideological track.

The experience of this party was marked by prosperity in comparison to many socialist leftist parties, whether in Morocco or other Arab countries, in that the party was in direct confrontation with the monarchy. The party was also distinguished by its ability to persist despite its predicaments and divisions and was able at certain points in its history to achieve support of the masses.

The USFP party was a principal party in the conflict with the monarchy. This conflict, at some moments in the history of Moroccan political life, took violent dimensions. This conflict pushed the USFP into trying to adapt to the social changes, and attempt to develop and adjust its organization and ideas.

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3 We refer to what the party and its leaders were subject to arrests and assassinations. Criminal investigations about these acts remain active until now.
to the requirements and possibilities of reality. The party moved from drastic revolutionary choices to reformist ones and to participation and opposition from within the institutions. It made peace with the monarchy and has participated with it since 1998 in exercising power in the government.

The importance of choosing this party is in the political transformation Morocco witnessed toward the end of the last century and the early years of the new millennium. The most visible political change in this period was the “alternance”: the King asked the leader of the USFP, which remained in the opposition for forty years, to form the new government in 1998, and the party accepted. Research and studies differ in defining its nature. The importance of this change for the party can be understood in two ways: the first is epistemological in that the experience enables the student and the researcher to look at the party from two different perspectives, that of the opposition and that of participation in government. Second, it allows researchers the possibility of verifying suppositions related to the ability of the party to implement its visions, ideas and the programs it advocated when practicing politics outside the government, now that it is participating in government. It can also illustrate the ability of the political party to realize the separating limits between ideas and practice through two rationales, that of the opposition and that of power and its institutions.

This study seeks to analyze the existing and potential exchanges between the USFP and its political and social environment. This is done through tracking the organizational changes that the party witnessed in its structure, ideology, positions and political conduct. Consequently, the study will analyze the interactive relationship of this party with the legal and political transformations of the governmental system, and the extent to which these transformations reflect on its internal organization. It also analyzes the effect of this interaction on the desired track towards democracy.

The first part of this work will look at the emergence and evolution of the USFP from the point of view that the circumstances and the track taken by this party have dominated its development. The second part will look at the evolution of the party, especially through its ideologies, organizational structure and political orientation. The third part will analyze the process in which the party moved from participation in representative institutions as an opposition party to internal participation in government.
CREATION AND EMERGENCE

A political party goes through a life cycle during which it experiences phases and moments that have a strong influence on its identity, political structure, and political lines. The most important phases are its creation, license for the party, and entrance to representative institutions.

Based on the above factors, this part of the study will make an attempt to look into important factors in the internal dynamics of USFP. This will be done by studying its emergence and growth and their influence on the party and its organizational structures and ideological identity, plus the extent of interaction of this organization with the nature of the political system. In order to achieve this, I will deal in this part of the study with two elements. The first one revolves around the roots of the USFP. In the second, I will concentrate on the dynamics of creation.

Roots of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces

The UFSP, which was first established as the National Union of Popular Forces, finds its roots in the national movement as a resistance movement

National roots of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces

The party phenomenon in Morocco was related to the movement for independence, driving out colonialism and recovering the unity of land and sovereignty (el-Benna, 1989, p. 407). Unlike their Western counterparts, political organizations in Morocco did not emerge as an institutional need tied to the Parliament and political representation. The party phenomenon emerged during the period of French colonialism. One can identify three principal elements to which the Moroccan political party was related:

French colonialism that did not recognize any form of political practice through elections.

The emergence of a political elite that demanded rights and liberties for the people. Its principal demand was the right of independence and the recovery of
national sovereignty. This last demand was tied with the unanimous agreement of the elite about the monarchy and its religious status. This may explain the demand for the return of the King preceding the demand of independence (el-Malki, 2004).

The influence of national liberation movements and Arab nationalism on the orientation of the political elite; this rendered the “national ideology” a unifying element for the elite despite their different ideological sources, paths of emergence, and orientations.

These elements clearly show that the distinctive founding principal of the party phenomenon in Morocco is the demand for independence (Rezette, 1955, p. 401). This particularity will define the structure and function of the political party during its emergence.

The methodological importance of this historical prelude, which covers the roots of the emergence of political parties, is that it helps the researcher in explaining many political lines of these parties in the course of their interaction with the political system. It also explains the visions of the parties for building a national government, the nature of its institutions (Regnier, 1975, p. 355) and the role of the monarchy in it. In other words, these national roots will control the roles, strategies and positioning of the parties for many decades, especially during the decisive and watershed era in the history of independent Morocco, from 1956 to 1962. The era witnessed the secession of the National Union for Popular Forces (in French: Union Nationale des Forces Populaires, UNFP) from the Independence Party (Istiqlâl).

**Contradictions of the Istiqlâl party and the secession of the National Union of Popular Forces**

Immediately after independence, the political forces in Morocco started to raise questions that had been put aside during the period of resistance against colonialism. The transitional period of 1956-1962 was marked by struggle for

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4 This explains the betting of the national movement on the monarchy as a symbol of national unity, in that it unanimously agreed on its legitimacy and its religious leadership.
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political power and control over government institutions between two forces: the Monarchy and the *Istiqlâl* party. Both were a symbol of nationalism and both were qualified to run public affairs.

A reading of this political struggle in post-independent Morocco shows that in the face of a monarchy that attempted to cast aside and marginalize political parties - it had an unambiguous vision for the nature of the ruling system and political power – the independent party lacked a lucid social and political plan for the nature of rule and political power. The dominating leadership of the *Istiqlâl* party remained hesitant to take a clear and congruous position about the ruling monarchy and public policies adopted since independence in 1956. It became obvious that the ceiling of ambitions of the conservative wing that controls the decision-making process within the party was to assume the role of a dominating majority party within a framework of a parliamentary monarchy. The left-wingers of the party led by Muhammad Basri, Abdellah Ibrahim, and Mehdi Ben Barka rejected this ambition.

The *Istiqlâl* party drew its strength and cohesion from a national identity and resisting colonialism. Even so, its internal contradictions stemmed from pursuing this element, especially that the party did not form a united organization in its orientations and intellectual identity. Many opposing and contradicting currents crisscrossed within the party organization. They included the conservative-right movement, the resistance and the liberation army movement, the syndicate movement and the political movement. These movements were greatly opposed in their lines and political practice. These contradictions led to the declaration of secession with the *Istiqlâl* party and the formation, in September 1959, of the UNFP. After resigning from the executive committee of the *Istiqlâl* party in November 1958, Mehdi Ben Barka established in January 1959 the Free Unions of the *Istiqlâl* party. Its leaders held their National Convention in April 1959, and in September 1959, it was renamed the National Union of Popular Forces.

So the formative roots of the USFP, which was established in 1959 as UNFP, are due to the national movement and its internal contradictions. These

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5 The Labor movement tried to exacerbate the work of the Cabinet headed by A. Balafrej (1958) in which the conservative movement within the *Istiqlâl* party was dominant. It did so through calling on the Moroccan labor union to hold successive strikes during the summer of 1958.

6 Mahjoub Ben Sediq, and Taïeb Ben Bouazza resigned from the political committee of the *Istiqlâl* party in May 1958.
contradictions were brought to the surface due to the major questions that the elite did not consider before 1956; especially the questions related to the nature of the national State, the nature of political authority in Morocco after independence and the paradox of democracy. The UNFP, since its establishment, tried to answer these questions.

Creation dynamics

The dynamics of creating the National Union of Popular Forces included two phases: first, a short-lived coexistence with the monarchy; this time had an impact on the organizational and ideological structures of the party. Second, the party then moved to the opposition, which pushed the party towards radical positions.

The time of coexistence

Through its creation phase and due to the presence of its cadres in the fourth Cabinet (1958-1960), led by Abdellah Ibrahim, one of the socialist leaders, the UNFP wagered on coexistence with the monarchy (Djaziri, 1997) and on avoiding a direct confrontation with it. Instead, it principally concentrated on trying to find and clarify an alternative social vision and an organizational frame that would restore the hope of popular forces (workers, farmers, the educated classes). However, the phase of coexistence did not endure so the party moved to the confrontation phase in December 1960, and to strong opposition of the political system.

Given the party goals, orientations and organizational structures, we could make three principal observations:

The Founding charter of the UNFP avoided ideological sides and sectarian commencements. It concentrated on general goals that the left-wing current inside the Istiqlâl defended. These goals constituted the foundation of the program.

7 See the complete text of the Founding Charter of the UNFP in USFP, From National Union to Socialist Union. 1959-1975, USFP publications, Casablanca, al-Magribiyya printing house, {D. T.}, p. 15-16.
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devised by the Cabinet headed by Abdellah Ibrahim, one of the UNFP General Secretariat members from 1958 to 1960, in order to reinforce independence and realize the unity of the land, economic liberation, social justice, agricultural reform and industrialization and nationalization (*ibidem*, p. 10).

During its creation phase, the party also avoided defining the nature of the political system and the nature of the political authority of the King. On that level, the party discourse was marked with a sort of moderation. The party principally concentrated on the necessity of “establishing a pragmatic democracy within the circle of a constitutional monarchy under the patronage of his Majesty Muhammad the Fifth”.

Concerning the organizational structure of the UNFP, the party did not elect or appoint a secretary general. The leadership of the union was a collective one, the “General Secretariat” with roles assigned among its members. This orientation is due to not wanting to reproduce the organizational structure of the *Istiqlâl* party, which is based on centralization (organization committee and a body of inspectors). The collective leadership was made up of many parties with differing and contradictory visions. This rendered the UNFP exposed to internal struggles from the start.

*Confrontation and radical orientation of the party*

The instance of coexistence with the monarchy did not last for long. Despite the King’s recommendation of the Cabinet headed by Abdellah Ibrahim after the establishment of the National Union of Popular Forces, and despite Ibrahim’s caution and his avoidance, especially on the level of discourse, of entering into a

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8 See the complete text of the Founding Charter of the UNFP in USFP, *From National Union to Socialist Union*. 1959-1975, USFP publications, Casablanca, al-Magribiyya printing house.


10 The politicians that seceded from the *Istiqlâl* party are the Moroccan Union of Labor, the Resistance and the Liberation Army, the separatist with the *Shûra* party and *Istiqlâl* party and the Popular Movement Party.
The Socialist Union of Popular Forces in Morocco

direct confrontation with the monarchy, the king exhibited confrontational and even violent behavior towards the union movement. This behavior is illustrated in the following examples:

In December 1960, a series of political arrests of members of the UNFP began, under various charges, such as defaming the dignity of the King\(^\text{11}\), conspiracy against the regime and attempts on the life of the crown prince\(^\text{12}\). The arrests resulted in many strikes to express the refusal to be coerced of members of the resistance and the liberation army, who were affiliated with the party\(^\text{13}\).

This is how the relationship between the King and the UNFP took a turn into a course of exclusion, conflict and struggle. Many manifestations that clarify this course of confrontation can be seen after the dismissal of the Cabinet of Abdellah Ibrahim in 1960. The position of the party became more radical as to the nature of the monarchy rule. The leaders of the party continued to assert, in the course of reevaluating the experience of the dismissed Cabinet, that the party found itself facing a “theocratic feudal system” whose main goal was the “preservation and revival of the traditional structures of Moroccan society. It did so in order to preserve the privileges of the old system and hinder the process of evolution and progress.” (Palazzoli, 1974, p. 248)

The party refused to participate in the Council for the Constitution appointed by Muhammad V. The party reiterated the demand of a democratically-elected founding Council to write a Constitution that would be subject to public referendum. The party also refused to attend the crowning ceremony of King Hassan II on March 3\(^{rd}\), 1962, and to take part in the national unity government into which Hassan II tried to include all political parties. Moreover, UNFP leaders called for boycotting the referendum on the proposed Constitution prepared by the King in 1962.

In this crisis-ridden path, the party held its second convention from 25\(^{th}\) to 27\(^{th}\) of May 1962. The convention reflected the conflict that marked the relationship

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11 The manager of the newspaper Libération, Muhammad Basri, and its editor in chief, were arrested because the newspaper wrote that the responsibility of the government is to the people and not the King.

12 Proclamation about a conspiracy against the monarchy was announced on December 14, 1960; in parallel to it a series of arrest among the members the national union was conducted.

13 I mention here the mutiny that took place in the city of Beni Mellal, as a reaction to the arrest of members of the resistance; A. Ibrahim was accused in March 1960 of being behind the mutiny. See Waterbury (1970, p. 240).
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of the party to the King. It also reflected the struggle that erupted between the political wing of the party and the syndicate one, because of differences in the nature of dealing with the monarchy. The conflict of interests and the divergence of political balances pushed the syndicate wing into formulating stances that were opposed to the official line of the party. This was done in order to detach and isolate labor unions from the decisions of the party. Meanwhile, another current within the UNFP pushed towards adopting military action in order to overthrow the monarchy, because of conviction about the futility of political work; while a third orientation remained a believer in political struggle.14

It is clear, as mentioned above, that the National Union of Popular Forces entered into a direct confrontation with the monarchy system through supporting the revolutionary socialist choice, formulated by Mehdi Ben Barka in the “Revolutionary Option” document (L’Option révolutionnaire au Maroc). The party confirmed this choice in a statement for the secretariat-general on May 2nd, 196315, and during the central committee meeting on July 16th, of the same year. In this meeting it made the decision to boycott the general election16.

In the course of this revolutionary choice, an announcement was made by the monarchy about “uncovering a conspiracy to change the government system and overthrow the ruling regime”. Parallel to this announcement, the cadres and militants of the party were subject to repeated collective arrests17. This state of

14 One of the manifestations of the struggle between the syndicate wing and the political wing is the request by local unions to suspend strikes in support of the political detainees under the pretext of not falling into provocation, since the Minister of Interior A. R. Guedira, entered into negotiations with the syndicate of the party. He was able to issue a joint statement with the Moroccan Syndicate for work calling for the cancellation of the strike scheduled on 19-6-1961. For more on these historical aspects see: al-Moussawi al-Ejlawi (2002).

15 The statement considered that the “revolutionary choice is the only choice for establishing a real democracy”; see text of the statement: A statement to the Moroccan people, secretariat-general of the UNFP, May 20th, 1963.

16 The declaration of the central committee included the justifications for this boycott and the confirmation of the revolutionary choice. It asserted that, “the actions of the absolute rule, through its central and local administration and through its mob, truly aims at imposing a complete dictatorship based on terror, torture and bribery... The actions of the absolute ruler and its collaborators objectively and practically mean that the UNFP has lost recognition and the administration refuses to deal with it as a recognized political organization”. See text of statement in the documents of the UNFP.

17 The arrests included 130 cadres from the party; among them were A. al-Youssoufi, and A. Bouabid, and 5,000 militants, according to party statistics. See: al-Benna (1989, p. 85-86).
tension between the UNFP (along with the political parties that sprang from the
national movement) and the monarchy resulted in social protests\textsuperscript{18} and institutional
imbalance due to the failure of the majority in the May legislative round\textsuperscript{19}.

All these events led the King to declare a state of emergency, according to chapter
35 of the 1962 Constitution. This declaration was an admission of the presence of a
grave crisis among the political players (Berrahou, 1986). Managing this crisis based on
usual constitutional authority and mechanisms became impossible. This empowered
the King, by chapter 35 of the Constitution, to declare a state of emergency, which
lasted five years (1965 to 1970). During this period, the National Union of Popular
Forces entered a state of stalemate whereby it closed many of its offices, and the
struggle among its factions deepened\textsuperscript{20}. It became necessary to reevaluate the party
organization as a whole in order to move beyond the immobility and to overcome
the organizational blocks and ideological mix that the differing factions of the party
set up concerning the way to deal with the monarchy and the new political situation.
The party attempted to achieve this in its extraordinary convention in 1975.

**Evolution of the Political, Organizational and Ideological Structure of the USFP**

This part of the research aims to detect the evolution of internal dynamics
that the USFP witnessed during the phase that followed its emergence as the
National Union of Popular Forces, especially the turning period in the party

\textsuperscript{18}I refer here in particular to the events of Casablanca on March 23rd, 1965. On that day,
the city witnessed popular demonstrations, which were repelled by the security forces and
the army. Many of the demonstrators died. Those events represented the first reaction of
the Moroccan people against the public policies adopted since independence. See Palazzoli

\textsuperscript{19}The failure resulted in the withdrawal of popular movement from the constitutional defense
front, which made up the supportive majority to the government.

\textsuperscript{20}The wings of the party tried to overcome their differences especially the ones between the
syndicate wing and the political one through establishing political mechanisms to organize and
control differences in order to bring back the party to the front of political work. To that effect,
the party established a political office in August 1967, headed by A. Ibrahim (labor wing) and
A. Bouabid (political wing). One of the missions of this office was to reorganize the party and
define the relationship between the syndicate and the party.
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history on the ideological, political and organizational level, which began during the extraordinary convention in 1975. The importance of considering this evolution lays in the following:

- The importance of the general context of the whole of the political system, which went through a transitional phase between 1975 and 1990; the political players felt paralyzed and powerless. Doubts about principals, individuals and the legitimacy of the system reigned. As a result, political and social contradictions emerged. This reflected on the work of institutions and limited their efficiency. The contradictions became a source for other crises that can be seen in the political behaviors of the players, namely the monarchy and the political parties.

- The Extraordinary convention of 1975, which is described in party literature and documents as the “convention of the new start”, represented an evolutionary phase and a cessation with the past phase of the party. The party tried to review its strategic choices on the ideological, organizational and political level in order to overcome the barriers that prevented its unity. The convention laid the foundation for a party cadre with clear identity, leadership and structures.

- The interactive relationship between the party and the political system witnessed a very important development, in which the party moved from radical discourse that denied legitimacy to existing political order, to a reformative political discourse with criticisms revolving around constitutional legitimacy and the necessity of reforms. The most important factor in this development is the acceptance by the party to participate in representative institutions within a strategy that ties the political line with religious thinking.

This part will look into the interactive relationship between the party and its environment. We will also look into the extent of the influence of the ideological structures of the party on its role, strategic choices and level of performance. This will be done through three elements: the first one detects the path of important developments that the party underwent. The second will present the significance of these developments on the ideological and organizational structures. The third will detect the extent of reflection of these ideological and organizational developments on the shift in the political practice of the party, from radical opposition to constitutional participation in elections and the acceptance of working from within the institution.
Developmental path: from the crisis of the political system to contradictions within the party

The declaration of the state of emergency constituted an admission of the crisis of the political system, its failure in the absence of political and institutional balances, and the lack of agreements among political players. This situation led the King to consolidate all authority into his own hands. This consolidation was manifested in many aspects, the most important of which are:

- Cancellation of the Prime Ministry. After declaring a state of emergency, the King assumed the role of head of state and prime minister. At the same time, he moved closer to the army and gave it a stronger role.

- Inflating the role of the administrative body and reinforcing its position, especially the Ministry of Interior, which consolidated clientelism.

- Isolating political parties and marginalizing their representative and cadre formation roles.

This orientation led to immobility, inability to gain mass support and isolation of the political system, which reduced its legitimacy. An attempt was made to get out of this state of political void, by ending the state of emergency and conducting a formative referendum in order to approve a new Constitution in 1970. Nevertheless, this did not prevent the appearance of a new and unexpected element in Moroccan political life: the army, which attempted two coups in 1971 and 1972.

Following the declaration of the state of emergency, and the abduction and assassination of theoretician Mehdi Ben Barka, the UNFP entered a political and organizational phase of decline, whereby its mobilizing and enrollment activities stopped, and the gap between its syndicate wing and the political one deepened. These conditions prevented the party from holding its third convention at the end of 1965, which might have helped the party to reorganize itself, and reframed its political work in a crisis-ridden path distinguished by marginalizing the political parties, a descendant of the national movement.

In order to overcome its organizational stalemate and insure continuity, the UNFP allied with the Istiqlâl party. They established a framework for coordination between the two parties through founding the Kutla wataniyya, “National Bloc” on July 22nd, 1970. The founding pact of this framework
was limited to defining common general goals, and to forming a “central committee” for coordinating and implementing these goals. The Kutla enabled the UNFP to break the stalemate. However, it did not prevent the struggle between the syndicate and the political from persisting and worsening. This led to contradiction in their stances on political detainees and on managing the negotiations with the King.

This disagreement led to rupture between the two currents inside the UNFP. This rupture was confirmed on the organizational level on July 30th, 1972 with the meeting of the administrative committee of the party without the presence of the supporters of the syndicate current. The committee made many decisions related to managing and running the party. This meeting resulted in a split of the national union. Two groups emerged. The Rabat group, led by Abderrahim Bouabid, was known as the National Union of Popular Forces, i.e., the administrative committee. The Casablanca group represented by Abdellah Ibrahim, kept the original name of the party in the context of conflict between the two groups. The break with the syndicate wing did not prevent the party from blending political work with the adoption of armed struggle, which was tied to a group of party cadres. This

21 The most important goals are “establishing a social, economic and political democracy that allows the people to exercise its sovereignty through an authority that spring directly from the people”. Work for “human rights respect and establishing basic freedoms especially the freedom of political association, freedom of gathering and freedom of the press”, and “work for liberating the Moroccan economy from capitalist control through nationalizing principal sectors and adopting an industrialization policy and achieving true agricultural reform”. See the Founding pact of the Kutla (Palazzoli, 1974, p. 335-356).

22 The Moroccan union for work, the principal sustainer of the syndicate current, did not take a clear stand concerning arrests which included the militant of the national union since 1969, especially the ones accused of conspiracy to overthrow the regime in 1971.

23 The stands of both currents were different during the negotiations with the King which extended from November 1971, to March 1972 (Waterbury, 1970, p. 263).

24 Among the most important decisions was the decision of the principal to call the convening of the party convention, giving complete authority to the administrative committee and managing the party affairs on the national level. See: The National Union of Popular Forces: the July 30 start a move beyond the halting plan, documents of the UNFP, p. 60-61.

25 Especially al-Faqih Basri who was sentenced to death on the charge of involvement with the July 1963 conspiracy. After the King pardoned him in April 1965, he left Morocco to establish a secret organization that adopts armed struggle (Gourdon, 1973, p. 396).
The Socialist Union of Popular Forces in Morocco

The group was subject to a series of arrests following the March 1973 events, and the suspension of its activities for four months. These events led the Rabat group to declare a rupture with the military-based group, in addition to the previously established organizational rupture with the syndicate wing. The group decided, in the meeting of its “central committee” in September 1974, to change the name of the party from the UNFP to the USFP. The new name was then approved by the Extraordinary convention of the party in 1975.

Reviewing the history of the UNFP confirms that it is not a political party united in its positions. Moreover, the party’s top components do not agree on common goals and ideas. Instead, it is a political organization with numerous leaders, each from his own organizational position. For example, al-Faqih Basri represented the party and took political lines from within the framework of the resistance and the liberation army. Al-Mahjoub Ben Sadiq and Abdellah Ibrahim took their stances from within the labor union framework, while both Abderrahim Bouabid and Mehdi Ben Barka worked from within the party framework.

From an ideological point of view, it is clear that the party lacks a clear ideological vision that encompasses political work. This explains the absence of scrutiny in numerous concepts that direct the work of a party, such as the relation between the labor union and the political one and the limits of the relation between armed action and political action, scientific socialism, popular liberation war, and revolutionary choice. This is perhaps what the party will try to overcome through ideological clarity and political work based on a strategy of democratic struggle and on organizational structures with defined responsibilities and specialties.

**Evolution of the ideological project and its reflection on the political practices of the party**

The Extraordinary convention constituted an opportunity for the party to develop its ideological beliefs, whereby (a) it relied on a strategy of “democratic

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26 The events consisted of armed group attacks using explosives in Rabat, Casablanca and Meknès, with the aim of bringing down the regime and kindle popular revolution. The main suspect in these events was the secret order led by al-Faqih Basri (Palazzoli, 1974, p. 460).

27 The report of the suspension of the party on April 2nd, 1973.
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struggle”(b) these choices reflected on the political conduct of the party, which moved from the political opposition to the system into a constitutional opposition from within representative institutions.

The democratic choice?

The ideological statement adopted by the extraordinary convention of the USFP constituted a qualitative step in the history of political parties in Morocco. The statement presented a profound coordinated vision for the social, political and economic evolution of Moroccan history before, during and after colonialism. The importance of the statement was that it nominally unified the way members of the party view its political identity, vision and theoretical foundations. It did so through abandoning radical and revolutionary choices, and adopting a clear ideology based on democratic struggle from within the constitutional institutions. What are the elements of this new orientation of the party? What are the reflections of this choice on the role of the party in the political system?

The essence of the socialist choice can be summarized in liberation, democracy and socialism. The concepts that the statement considered constitute “three interconnected and intertwined goals, each relying on the rest; they form one undivided goal, with no preference of one element over the other elements.”28 The statement adds that achieving economic and social development is tied to one principal that can be summarized in “the necessity to transform the structures of the mechanism of the State, and establishing democracy”29. This necessary condition will form a prelude on which the party will build a strategy of struggle based on the pillars of political democracy as a main element to achieving social and economic democracy.

It is clear from the mentioned elements that the ideological statement combined socialism, democracy and liberation. This way it would set the stage for a new orientation of its historical path. This orientation is based on social democracy, which combines political democracy and socialist planning. Attempting to bring the

28 USFP, The ideological statement documents of the extraordinary convention, Casablanca, 10-11-12 January 1977, p. 133. [in Arabic]
29 Ibid., p. 145
socialist choice closer to the specifics of Moroccan society, the statement avoided falling into the dogmatic tendency that marked the experiences of communist parties. The statement also clarified the new choices of the party, which were summarized in counting on the body of government to achieve change from within, by accessing representative institutions through free and honest elections.

The third convention of the party in 1978\textsuperscript{30} consolidated this democratic choice, asserting that it was a conscious and contemplated choice and that it could deepen the consciousness of the masses about their issues and problems: “We doubt not that our vigilant and responsible presence in those institutions will soon give results and maybe sooner then expected”\textsuperscript{31}. In the same vein, the political statement of the convention went on to demand review of the constitutional treatise\textsuperscript{32} with the prospect of reforming the system and shifting it from an absolute monarchy to constitutional, parliamentary and democratic monarchy\textsuperscript{33}.

The fourth (1984)\textsuperscript{34} and fifth (1989)\textsuperscript{35} conventions followed the same ideological path i.e. the “democratic choice”, whereby the party remained loyal to its slogans, which regulates it identity, liberation, socialism and democracy. The party stressed the establishment of the national democratic state based on a parliamentary constitutional system.

\textsuperscript{30} The third convention of the USFP was held between 8\textsuperscript{th} and 10\textsuperscript{th} December 1978. It constituted an occasion to evaluate the democratic choice of the party and its involvement in the democratic process and national consensus between 1975 and 1978.


\textsuperscript{32} The principal demand of the USFP the election of a establishing council for writing the constitution. It partially retreated from this demand since the issuance of the July 30, 1972 resolutions.

\textsuperscript{33} USFP, \textit{The political statement documents of the third convention, op. cit.}, p. 20. [in Arabic]

\textsuperscript{34} The fourth convention of the USFP was held between 13/15 July 1984. This convention lowered the harsh tone of discourse that marked the third convention. The report of the convention did not use words like “the revolutionary party” and “the revolutionary choice”; they were replaced with “the avant-gardism party”. The party also tried to justify its lower tone toward the political system and the softening of its stands by asserting that they were based on the democratic choice. See USFP, \textit{Papers of the fourth national convention social crisis and the democratic buildup}, Casablanca, [d. n.], 1989, p. 100 and up. [in Arabic]

\textsuperscript{35} The fifth convention was held between 30-31 May and April 2\textsuperscript{nd} 1989.
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The party backed off on its demand for a parliamentary monarchy and replaced it with the demand for endorsing “a completely responsible governmental authority that enjoys a freely expressed and strong confidence” and is subject to democratic monitoring and follow up. This was the demand adopted by the fifth convention, which demanded the amending of the Constitution in the context of a constitutional monarchy and balance of power.

Did the party achieve the tie it sought between the political line and the ensuing resolutions? In addition, what are the results of the party practicing the democratic choice?

*Confinement of the practice of the democratic choice to a “tied constitutional opposition”*

By supporting democratic choice and political and ideological clarity, the USFP entered a new phase, enrolling in the national consensus about the issue of the Sahara and participation in the “democratic process.” This was manifested through participation in representative institutions within the framework of constitutional legitimacy. The USFP participated in the collective elections on November 12th, 1976, and the legislative elections on June 3rd, 1977, on a platform that agreed with the ideological choice of the party. The party won fifteen seats in the elections and constituted the only opposition group in the Parliament.

By acting in such a manner, the USFP moved from a party that opposes the system from without to a party practicing constitutional opposition from within the representative institutions. The discourse of the party also moved from a radical discourse towards the monarchy to a reformative discourse calling for

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36 USFP, *Papers of the fourth national convention*, April 1989, p. 50. [in Arabic]
37 USFP, *Resolutions of the fifth national convention*, April 1989, p. 79. [in Arabic]
38 The “democratic process” in the Moroccan political discourse refers to the phase of political openness that the 1972 constitution established on the issue of the Sahara and provided the capabilities of mobilization about it, whereby the political parties of the opposition agreed to participate in legislative elections and constitutional institutions.
reforming institutions and fortifying them against fraud and corruption. The party remained true to its reformative discourse despite the moments where it took radically-oriented political positions, especially its position on the referendum in the Moroccan Sahara, which led to imbalance in the national consensus around that national issue. In addition, its stances that called for the withdrawal of its deputies from the Parliament led to an institutional imbalance.

This stance constituted the emergence of the contradictions that were at work within the USFP between a pro-election faction that strongly defended the continuation of participating in representative institutions, and a faction that opposed that participation and called for withdrawal from fake representative institutions because participating in them is “domestication of the class struggle”. This disagreement within the USFP about the nature of democratic struggle led to negative organizational changes. These changes were manifested in the splitting of the party since the events of May 3rd, 1983, between the USFP political bureau and the USFP administrative committee that opposed the official choices of the party; administrative committee which had been enrolled, on October 6, 1991, within a framework of a political party called the Democratic and Socialist Avant-Garde Party (PADS).

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40 The imbalance in the national consensus is due to the stand of the USFP on the Nairobi recommendations that approved the referendum to solve the Sahara problem. The party strongly criticized the stand of the King agreeing with the recommendations and called for a referendum on the referendum whereby the Moroccan people decided their stand on the resolutions of the implementing committee meeting in the second Nairobi convention. The union considered that “implementing the referendum under the conditioned defined by the implementing committee will harm the geographical unity of the nation”. This led to the arrest and trial of the party leaders, in particular Abderrahim Bouabid (Santucci, 1981, p. 576).

41 The USFP withdrew from the Parliament on October 5th 1981, in a letter addressed to the Speaker of the House. They considered that their local mandate was over in 1980 and that the results of the May 30th, 1980 referendum that extended the legislative mandate from four to six years did not have a retroactive effect. Since the USFP was the only party in the opposition inside the Parliament, its withdrawal caused an institutional imbalance. The monarchial opening speech of the Parliament session on October 10th 1981 stated that this conduct was against the Constitution and considered their withdrawal a exit from the “Muslim community”. On October 13th 1981, the deputies of the USFP returned to the Parliament without exercising the role in the opposition.

42 See a circular by the regional publication of the party in Rabat dated January 1983, which asserted that “the principal functions performed by the serials of democracy” in formations like the Moroccan ones which are domestications, confinement and containment of the class struggle itself in faked institution such as the current Parliament”. See: May 1983: from the socialist union to the avant-garde party. The continuation, documents and discussions, Casablanca, al-Tarik publications, 1993, p. 100.
The split constituted an indicator of the inability of the party to manage differences within its organizational structure and its incapability of institutionalizing the opposing currents inside the party.

The USFP resumed its participation in representative institutions, after ridding itself of the faction opposing this participation and after restoration of its relation with the monarchy. The party participated in the communal elections on June 10th, 1983 and obtained 3.46% of the votes. In 1984, it ran in the legislative elections, and obtained thirty-six seats (36% of the votes).

The party remained loyal to its electoral choice to the point of participating in governmental practice in 1998. The party participated in the representative institution from the position of constitutional opposition. It participated in the legislative elections in 1993, (which followed the vote of the USFP against the 1992 Constitution), and obtained forty-eight seats. It also participated in the legislative elections in 1997, and won fifty-two seats. During this time, the party exercised a constitutional opposition. However, its opposition was restricted, monitored and limited in its dimensions. This caused the party to justify constantly its participation in the representative institutions. At times, it justified its participation as the necessity of unifying the internal front and confronting the outside dangers facing Morocco. At other times, it justified its participation in the Parliament as necessary in order to express the opinions of the working masses regarding change and fighting corruption and delinquency in all fields. Moreover, the participation in elections provided the possibility of expanding the base and role of the party in society.

If the party needed such justifications in order to legitimize its participation in representative institutions, then the move to participate in government within what political players agreed to call “consensual alternance” in 1998 brought the party into a major transformative phase.

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43 A royal pardon was issued for the leaders of the party A. Bouabid, M. al-Yazighi and M. Lahbabi who were arrested and sentenced because of their stand on organizing the referendum in the Sahara benefited from the pardon in February 1982.

44 Prior to that, the party participated in the national unity government formed on November 30, 1983. The party justified this participation as a contribution to defending national unity and working to provide conditions for free and honest elections. It was represented in the government by two ministers, A. Bouadib, and A. Radi.
Limits of structural and organizational development of the party

The Extraordinary convention of 1975, in its ideological and organizational report, explored the importance of organization in the course of the democratic choice that the party adopted. The report asserted that these important choices are dependent on organizing and restructuring the party. This is to be done in a way that makes the party an “organization that uses its behavior, the quality of relations that reign between the party and its militants and the degree of the political and ideological formation of all its cadres and supporters, as a model that honestly reflect the image of socialist society it seeks to build”45. The exploration of these organizational sides in the convention can be explained as an attempt by the party to transcend the previous era, which was marked by the ineffectiveness of its institutions and the multiplicity of the decision-making sources within it. The socialist union, in many of its previous phases, lived more on its line and its ideological and symbolic capital than on its organizational structures, which suffered many defects. To remedy this situation, the party worked on establishing the principal of centralized democracy in order to rehabilitate the party on the organizational level. Moreover, the principal and internal rules of the party defined the base for the democratic functioning of the party. This was done in order to control relations among different structures of the party. In addition, these rules laid the foundations for a more rational party structure.

The ideological report of 1975 asserted the principal of centralized democracy as a mechanism that insured the cohesion of the organizational structures of the party and “protects it from pitfalls in its strategy or tactics”46. From the point of view presented in the report, this principal adopted by the party insures, on the central, regional and local level, “the expansion of the participation of the union base in the activities of the union and guarantees the effectiveness and callosity of responsible divisions. In addition, it lowers the heavy-handedness which at times was responsible for the paralysis that some branches and regions suffered from”47. This situation led the party to explore at length, during the convention, the necessity of establishing, reinforcing and activating centralized democracy.

46 In its previous phases, the party adopted decentralized democracy on its organizational level whereby its structures enjoyed a certain independence; this opened the door for multiplicity in decision-making sources and stands and their contradicting the deciding national divisions of the party.
47 See the presentation of the organizational report by M. al-Yazghi, al-Muhârîr, 11-1- 1975.
since it was the principal guarantor that the party would abide by the rules of discipline and compliance; in addition, centralized democracy would increase the speed of implementing decisions and efficiency in executing them the right way.\(^{48}\) It is noticeable, on the level of divisions, structures and organizations of the party, that the Extraordinary convention laid the foundations for a modern political party, by having an official and recognized leadership. A first secretary who is the spokesperson represents this leadership, which enjoys the trust of all members. It also established operating, decision-making, orienting and organizing divisions: on the national level (the general convention, the national administrative committee, the central committee), and on the regional and local levels (the regional conventions, regional and branches offices). Similarly, the ideological report and the organizational decree of the party stressed the necessity of reinforcing the cadres formation capabilities of the union by being open to youth and women. Based on this, the internal law of the party established special corresponding organizations and structures tied to the party, especially the Unionist Youth Division (\textit{shabila ittihadiyya})\(^ {49}\), and a special organization for the women sector that “provides the female members of the union with the possibility of contributing to the integrated party structure”.

However, the party structure and its decision-making and operating divisions such as the principal system\(^ {50}\) and the internal law\(^ {51}\), which currently regulate

\(^{48}\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 47.

\(^{49}\) The first national congress for the Unionist Youth, 22\textsuperscript{nd}-25\textsuperscript{th} December 1978, discussed the proposed reports: the guiding report and another report on the social and economical problems of youth and on education and the student movement, and the system for students, see: \textit{Tasks of the first national congress for the unionist youth}, Rabat, no publication date.

\(^{50}\) The compliance of principal system of the USFP with Law number 04-36 on political parties issued in 2004 was approved in the second extraordinary convention of the party in Rabat on November 10, 2006. The law regulating political parties came to control, regulate and activate the role of parties, and democratize their operational rules. As it defined the rules and patterns of establishing a political party (chapter one), it also defined the way a political party operates, such as the necessity for having a written program, principal systems and an internal law, and organizational structures on the local, national and regional levels that use the rules of democracy to control the way it operates (chapter two); the law also controlled the issue of financing political parties and subjected its expenditures to the monitoring of the High Accounting Council (chapter four); the law opened the door for the possibility of forming unions of political parties (chapter five).

\(^{51}\) The internal law of the USFP, which was approved in the national council in its session on October 28\textsuperscript{th}, 2005. This law defines the operational ways for each division of the party and the terms formalities for the meeting of these divisions.
The party and its structure, have not had, since the Extraordinary convention, any fundamental or even partial amendments. The exception to this is a set of organizational and operational rules formulated by the sixth convention of the party. It is noted that, during the period following the extraordinary convention, the principal of centralized democracy was not abided by nor activated. The preparation committee for the third convention of the socialist union stressed the malfunction that befell party divisions due to lack of respect for the centralized democracy principal. This exposed the party to disorganization, lack of control and discipline and defining responsibility and accountability. This situation affected party divisions on the national, local and regional levels.

POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE SYSTEM AND OF PARTY CONSTITUENTS

Since its establishment as a national union, 1996 was the first time that the USFP voted yes on the Constitution. Prior to that, its stand on the issue of the Constitution was utter refusal of the Constitution that the King presented for referendum. Two years after its yes vote, the party moved from constitutional opposition to participating in the government - even to heading it, by the First Secretary of the party, Abderrahman al-Youssoufi. His trajectory is embedded in USFP history. His political career started in 1943 with his adhesion to the Istiqlâl Party and by organizing the working class in Casablanca (1944-1949). He also participated in the creation and leadership of the Resistance Movement and the Liberation Army between 1953 and 1956. In 1959, he was one of the founders of the National Union of Popular Forces (UNFP). Member of the General Secretary of the Party, he was also the Chief Editor of al-Tahrîr, the official organ of the party (1959-1965). He was arrested and sentenced to death on charges related to overthrowing the regime and defaming the person of the King in 1963, and reprieved in 1965. Following Mehdi Ben Barka’s kidnapping, he went into exile between 1965 and 1980. In 1978, after the death of Abderrahim Bouabid, he was nominated first Secretary of USFP. He resigned in September 1993 but took office again in 1995.

52 See USFP, Documents of the sixth national convention, Casablanca May 28th-April 3rd, 2001. [in Arabic]
53 The convention was held on December 8th, 9th and 10th 1998.
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These lines are a principal and strategic transformation that reflects a major connection between the growth of the party and change of the political system towards constitutional reform and democratization and towards bringing political parties of the opposition into power. What are the procedural indications according to which we use the concept of transformation to describe these transitions? That is the transition of the regime towards democracy and the transition of the party constituent from opposition to the government, plus the transition of the relationship between the political system and its party constituents to a new phase.

We do not employ the concept of transformation in this study to express the transition from one structure to a different one. We also do not use this concept to indicate the abandonment of one mode for the sake of another one. We employ the concept to indicate the transitional state and conditions that the USFP went through when moving from participating in representative institutions from a constitutional opposition position, to working within government institutions from the majority standpoint. This transformation or transition was done within the framework of continuity.

What, then, is the course of this transition? What is the effect of the economic and social situation and international variables on the transformation of the political system towards constitutional reform? What is the effect of these situations on the position of the USFP from the political system and the constitutional reform? Did these situations have an influence in bringing about the transition from consensual democracy by agreeing on the revised Constitution and agreeing to preside over a government based on consensual “alternance”? What are the reflections of these agreements on the party? Was the USFP a player and a contributor in the transformation via a thorough, thoughtful strategy? Alternatively, was the party subject to transformation?

In order to present preliminary answers to these questions, I will concentrate on two elements: First, the influence of social, economic and international conditions on the transformation of the political system, and through it to the transformation of the lines of party constituents regarding constitutional reform and second, the essence of this transformation was tied to the concept of the transition to consensual democracy and its reflections on the USFP.
Influence of social and economic transformations and international variables on the transformation of the system and on the political transformation of the party constituent

The transformation of the political system and the change of the stands of the USFP during the 1990s were linked with economic and social conditions and international variables. This forced on the monarchy, the USFP and the remaining opposition parties the necessity of interacting politically with these conditions. A manifestation of this was the agreement of political players that constitutional and political reform was necessary as a prelude to change. The most important aspect of this awareness is that it reflected, in its patterns and content, the renewal of the pact between the monarchy and the opposing political parties whose positive interaction with constitutional reform constituted an indicator of the beginning of the transformation.

At the start of the 1990s, economic conditions changed, marked by inflation and rising debt, deficit trade balance and weak agricultural production because of the drought years of 1990-1992. In addition Parliament and the Cabinet adopted, through the mandate of the elected Parliament of 1984, a public policy with liberal dimensions to implement the policy of structural adjustment. This economic situation reflected on the social situation (Santucci and Benhlal, 1991) whereby the phenomenon of social protest grew through many demonstrations and sectorial strikes. These protesting movements were striking for their continuity, lack of cadre formation and centralization in the urban sphere.

The reports prepared by the World Bank, upon the request of Hassan II, expressed the dangerous social and economic situation Morocco was undergoing. These reports constituted the subject of the King's inauguration of the legislative

55 The demonstrations included the health, education and ports sectors. The most dangerous one was the general strike called by the two central unions on December 14, which turned into a mass protest that was called the “bread revolt”. The two unions were not able to use it for cadre formation nor to limit its extent (Santucci and Benhlal, 1991, p. 732).

56 The quantitative evolution of the opposition movements that Morocco experienced makes the intermediary structures of parties and unions unable to in-cadre them and control their track; despite the fact that they work on investing them politically to criticize adopted public policies in the economic and social spheres. On this subject, see how the USFP newspaper dealt with the December 14, 1990 events. See: al-Ittihād al-ishtirākî newspaper, from the 14-12-1990 issue to the 18-12-1990 issue.
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session on October 13, 1995. The Moroccan Monarch stressed in the course of commenting on the reports that they are “based on a tormenting reality, painful numbers and comparisons that keeps every conscience awake”.

In addition to the effect of the economic and social situation, international variables reflected on the political system. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the international scene underwent many changes, whereby totalitarian (Badie and Smouts, 1995, p. 33), military and one-party regimes crumbled. Because of the transformations that the world order witnessed, many criteria on the level of dealing among states were emplaced; such as adopting the values of liberal democracy, especially political multiplicity, general elections, separation of powers and the reduction of the sphere of “internal public affairs” whereby the subject of human rights became an internal issue with international dimensions.

Within this setup, one can understand the influence of the international and global community on the Moroccan political system by monitoring the track of democracy and human rights conditions in Morocco through reports issued by international institutions specializing in the human rights domain. This put the Moroccan political system in a crisis with international and local public opinion, despite its attempt to find legal and institutional solutions for the human rights issue.

57 See the Royal inauguration speech of the legislative session on October 13th, 1995.
58 During this period, the international relations witnessed many variables and developments that engulfed the international community and had reflections on many political systems (Roche, 1992, p. 5; Morreau Defarges, 1993, p. 10 and up).
61 Such as founding the Consulting Council for human rights, which was established in Zhair Sharif. See: Zhair Sharif n° 1-90-12, April 20th, 1990. The Official Gazette, n° 4044, 2-5-1990, p. 306-307 (in French). In addition, amendments to the penal code were introduced and the detention period was reduced by Law n. 30-90-67 in December 1991.
In order to transcend this economic and social crisis and to keep up with international variables, the State adopted economic liberalism. This was manifested by encouraging individual initiative, liberating prices, reforming the financial and taxation system and formulating a privatization program in 1989 (Malki, 1993). This was done to encourage individual initiative and attract foreign investments. This program was an indicator of the increasing retreat of the role of the State from the economic sphere, while at the same time trying to increase its financial capabilities in order to meet social demands.

It is noted that this betting on economic openness and on the values of economic liberalism, such as individual initiative, competition and encouraging investment was not accompanied by political evolution. The political system remained a closed and static one, where values contradicting the liberal ideology adopted by the government reigned. Elections lacked the conditions for freedom, integrity and competition and the parties of the opposition lived on the margin of the system. There were also restraints on public freedoms and human rights. The awareness of this contradiction led to contemplating constitutional and political reforms and to opening channels with the opposition by involving it in a general strategy for reform.

In their vision for reform, the political players - the monarchy and political parties, especially the USFP - started from the assumption that the constitutional pact was not up to date with the requirements of Moroccan society, the liberal model the State chose, or with international changes. Consequently, the players unanimously agreed on the necessity of amending the Constitution in the name of reinforcing democracy. Going back to the memorandum of the Istiqlâl party and the USFP, on October 9th, 1991⁶², and the memorandum of the Kutla, on June 19th, 1995⁶³, and to the amended Constitution on September 4th, 1992, one

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⁶² This memorandum included the most important demands of the USFP and the Istiqlâl party concerning constitutional amendments. The same demands were included in the memorandum of the bloc, on June 19, 1995.

⁶³ The Kutla dimuqrâtîyya, Democratic Bloc, was established by five opposition parties in the course of the constitutional and political discussion on May 17th, 1992. The parties are: the Istiqlâl party, the USFP, the Progress and Socialism Party, the Organization for Democratic and Popular Action, the National Union of Popular Forces. Of the priorities, the establishing covenant of the bloc concentrated on: deep constitutional ratification that guarantees the reinforcement of the Institution State, endorsing the power of the law and modernization and democratization of the bodies of the State.
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can see the most important elements that the monarchy and political parties agreed on including in the constitutional reform program. These elements were included in the approved Constitution of 1996.

In summary, the most important elements are the establishing of the concept of the nation of law by the reformed Constitution through constitutional consolidation of human rights. In addition to that, the Constitutional Council was revived, and its specialties expanded. Moreover, a special position was dedicated for representative institutions, through fortifying the monitoring role of the Parliament via the possibility of forming fact-finding committees. The constitutional reform also reconsidered the relations between powers towards more balance amongst them, and empowered them with means to exercise their specialties and develop their work. In reading the texts that regulate relations among powers (the Monarchy, the Parliament and the Cabinet), one can assert that the 1996 constitutional reform took the path of transforming the system from a presidential monarchy, to one with some elements of a parliamentary monarchy.\(^{64}\).

If these constitutional amendments took into consideration the recommendations commanded by the USFP, which were expressed by the memorandums to the King through the Kutla, the contemplation of the participatory strategy through which the process of constitutional reforms took place can be considered the beginning of the political transition in the party position on the constitutional issue. This is in spite of its negative stand on the referendum for approving the Constitution that included these reforms. Now, we conclude that the economic and social conditions and the international variables reflected positively on the Moroccan political system, in the shape of political and constitutional reform and towards the transition to consensual democracy.

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**Essence of the political transformations and their reflections on the USFP**

The essence of the political transformations that the political system and the party constituent witnessed, in the progression of moving towards consensual

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\(^{64}\) See in particular, chapter 59 of the 1992 Constitution, which acknowledges the double responsibility of the Cabinet towards the King and towards the Parliament, and implicitly states the dual installment of the Cabinet in office by the King and the Parliament.
democracy, can be summarized through the agreement on the 1996 Constitution, and the move by the party to lead the consensual “alternance” Cabinet. These transformations had negative reflections on the socialist union, both politically and organizationally.

One of the principal elements that studies about the democratic transition concentrated on, regardless of their theoretical bases and methodological orientations, is the consensual progression (Enhaily, 1999, p. 67-68), through which rules and legal norms and standards that govern the political game were formulated, and the process of producing these norms as well as the agreement and accord of the political players concerning them. Perhaps the most important feature that marked the post-constitutional reforms period is the commencement of the consensual cycle, starting with the USFP voting positively on the 1996 Constitution. This consensual cycle was crowned by the appointment of the “Alternance” Cabinet.

The USFP, and the parties springing from the national movement, took a positive stance in 1996 by voting yes, for the first time through its history, on the referendum for the amended Constitution. This positive stand can be considered an expression of an agreement between the parties and the monarchy on the rules and standards of the political system. The unanimously agreed-upon Constitution formed a crowning of two tracks. First was the resumption of the discussion about the constitutional issue, after the approval of the 1992 Constitution, especially after the indirect legislative election held in 1993. The second track is the one of realization by political players of the common danger, which was summarized by the late King in the report of the International Monetary Fund in 1995, that Morocco is facing the “danger of a heart attack”. This realization of the common danger was expressed by the players by the reduction of their legitimacy in the face of the difficulties of crisis, especially the distribution crisis and the participation and representation crisis.

The two tracks facilitated negotiation and dialogue among political players and during the process of producing the negotiated standards. This gave the opposition parties, especially the USFP, which remained in the opposition for forty years, the legitimacy of contributing to reaching the agreement. It also bestowed a degree of independence on the resulting rules and standards.

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The track of formulating the 1996 Constitution, and the yes vote it received from the USFP\(^{66}\), is a positive indicator in the process of moving towards consensual democracy in Morocco. This is clear through the agreement on the following standards:

- Agreement on the formal framework of the Moroccan political system (constitutional monarchy), and the absence of any demand for a different form of government (such as demand for a republic).

- Agreement on the constitutional philosophy that shapes the system, the monarchy, Islam and multiplicity of parties.

- Agreement that the democratic transition can only take place within the constitutional institutions, thus transcending revolutionary choices.

- Agreement on granting relativity to the visions and discourses of political players; this opened the door for new mechanisms to emerge in the cooperation between the monarchy and the opposition parties, such as dialogue, mutual agreement and political meetings.

- Agreement among political parties of the opposition and their acceptance of the central role of the King in defining the types and contents of the mechanisms and assurances of the agreement\(^{67}\).

- These agreements constituted a prelude to incorporating political parties in the work of the government through the “consensual alternance” Cabinet.

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\(^{66}\) The USFP justified its positive vote on the 1996 Constitution in a statement from its central committee on September 4\(^{th}\), 1996, in that the amendment fulfilled the demands of the party and of Kutla, which require electing a Parliament for a 5 year term, and the establishing of the High Council for Accounting. The party considered the positive vote as an expression of hope for general party reform. See: text of statement, the socialist union, 5 and 6-9-1996.

\(^{67}\) See the joint statement of the public authorities and the political parties on February 28\(^{th}\), 1997, asserting the central role of the King in building the agreement track. See text of statement in al al-Itihād al-īshtirakī newspaper, 29-2-1997.
The political and institutional dynamic of the 1990s affirmed that the participation of the left opposition in government work, especially the USFP, became a “necessity” and a “principal prelude for democratic transition” and to “save the country”. This may explain the connection of political and constitutional reform, which was launched at the beginning of the decade, with the dispute among political actors (the monarchy and the opposing political parties) about political “alternance”. If the political players agreed on the necessity of “alternance”, as one of the conditions for change and democratic transition, they disagreed on its content and the mechanisms for achieving it. By reviewing the two propositions that the King presented to the opposition parties for forming the consensual cabinet - the first one on October 24th, 1991, the second one on October 14th, 1994 - and by reviewing the response of the political parties, one notices two opposing visions for the conditions and mechanisms for achieving “alternance”. The first is the vision of the monarchy, which considers “alternance” a grant, in which the King assures the conditions for its success, due to the centrality of his vast authority. The second vision is that of the opposition parties, which considers the “alternance” as democratic; it starts with ballot boxes, i.e. from the will of the electoral body.

However, after the agreement on the 1996 Constitution, and after the political failure of the 1997 elections, the opposition unanimously agreed that it lacked impartiality. The King suggested forming a Cabinet for “consensual alternance”. The USFP and the parties of the Kutla, with the exception of the Organization for Popular Democratic Labor (OADP), accepted the suggestion. Thus, this Cabinet confirmed the negotiation and agreement track between the monarchy and the opposition parties. On February 6th, 1998, the King received the first secretary of the USFP, Mr. Abderrahman al-Youssoufi, appointed him Prime Minister, and entrusted him with forming a Cabinet based on parliamentary majority. Starting from the way the Cabinet was formed, its structure and components, the following qualitative notes can be detected:

The coalition nature of this Cabinet: the USFP had to form an alliance with six
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other parties\textsuperscript{70} in order to insure a parliamentary majority and form the cabinet. The “consensual alternance” experiment took place outside of the election formula, since none of the political parties or coalition of parties received the majority in the Parliament.

The contractual nature of the Cabinet: the Cabinet drew its legitimacy from its contractual nature, between the King and the socialist union, which had remained in the opposition for forty years\textsuperscript{71}. The essence of this contract is summarized in political reform, saving the country and the “democratic transition”. King Muhammad VI affirmed, after the death of his father Hassan II on July 23rd, 1999, this contractual dimension in supporting the Cabinet in his first speech upon assuming the throne.

This contractual and coalition nature of the Cabinet had an influence on its components, whereby the Prime Minister transcended the ideological identity of the parties that formed the Cabinet. The Cabinet was made of parties from the left, conservative right, and parties in the middle\textsuperscript{72}, in addition to the sovereign ministers who are connected to the King as Commander of the Faithful. The sovereign ministers were given central ministries, such as the interior, justice, endowment and Islamic affairs and exterior ministries.

The political players gave the Cabinet a rescuing dimension. The USFP based its participation and leadership of the “alternance” Cabinet on the necessity of “saving the country” and contributing to general economic and social reform\textsuperscript{73}.

\textsuperscript{70} The Cabinet was formed with seven parties, including the USFP, which assumed fourteen ministries; the Istiqlâl Party assumed six ministries, the National Rally of Independents six ministries, the Democratic Forces Front, two ministries, the Popular National Movement three ministries and the Democratic Socialist Party one ministry, the Party of Progress and Socialism, one ministry.

\textsuperscript{71} A. al-Youssoufi asserted the contractual nature of this Cabinet and believed that his appointment as the prime minister was equal to a holy pact between himself and the King. A. al-Youssoufi announced to the Parliament in January 2000, some aspects of his conversation with the King during his appointment as Prime Minister. He stated the following: “The Holy Koran was beside his majesty as he said: ‘This Koran is our judge,’ yes this pact that encircles my neck is the highest of pacts and mutual commitment between myself and his majesty King Hassan II… And I am still bound by it in my work under the leadership of his majesty King Muhammad VI”.

\textsuperscript{72} The left was comprised of the USFP and the Socialist Democratic Party, which severed with the Organization for Democratic and Popular Action in 1996, Popular Forces Front which severed with the Progress and Socialist Party in 1997, and a rightist party, the Istiqlâl Party, and parties in the middle such as the National Rally of Independents and the Popular National Movement.

\textsuperscript{73} USFP, 17-6-1998.
This Cabinet was marked by its transitional nature whereby the USFP asserted that the consensual “alternance” is of a transitional nature and a prelude towards a real “alternance” based on ballot boxes through free and impartial elections.74

From these notes concerning the forming and the course of appointing the consensual “alternance” Cabinet and its components, the question is raised about its program and the outcome of its work. The program of the Cabinet, which was presented by Prime Minister Abderrahman al-Youssoufi, to the Parliament in April 1998, revolves around the issue and paradox of change and achieving “general reform”.

The Prime Minister stated that in order to achieve these goals, priorities for working towards change should be designed: abolishing privileges, fighting bribery, misuse of power, settlement of human rights issues, engendering political life through reconsideration of the voting system and eliminating once and for all every source of political protest about its results, and working on engendering public life and reforming the justice system.75

The comment that can be made concerning the declaration by the Cabinet is that it did not deviate from major strategic directions of the State. The declaration asserted the liberal choice of the State, through encouraging free initiative, foreign investments and the continuation of privatization. Moreover, the declaration by the Cabinet outlined an urgent program that aims at finding solutions for social problems, as well as transcending the difficult economic situation through controlling financial balances and ensuring the stability of the national economy.

The “alternance” Cabinet achieved some of the goals it set in its program, such as the projects related to retirement funds and social security and a relative expansion of the margin of freedom and contributing to reform in education and the family code. Nevertheless, a reading into the actual practice of the “alternance” Cabinet helps us understand the limits on the role of Cabinet and of the Prime minister in the context of a ruling and prevailing monarchy. Both the institutional and constitutional givens are that the King sets the strategic public

74 The central committee of the party, in its decision to support the “Alternance Cabinet” asserted, on February 5th, 1998, this transitional nature. See text of the central committee, USFP, 9-2-1998.

75 See the Cabinet program, USFP, 18-4-1998.
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policies\textsuperscript{76}, through the jurisdictions given to him by the Constitution and through the infiltration of his jurisdictions into those of the Cabinet and the Parliament. The domain of the work of the Cabinet is summed up in participating alongside the King in the domain of public affairs. Constitutionally, the Cabinet lacks a means of influence and a real ability to exercise authority. It was not possible for the consensual “alternance” Cabinet, which secured the transition of the throne from Hassan II to Muhammad VI, to exceed the ceiling of change set by the monarchy.

This experience poses many questions: what are the reflections of the political transformation of the USFP, from the opposition to working in the government, on the organizational and political line of the party? Did this experience enable the party to realize the paradoxes of moving from the opposition logic to the logic of participating in government work? What are the manifestations of these paradoxes?

\textit{Reflections of the “consensual alternance” cabinet experience on the party: crisis of the USFP}

The participation of the USFP in government work within the framework of the “consensual alternance” Cabinet, which the party headed from 1998 to 2002, caused the party to face a severe crisis that struck its organizational structures and its political and intellectual choices. The manifestations of the crisis of the socialist union, because of its participation in government work, can be detected through many elements, some of which are: consecutive resignations of party leaders and consecutive divisions within the party, its receding results in the 2007 legislative elections, and the failure of the first round of the eighth convention of the party in 2008.

The sixth convention of the USFP was held in 2001 within the context of the party heading the “consensual alternance” Cabinet. This occasion constituted

\textsuperscript{76} King Hassan II, asserted on March 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 1998: “Considering that the one sitting on the thrown is the father of all and his party is the nation, it is him who oversees that the contest is open to all political currents, so they can compete through rotation in order to formulate the major choices which are set by sublime representative of the nation”. See the royal speech, \textit{al-Sahara}, 4-3-1998.
an important organizational instance to evaluate the participation of the party in government work. The political report, presented by the First Secretary and Prime Minister, Abderrahman al-Youssoufi, on behalf of the political bureau, spoke of the importance of this participation in the history of the party, and in the process of the democratic transition in Morocco. The convention also asserted that the political track that led to the “alternance” was not free of obstacles.

There appeared within the convention opposition currents to the line of the party and its political choices concerning the participation in the Cabinet, and to its ideological choices, especially that the party clearly asserted the adoption of socialist democracy as a means to change, which means moving closer to liberalism. The most important of these currents is the union current, headed by the First Secretary of the Confederation for Labor, Noubir al-Amawi, who led a corrective movement within the party. The movement ended by severing with the party and establishing a political party under the name of the National Ittihadi Congress. A second current, “Loyalty to Democracy” had heavily criticized the participation in government work. Its leaders called, in a statement published before the convention, for the necessity of organizing the currents within the party. With the party ignoring this demand, they established the “Loyalty to Democracy” party, which was headed by Muhammad al-Sassi, a former leading member of the Unionist Youth.

Disagreements among the components of the USFP deepened around the issue of participating in government work after the 2002 legislative elections, end of the mandate of the consensual Cabinet. The party won first place with fifty seats. It was expected of the King to nominate the Cabinet of Abderrahman al-Youssoufi, in order to continue the big projects it had launched. However, King Muhammad VI appointed a Prime Minister from outside the political parties. The political bureau asserted that this appointment constituted a departure from the democratic methodology, which requires the appointment of a prime minister from within the political parties, and from within the party that won the election. In the context of reading this appointment and the experience of the “consensual alternance” Cabinet, Abderrahman al-Youssoufi considered that the “alternance experience that Morocco knew in the last five years is nothing

but a repetition of past experiences\textsuperscript{78}. The “alternance” did not transcend itself through the September 7\textsuperscript{th}, 2002 elections, in the sense that the transition from consensual “alternance” to democratic “alternance” did not materialize\textsuperscript{79}.

The resignations of party leaders constituted another manifestation of the internal crisis of the USFP. The disagreements the party witnessed, due to not assigning a Prime Minister from the party after the 2002 legislative elections, led to the resignation of its First Secretary on October 27\textsuperscript{th}, 2003\textsuperscript{80}. Despite efforts to present this resignation as a form of interference by the Ministry of the Interior in the elections, it nonetheless reflected a sign of struggle between the elites within the socialist party. The same struggle caused Muhammad al-Yazighi, the first secretary, to resign after the results of the 2007 elections. He was subject to many criticisms for the way he ran the party and for making decisions on his own. These criticisms reached the point of directly asking him to step down, and demanded that the political bureau form a collective leadership of the party.

The USFP won thirty-eight seats in this legislative election, ranking fourth. This was a time to review the weight of the party and its status with voters. Thus, these results constituted an embodiment of the crisis of the party and one of its manifestations. The results deepened the struggle within the departments running the party, especially the political bureau, which managed the election process. Many readings tried to explain the receding electoral results of the party; regardless of the importance and the objectivity of these readings, these results are an indicator of the deep crisis within the party and its receding status. This crisis was consolidated by the acceptance of the party to participate in a Cabinet headed by the \textit{Istiqlâl} party.

The eighth convention of the party, held from 13\textsuperscript{th} to 15\textsuperscript{th} of June 2008, under the slogan “a revived party for new Morocco”, could have been a moment of “self dialogue and search in the common identity”\textsuperscript{81} and a moment

\textsuperscript{78} A. al-Youssoufi, “the real questions for democratic transition, result and horizons of the democratic experience in Morocco”, \textit{al-Ufuq al-Dîmuqrâtî magazine}, June 2004, p. 15 and up.

\textsuperscript{79} A. al-Youssoufi, “the real questions for democratic transition, result and horizons of the democratic experience in Morocco”, \textit{al-Ufuq al-Dîmuqrâtî magazine}, June 2004, p. 16.

\textsuperscript{80} Previously, A. al-Youssoufi had presented his resignation from the leadership of the party in 1993 in objection to the fraudulent interference of the Interior Ministry in the elections. The acting first secretary, M. al-Yazighi, took over the leadership of the party.

\textsuperscript{81} See the editorial of the USFP newspaper, \textit{al-Ittihâd al-ishtirakî}, 12-6-2008.
of “practicing self-criticism”. Nevertheless, this convention could not vote on anything besides the financial and conduct reports. Its work stopped when reaching the point of voting on the organizational decree. The convention was not able to finish its agenda, vote on its decrees or elect leadership. The leadership of the convention\(^{82}\) had to postpone the remaining tasks up to six months, during which the political bureau and the national council ran the party. The direct reasons for the failure of the USFP eighth conventions were the “obstruction of voting on the resolution adopting the list system”. This system is based on running for the position of First Secretary and membership of the political bureau on competing lists. As for the objective reasons for this failure, they are compounded with the organizational, ideological, political and other problems related to the leadership of the party overlapping. The failure of the first round of the eighth convention of the USFP manifested the depth of the crisis of this organization. This crisis will mortage its future while waiting for the second round. If the above-mentioned elements formed one of the manifestations of the crisis of the party, then how can we explain this crisis?

**Prelude to explaining the reasons for the crisis of the USFP**

Some departments of the party\(^{83}\) and some of its leaders issued documents trying to explain the reasons for the crisis the organization is going through\(^{84}\). The reading of these documents and the reading of the experience of the USFP, after its political transition into participating in the Cabinet, helps us explain the crisis of the socialist union, which is summarized in three points.

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82 See text of the statement to postpone the 8\(^{th}\) convention, USFP, 17-6-2008.
83 I refer here to the following documents in particular: the November 28, 2003 document issued by the political bureau after the resignation of Abderrahman al-Youssoufi. See text of document, *Nawāfīz magazine*, 22-23 April 2004, p. 166-178; the *Special report on the 2007 elections*, on November 17, 2007; documents issued by the preparatory committee for the USFP 8\(^{th}\) convention, *Proposed project about the identity, the identity committee, proposed project about activating party capacity the preparatory committee, and the project about political and institutional set up for the convention, institutional and political committee.*
84 I refer here to the following documents in particular: USFP, *Open initiative for reconstructing the USFP and the left*, Casablanca, December 29-30, 2007, a document signed by more than 100 militants, and USFP of Casablanca, *Our responsibilities document*, the political file, January 2\(^{nd}\), 2008.
The first point has to do with lack of internal democracy. Theoretically, the principal and internal rules of the USFP lay the foundation for a political party that is based on democratic principals such as separation between decision-making departments and managing departments, rotation of responsibility within the party, not combining many tasks, and respect for rotation of leadership positions. Nevertheless, on the practical level it is noted that the party knows a sort of despotism of some leaders in making decisions and lack of respect for separation among decision-making and managing departments, where the jurisdictions of the political bureau permeate the remaining departments. The absence of internal democracy results in not accepting differences within the party. This leads to internal divisions.

The second point for explaining the crisis of the USFP is summed up in lack of theoretical analysis of the political transformations the party is witnessing. The USFP entered government work without a clear vision of the nature of this participation and of its limitations. Even ten years after entering government work, the experience remained without theoretical accompaniment and without the profound thought that facilitates the process of designing a new identity for the party. Comparing documents of the conventions the party held after its engagement in government work with the revolutionary choice document and the ideological report helps us assert that the party is in need of deep theoretical analysis.

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85 The November 28th, 2003 document asserted the following: “We lived in the shadow of historical leaderships an atmosphere of unanimous agreement which had its merits, but it burdened the party with negatives that greatly contributed in the growth of the phenomena of ring and factions formation, selfishness, wasting time on side battles and the lack of clear control mechanisms for treating and accountability. Time has come at the start of this new phase to set in motion the rules for democratic management, such as election, competition and guaranteeing the minority rights”. See “The November 28, 2003 document”, Nawâfiż magazine, 22-23 April 2004, p.168.

86 See: M. al-Sassi, “the current internal democratic crisis of the socialist union-manifestations of remedy suggestions”, Nawâfiż magazine, n°9-8, 2008, p. 30 and up.

87 The document of the proposed project about the identity of the 8th convention of the USFP asserted the following: "The only way for proper dealing with the problem of identity within the party, in a way that spares the experiences of bitter, past divisions is the commitment to internal democracy first and the respect of the organizational control mechanisms we agree on”.

88 November 28th, 2003 document asserted that, “The rearrangement of the internal house can not be done without reinvigorating intellectual and cultural diligence within the party in order to define its identity and reference”, See text of document, Nawâfiż magazine, 22-23, April 2004, p. 169.
analysis that goes along with its practices. This makes the identity paradox within the organization a deeper one\(^89\).

The third point for explaining the crisis of the USFP goes back essentially to the betting by the party on the government and the marginalization of society. The November 23, 2003 document asserted that the “USFP was one of the few parties that infiltrated the Moroccan social fabric. Its organizations, reputation and symbols reached all over Morocco and entered every Moroccan household. However, in the last few years the party recorded a sort of recline in nourishing its ranks with new generations and energies”\(^90\). Similarly, the proposed political and organizational resolution for the eighth convention of the party asserted that the “concentration of the party on participating in parliamentary and governmental affairs, at the expense of continuous mass formation of citizens in the neighborhoods, labor sectors, popular organizations, associations and unions. This contributed to the party becoming like the other parties; it works on a seasonal basis, depending on circumstances and emergencies, especially mass representation and parliamentary occasions”\(^91\).

**CONCLUSION**

Since its establishment, the USFP went through different phases that reflected on its ability to interact with its surroundings and with social variables. The party moved, during its first phase of establishment, from a brief instance of coexistence with the monarchy, to confrontation with it, which was marked by conflict and struggle about legitimacy. The party then moved, after its sixth founding convention, to the evolutionary phase, in which it worked on clarifying its ideological project and its democratic choice by agreeing to participate in representative institutions within the framework of constitutional legitimacy. Nevertheless, the principal political transition in the history of the party

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89 The proposed report about the identity of the 8\(^{th}\) convention of the USFP asserted the following: “The USFP of Popular Forces is holding its 8\(^{th}\) convention, is not fully aware of the necessity of pausing at the paradox of the party identity”.


91 See: *The proposed political and organizational resolution*, the preparatory committee for the 8\(^{th}\) convention of the USFP, 2008, p. 8.
remains its move to participate in government work, alongside a monarchy it once tried to overthrow. Each of these phases reflected on the organizational and structural makeup of the party: the instance of confrontation produced a closed organization with multiple leaderships. The moment of participation in representative institutions produced an open organization, which enabled the party, at some point in its history, to increase its ability to form cadres and amass support. However, the instance of participation in government work reflected negatively on the organizational and structural makeup of the party. This in turn reflected on the status and role of the party within society. The cost to the party of participating in the exercise of power in its managerial limits in the course of an encompassing and ruling monarchy took its toll on the party.

Analyzing the courses of transitions of this party constituent from one position to another helps us see the confined roles and limited function of political parties within a political system marked by the existence of a ruling, arbitrating and encompassing monarchy based on personalization and unification of authority and its inability to omit. We also conclude that the contribution of the party constituent and its role in the transition of the political system and accomplishing democracy depend on the availability of conditions for this transition. Some of these conditions are related to the political system as a whole and some others depend on the party constituent.

Concerning the political system, the expected “transition towards democracy” depends on the existence of a democratic Constitution based on institutionalism of authority, instead of personalizing it, its allocation instead of its centralization and its rotation instead of monopolizing it. There can be no democracy without a democratic Constitution based on the separation of authorities and on mechanisms for power transfer and rotation in its exercise, and on expanding the sphere of rights and freedoms. As for the level of party constituent, the contribution of the political party in the course of transition towards democracy depends on the necessity of the internal evolution of this component and the necessity of holding its organizational and cadre formation structures accountable and subjecting them to democratic standards and their mechanisms. The contribution to the transformation of the system and demanding democracy starts by achieving this transformation within the party organization itself. No party constituents that do not function according to the logic of democracy on the internal level can contribute to building democracy.

The USFP leaders tried - for the first time in their history - to hold their last
convention, the eighth convention in July 2008, in a democratic way through which the principal of the sovereignty of the convention could be respected. The convention was held without prior agreements on the person of the leader, the members of the divisions that run the party and on the future political orientation of the party, but it failed to make of the eighth convention an instant of democratic transition at the level of the highest of its deciding cadres.

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The Islamic Movement and Its Chances of Developing into a Party: 
The Case of Al-Wefâq National Islamic Society in Bahrain

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Al-Wefâq National Islamic Society (Jam‘iyya al-wefâq al-watani al-islâmiyya) is a relatively new organization in Bahrain and was established as a logical response to the spirit of political openness resulting from the National Action Charter of 2001. Al-Wefâq Society and other political opposition associations deemed that the security détente and the initiation of national reconciliation were part of the political outcome of calls for reform heralded by Islamic and national movements since August 1975. This interpretation allowed al-Wefâq Society to define itself as an essential participant in this national reconciliation process and was responsible to some extent for preserving and exploiting this reconciliation in order to serve the Society’s political ambitions. It thus seeks to emerge as an essential component of the political power structure by being represented in the cabinet, and the National Assembly’s Chamber of Deputies and Shûra Council. In so doing, the Society abides by a peaceful policy that rejects violence so as to display moderateness, to commit to acting in good faith, and to contribute to the realization of its reform platform within the framework of a political regime based on a mixture of tribal patriarchal patterns and manifestations of political modernization.

Since Bahrain gained its independence in 1971, the ruling regime sought to offer democratic concessions, calling for electing a constituent assembly in order to draft the country’s constitution in 1973, which was followed by

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National Assembly elections in 1974. However, this experience was short-lived, as the government dissolved the National Assembly and suspended the implementation of some articles of the 1973 constitution. It thus refused to abide by the State Security Law until this law was abrogated under the National Action Charter, which stipulated the resumption of parliamentary life, albeit without providing clear guarantees regarding the hierarchy and prerogatives of the legislative power. Political forces had to make do with other guarantees, mainly a statement by the then-Justice minister asserting that the Chamber of Deputies was the holder of legislative power and confining the appointed Shûra Council to consultative functions. Constitutional amendments passed in February 2002 were disappointing for the opposition and democratic forces, as these amendments gave the elected parliament equal prerogatives to the appointed Shûra Council, and, in an unexpected move, extended the king’s direct prerogatives.

Even though al-Wefâq Society achieved a sweeping victory in the local and parliamentary elections by winning the majority of seats, it was only reluctantly acknowledged as an official political party by the government, which still refuses to admit the existence of any opposition to it, or by other pro-government parties, according to whom the Society was bargaining for more than it deserved. The limitations imposed on the formation of executive power and the failure of political alliances within the Chamber of Deputies eventually led to the endurance of the government’s impunity and the slackening of the democratic process. As a result, there are confused opinions within al-Wefâq Society manifested in the statements of the Society’s secretary general, which, at times, consider withdrawal from the Chamber of Deputies, and, at others, examine the possibility of the bloc members’ resignation, or even threaten to take to the streets as a means of applying political pressure.

This study seeks to examine the experience of the Islamic Shiite movement on the level of partisan organizations in Bahrain and the role of this experience in the development of the democratic process by studying the case of al-Wefâq. The study also aims to look into al-Wefâq’s policies and options in the Bahraini political landscape, and the resulting problematic issues pertaining to the political system and its status within the framework of the democratic process, not to mention those problematic issues related to the religious referential authority and the extent of its influence within the Islamic movement and local society. It also compares the dynamics within al-Wefâq’s organizational structure in light of those that prevailed prior to the Society’s establishment, or what is traditionally referred to as the Islamic movement. Based on these results, the effects of the
partisan experience as organized by the 2005 law for political associations on
the internal structure of *al-Wefāq* were evaluated, as the Islamic movement’s
rhetoric targeted the State in lieu of the Islamic state. Islamic political elites
interacted with the idea of the constitution as an essential component of
political rhetoric, and all this was exploited in exercising the most important of
democratic prerogatives: political representation within *al-Wefāq* or on the level
of parliamentary and municipal elections. In this respect, the performance of
*al-Wefāq* bloc in the Chamber of Deputies is examined, along with the results of
this experience on the organizational and popular levels.

The study also tackles the methods used by *al-Wefāq* Society to recruit new
members and choose its leadership and political executives on the one hand,
and, on the other, their repercussions on the Society’s electoral and popular
empowerment.

**STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS**

**The establishment of *al-Wefāq* Society**

The idea of establishing *al-Wefāq* Society arose from the conflict with the
government based on the Society’s Islamic identity and in light of the confrontation
with the government’s totalitarian policy. The Society’s establishment rhetoric
also relied heavily on the slogan of putting things in order within the Shiite
community. The Islamic movement in its current shape began to spread toward
the end of the 1980s, and particularly after 1990, at a time when a series of
variables aided the popular expansion of the Islamic phenomenon, knowing that
it had earlier spread as youths and groups were affected by the Islamic awakening.
These Islamic cells had their own strategy for expanding the Islamic awakening
into villages and cities by exploiting some religious rites and ceremonies, especially
those of *‘Ashura*, when, in addition to centralized guidance, centralized convoys
were set up in the capital to act as media and mobilization platforms. These
cells were tasked with distributing religious classes over all Bahraini regions to
train new executives who would serve the cause of the Islamic movement¹. As a
result of these measures, supporters of the Islamic movement grew in number.

¹ Exclusive interview with a top executive, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008.
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However, while its popularity seemed to increase, the movement lacked structure or institutionalization due to the undercover aspect of its actions and to the prevalence of a spirit of leadership over internal and peer-to-peer relations.

Within less than five years, the Islamic movement had managed to provide itself with new executives to lead its social and political actions in addition to the old generation of executives coming from the Islamic Call Society, which was established by Baqer al-Sadr in Iraq in 1957 based on jurisprudential foundations and on the Guardianship of the Jurist (wilâyat al-faqîh). This generation of executives remained faithful to the methodology of the Islamic Call Society even after the party’s internal resolution to dissolve itself in 1983. While its popularity was on the rise, this broad-ranging movement obviously lacked sociopolitical integration structures. Yet this did not prevent the multiplication of functions and of means of religious education and mobilization, nor did it hamper its capacity to sponsor common causes. This gave the Islamic movement a counter-power guaranteeing communication with some channels of participation, integration and expression that was independent from the authorities.

Drawing a comparison between the two stages characterizing the Islamic movement may shed light on some of the dynamics within these movements. In the 1980s, the Islamic movement was actually subjected to very harsh censure, which hindered its expansion. We are not talking here about religious commitment, which was – by and large – spreading following the successful Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979; rather, what we mean is linking this religious sentiment to local or international political objectives.

The absence of a minimum amount of democracy and the atmosphere of oppression were an essential hindrance to the spread of the Islamic movement and its capacity to establish sociopolitical support networks. The same reason explained the movement’s extremist rhetoric, which was almost hostile to the ruling regime. Nevertheless, the situation evolved in the early 1990s, as the regime eased its oppressiveness, allowing some aspects of tolerance within the social and political fabric and acting on the suggestions of some international parties to introduce political modernization into the political system. These measures allowed many Islamic movement executives to return to Bahrain from exile, whereas those who had been imprisoned resumed action, albeit with a less edgy political spirit that moved them farther away from their former extremism. Hence, the Islamic movement adopted a local rhetoric tackling domestic issues, such as unemployment, poverty and political problems, especially political participation.
and the reorganization of the political system. In contrast, it retained its own mobilization rhetoric, taking advantage of the wave of democracy that prevailed in the early 1990s. During this period, societal and Islamic call rhetoric rose once again to prominence after it had been overshadowed by the Islamic state.

The evolution of totalitarian dynamics (clashes, turning to the past) into local ones (alliance, planning) takes into account the developments that occurred. While this evolution guaranteed the Islamic movement’s popular expansion and consolidated its ties with religious leaders, it still failed to produce different internal dynamics from those underlying the establishment of the movement’s cells. Indeed, religious influence and eminence is acquired through obedience, attachment, execution of orders and recommendations (al-taslîm, acceptance), as well as through seeking the company of and remaining close to religious leaders (al-bazwa, privilege). This pattern is still in force, in addition to subjecting peer-to-peer relations to personal points of view as a criterion of preference and subsequent hierarchical ascent within the movement or organization (al-shakhsana, personalization). A mere disagreement was enough to cause estrangement, exclusion, secession and unilateral action.

Prior to the deterioration of the security and political situation at the end of 1994, the Islamic movement lacked political structure; rather, there were higher circles of clerics leading multiple and scattered groups of youths who carried out their commandments and sociopolitical orders. One such example is the protest staged by the unemployed in front of the Ministry of Labor in August 1994 based on Sheikh Ali Salman’s sermon in which he called on them to come out and reveal their true number so as to pressure the government into creating job opportunities. However, it was originally a test of the scope of the clerics’ influence and how it could be used in more substantial political plans, such as signing a popular petition in November of that year. The circle of clerics managed, in cooperation with youth groups, to gather more than 25,000 signatures.

Many observers and analysts of the deterioration of the security situation in 1994 fail to notice this link and the intense mobilization that prevailed throughout the previous period. The tension burst when Sheikh Ali Salman was arrested. At first, acts of contestation were meant to express opposition to this violation of the national movement’s identity; the clerics thought they could release Sheikh Ali as they had done months before following the protest of the unemployed, when he was arrested and subsequently released under the political pressure
they had sponsored. As a result of the confusion between the circle of clerics and the Popular Petition Committee, which was characterized by its national aspect, the committee’s demands were adopted by the protesters. Promoting the constitution and meeting the demands of the popular petition were added to that of releasing Sheikh Ali Salman, who nonetheless remained in custody until he was deported in January 1995.

Against a backdrop of continuing security incidents and the prevalence of official violence, political parties were sorted differently from in previous periods. The Islamic Shiite movement, thus, became an integral part of the opposition, taking the lead on the political, media and organizational levels based on the tacit approval of the remaining political organizations.

One of the results of these security incidents, which went on for five years, was their consolidation of the mechanisms that produce religious and political leaders and their promotion of internal dynamics (acceptance, privilege, personalization) that gained in importance compared to the previous period. Imprisonment and torture greatly aided this process. The activities of a political leader who proved his worth exposed him to imprisonment or exile, thus investing him with a new experience and authority, and cementing his status within the community and on the political landscape. Imprisonment is, therefore, one of the most important sources of capital and privilege for a political leader (al-Zahi, 2003, p. 252).

The Islamic movement took a sharp turn and entered a new period with the National Action Charter, which marked the emergence of new political events and parameters, such as the role and activities of all-inclusive national institutions, the election of a legislative council and municipal councils, and the emergence of some factors pointing to the end of existing political formations, albeit without their being replaced by new ones. The main political evolution was the focus on the rhetoric of “national dialogue and unity”, and the burgeoning of a general optimistic mood, which encompassed all national forces operating within the country and abroad.

It is against this general backdrop that a group of influential members of the Islamic movement sought to establish a political entity through which the movement would confront prospective challenges and manage the permanent tension between the parties to the Islamic movement and other political forces. Whether before or after the vote on the National Action Charter in February 2001, religious figures repeatedly asserted the Islamic movement’s wish for all-
out political participation, especially considering that the extensive support it enjoyed allowed it to spread its activities and hegemony to vast areas of the country and various elements of society. Accordingly, the founders of al-Wefâq Society held intensive – and at first secret – meetings in order to develop a new formula organizing the movement’s action. The latest upheaval had given rise to field leaders with rich and dearly paid-for experiences in political struggle, but it failed to foster the emergence of political leaders who were capable of managing the political and demand-oriented conflict (Rahiba, 2007, p. 452).

Here, it is worth mentioning several issues that played a major role in the formation of al-Wefâq Society, namely:

- The leftist initiative to establish the National Democratic Action Society urged the founding members to hold intensive meetings in order to attach themselves to the leftist movement, and, through the law pertaining to civil associations, allowed the possibility of taking part in political life.

- The list of objectives submitted by the members to the Ministry of Labor was devoid of any clear political aim, using volunteer work instead to tackle all objectives as the key to political action.

- The founders of this new organization and its identity were predominantly Shiite, in a clear indication of its spiritual relation with the religious referential authority represented by Sheikh Issa Qassem. This led to several obstacles to which the new formation was confronted. Some, in fact, saw in it the start of sectarian structures, thus resulting in the formation of Sunni political associations in what amounted to a dangerous relinquishment of the principles underlying the National Action Charter and national unity (Bashmi, 2002, p. 213).

- The list of founding members sought to achieve maximum representation of different components of society and included tradesmen, technocrats (educated people) and partisans. It also strived to represent the various factions of the Islamic Shiite movement. Nevertheless, the mechanism in force for choosing these members was unclear, as several people who had

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3 Exclusive interview with Toufic Riachy on May 29, 2008 and Dr. Mohammad Said on June 3, 2008.
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organized the preliminary meetings were left out. This choice was made based primarily on private knowledge of the individual without there being any code of conduct governing political action and its requirements of competence and ability to manage internal and external conflict.

The new formula of *al-Wefâq* Society did not cancel or suspend the previous one, and was only drafted by the Initiative Committee several months following the first elections within the Society. This is best proven by Abdel Wahhab Hussein, one of the Society’s founders and an Initiative Committee leader, who said, “The Initiative Committee is a Shiite opposition movement dedicated to overt action and undertaking to reject any covert actions due to their dangerous nature and to its intimate belief in the importance of overt action under the law.”

The founders managed to secure the Ministry of Labor’s registration consent, and a date was set to elect the Society’s Board of Directors by founding members only. Twenty-five members out of a total of 117 ran for 11 board seats. The Ministry of Labor approved the registration request on November 1, 2001, and three years after having been notified of this consent, *al-Wefâq* Society decided to elect its 11 board members on November 28, 2001, emphasizing that 25 candidates would be competing and that elections would be limited this time to founders only. Here, one cannot overlook the fact that these elections were free from prior guidelines that were imposed on voters so as to portray to the public an image highlighting *al-Wefâq* Society as a political and social representative of all components and sections of society. This is illustrated by the elected members’ official background, as the first Board of Directors encompassed most components and sections of society. This formula was used to consolidate the Society’s influence and extend its power not only on the social level, but also on the level of relations with other political parties. The Board of Directors promoted this exemplary image by forming 16 committees covering all activities and fields, and the Society thus came to resemble a shadow ministry in democratic governments.

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4 For further details on the initiative committee, refer to Rabiha (2007, p. 442).
5 The elections were held on time in the Scheherazade Hall in the presence of 106 out of 117 founding members and representatives from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the local media, and reporters from foreign press agencies. The following 11 members were elected: Sheikh Ali Salman, Hassan Mshaymeh, Dr. Nizar Al-Baharina, architect Jawad Feiruz, attorney Abdel Shafeef Khalaf, Mohsen Moussawi, Sheikh Abdel Nabi Ali Abdel Hassan, Dr. Abed Ali Mohammad Hassan, Sheikh Jassem Al-Khayyat, Dr. Abed Al-Jaleel Al-Sankis and architect Jalal Feiruz.
In reality, this proliferation of committees adequately provided for the allotment of functions to the various components of the alliances composing al-Wefāq. Yet it eventually fell short of its purpose, as these committees proved to be deficiently productive due to their limited prerogatives compared to those of the Board of Directors. Moreover, the reform platform lost momentum at quite an early stage of al-Wefāq’s lifetime, and this, in addition to the promulgation of the 2002 constitution, sowed confusion within these committees. All eyes turned then to the constitutional amendments, and all other issues were overlooked, including the political empowerment of women and the training of youths.

There was an opportunity for the elected Board of Directors to form the nucleus of a party that would be open to further development, especially considering that the board was now endowed with prerogatives equivalent to those of the General Secretariat according to the new rules of procedure. Indeed, it would have been possible to take advantage of the electoral power of the Board of Directors instead of the current appointment system in the General Secretariat, to spread the “one man, one vote” system and to benefit from the board’s particular blend of individuals, who, on the one hand, were opposed to the interference of the religious institution in party decisions, and, on the other, enjoyed an electoral power that was equal to all kinds of traditional power based on internal dynamics (acceptance, privilege, personalization).

**Institutionalization within al-Wefāq Society**

The establishment of al-Wefāq Society represented a genuine challenge to the political establishment and to its ability to address the requirements of political modernization and sociopolitical developments within Bahraini society. Ever since it was established, the Islamic movement was convinced of the need to transform itself into an institutionalized movement where behavioral patterns and values would be defined as constants, a movement guaranteeing the greatest share of social work ethics with equal chances, rights and duties based on a clear and accurate description of responsibility, missions and autonomy. Al-Wefāq Society tested several rules of procedure, introducing amendments to internal measures from time to time in order to develop its institutional structure and democratize itself. The problem was that al-Wefāq merely understood institutionalization in its bureaucratic shape and the function performed by administrative bureaucracy. Hence, it glossed over or failed to explain the concept of bureaucracy, which it aimed to attain through its efforts.
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*Al-Wefâq* Society is still a young political organization, and is, therefore, exposed to the threat of breakup as pressure intensifies or as potential political changes occur, such as with the State Security Law or the disruption of civil peace, or even when some security services harassed the opposition as it engaged in political action. This explains certain phenomena within the Society, such as calling for replacing leaders with younger or second-generation figures. While it is true that *al-Wefâq* executive officials are mostly over 40, such phenomena are nonetheless considered recent in the history of the Society.

This gap between the organization’s age and those of its members made it very difficult to abide by institutional logic, for executive officials and leaders often held recourse to their experiences prior to *al-Wefâq*’s establishment as a basis for measures and policy-making. Many *al-Wefâq* leaders continued deriving inspiration from their former experiences in order to confront obstacles and challenges, and, according to several examples, experiences should be carefully chosen, especially those that contribute to the consolidation of power and influence within the organization. This behavior primarily aimed to confront challenges and obstacles. Covertly, however, these were defense measures so as to confront institutional requirements, such as the alternation of power within the party or the replacement of party leaders with others from a different generation. In contrast, some – younger – members did not have any historic experience, but rather a modern practical knowledge. These members attempted to implement their knowledge within the organization on the political level while challenging the others’ historic experience. This threw into question *al-Wefâq*’s capacity to maintain its functions and objectives in light of the growing wish to preserve its organizational structure.

When the 2005 law for political associations was issued, the Society could become more accurate in defining its objectives. Prior to this law, associations registered under the law for civil associations were banned from clearly proclaiming their political objectives. However, according to the new rules of procedure, they were now able to be explicit about the political representation of Bahraini citizens, their participation in decision-making, and their support of the power alternation principle, thus edging nearer than ever to the functions of a political party.

*Al-Wefâq* Society has seemingly achieved none of its objectives. For instance, it has not attained its objective of representing new sections of society; rather,
several factions left the organization and chose to quit politics. Still, this does not mean that the Society is walking down the path of intransigence. Indeed, this was merely the start of an organizational experience following a period of discontinuity and a popular experience that went against the organizational trend, not to mention the pressure exerted by the political regime. We would be wholly mistaken to try \textit{al-Wefâq} Society based on the output of a complete democratic system.

Against a backdrop of few chances for adaptation, \textit{al-Wefâq} strived to ameliorate the hierarchy of its organizational units. Its internal order thus developed from a simple structure composed of a general assembly electing a board of directors, which in turn formed special committees, into a system based on three organizational levels: First comes an upper level composed of two organisms, the General Secretariat appointed by the secretary general, who in turn is elected by the General Congress; and \textit{al-Wefâq} Consultative Council\footnote{According to the rules of procedure, the council is composed of 30 members in the first session, and the General Congress has the right to examine the possibility of increasing this number in subsequent sessions. The General Congress elects Consultative Council members by secret ballot for four years, except for the first session when the membership of half of the representatives who scored the lowest number of votes is terminated two years into the session.}, which oversees the activities of the General Secretariat and the actions of the parliamentary and municipal bloc. The second level is made up of the General Congress and the Arbitration Committee, and the third is composed of the committees emanating from the General Secretariat or the Consultative Council, which represent the base along with the members who are not represented in any of these levels.

The complicated aspect of the rules of procedure and their availability as a written reference that defines the prerogatives of each of the Society’s units gave additional vitality to internal democracy. This was manifested by the fact that any divergence of opinions would be resolved based on the rules of procedure, and conflicts would often be resolved or postponed due to objections raised by the other party in light of the Society’s bylaws, even though it exacerbated sensitivities in some cases. This was the case when Deputy Secretary General Hassan Mshaymeh took the initiative to participate in a seminar on Bahrain held in London in 2006. During this seminar, he expressed views that were not publicly adopted by \textit{al-Wefâq}, thus triggering a violent wave of criticism against the Society. Secretary General
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Sheikh Ali Salman then said that the opinion expressed in the seminar was a personal one that did not reflect that of the Society based on its rules of procedure, whereby the secretary general, rather than his deputy, represents the Society. This hierarchical development was in conformity with the democratic character of any political party, thus providing the basis for al-Wefâq’s action. Nevertheless, things were not this simple, as this hierarchy was supposed to have an active and present function, which al-Wefâq Society failed to ensure. Many organizational units did not attend the meetings regularly, knowing that the quorum was seldom complete. One of these units, namely the Monitoring Committee, even paid some of its members for projects they did not complete. Upon closer scrutiny of these internal dynamics, it appears that many organizational levels were not playing their role as they should have, since they were subordinate to the General Secretariat, which was being monopolized by the secretary general, as reported by several members.

Due to this functional imbalance, the Society did not manage to avert secessions at quite an early stage of its life. This imbalance also translated in the fact that the abovementioned levels lost confidence in and respect for their respective roles. For instance, members of the Parliamentary Bloc did not take kindly to having Shûra Council members monitor their work, justifying this reluctance by invoking the lack of parliamentary experience, which was relatively new for al-Wefâq Society.

According to many observers, discussing the reasons underlying the functional deterioration of organizational levels against a backdrop of organizational intricacy merely refers to self-rule or autonomy. Self-rule is an indicator of the Society’s independence and its dealings with other social or political organizations. In contrast, its actions may be subordinated (Huntington, 1968, p. 34) to other

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7 The seminar is held annually in the House of Lords and participation in it is a highly controversial issue in Bahraini circles, thus forcing political associations to issue a clarification statement afterward. Refer to: “Statement of the Democratic Action Society” (in Arabic) dated September 4, 2005. Another seminar held in 2003 also led to major controversy, Gulf News, August 29, 2003.

8 Mohammad Said, former member of the al-Wefâq Political Committee, exclusive interview, May 28, 2008.

9 Exclusive interview with a member of the al-Wefâq on condition of anonymity, May 28, 2008.
social forces supporting or overlapping it, especially the Islamic Scholars’ Council. Despite its religious character, the council plays a major political role based on its conviction that religion and politics are intricately related. It has, for example, issued many political statements, some of which were behind its participation in the 2006 parliamentary and municipal elections. The particular statement issued at the time was: “Despite all crises and tensions on the political and security levels, and despite all obstacles, the Islamic Scholars’ Council believes that participation in the elections is the best option, allowing it to confront this situation with all its complications and to foil strife, exclusion and sequestration schemes.”

The council issued another statement following the proclamation of election results, calling for national consensus and urging political forces who failed to reach parliament to play their political role from outside parliament.

This confusion can be explained as follows: First, both formations are based on the Islamic referential authority and the harmonious vision of mixing religion and politics; second, they enjoy an aura of strength and influence among the popular mass of supporters who also back al-Wefâq; and third, the Shiites, upon examining their situation in Bahrain, consider themselves a community with grievances, which can be addressed only through multiple power sources outside the framework of the State. Hence, many al-Wefâq members and supporters hold this overlapping as perfectly normal and find its natural explanation in the close relation between al-Wefâq and the religious authority, emphasizing the latter’s role in the Society’s political decision-making process. In contrast, some do not hide their aversion for such a degree of overlapping, considering that Sheikh Issa Qassem’s opinions and instructions generally transform into decisions adopted within al-Wefâq General Secretariat.

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10 This council is composed of the most prominent Shiite scholars in Bahrain. Established in 2004, it defines itself as an Islamic scholars’ committee endowed with the mission of caring for the Society on the individual and social levels in keeping with a comprehensive and integrated Islamic religious vision. In order to gain membership, the cleric is required to have reached advanced levels of erudition, whereas membership of the Central Committee requires the candidate to have spent at least five years in research. The council is composed of five divisions organizing its executive action. For additional details, refer to the council’s official website: http://www.olamaa.ne


and, thus become binding for all the associations that are allied with it. This has a negative impact on political and demand-oriented action in Bahrain now and in the future (Rahiba, 2007, p. 456).

**Diversity within *al-Wefâq***

The question is: How did *al-Wefâq* manage its former diversity, and why was diversity frozen in favor of one opinion? Did its institutional dimension contribute to the imitation of democracy within it? A closer look at *al-Wefâq*’s developmental course is most likely to reveal that the vanishing of some positive signs from the Society’s inner circles and the waning of some democratic dynamics in favor of more traditional ones were due to the receding rate of networks based on individual interests in return for increasing chances for the community, which forms a cohesive social unit, hence the possibility of shaping it into a closed, static formation.

For further details, one can draw a comparison between two stages of *al-Wefâq*’s short lifespan, i.e. between the board of directors that had been in force ever since its establishment and the new rules of procedure that were adopted following the Society’s registration under the law for political associations. The board of directors was a strong, elected body that was home to conflicting points of view, each of which sought to exert political pressure that would reflect its strength to the masses. Furthermore, there were no major constraints imposed by the bylaws, which led to relations inter pares that lacked a reasonable dose of internal distribution of roles. Conflicts were settled, therefore, only by speaking in the Society’s name or by opting for secession from it. The first such secession came as a result of demands to grant educated members and clerics (the Scholars’ Council) equal power, knowing that the same reason holds true for the second secession as well. The difference is that the first group had no power or influence whatsoever outside the Board of Directors, and it had a weak support base among members. *Al-Wefâq* was, thus, little affected by this secession. In contrast, the second one was led by influential and hawkish symbolic figures who played a decisive role in taking steps that went against government decisions.

The withdrawal of hawkish members from the Society spelled the end of any dissenting or different voices and spoke of dwindling chances of finding any lone internal networks in favor of the so-called theory of accumulation (gradual
advancement), whereby individuals are controlled by the other members and subjected to the requirements of their roles. This justifies the quasi-monopoly on power by the secretary general and the scholars based on the principle that different roles and disparities among power levels lead to greater harmony and better production.

Since the General Secretariat is, under the new rules of procedure, appointed by the secretary general, the latter is endowed with greater power, one that is elected by the General Congress. Given the weakness of other units, such as the Consultative Council and the Arbitration Committee, members can, as some have already done, detach themselves and relinquish any action or follow a fatalist path that does not believe in the power of change and rejectionism.

**The Constitution and Elections**

The momentum behind the establishment of *al-Wefâq* relied entirely on participation in the parliamentary elections and on securing major political gains for the Islamic movement, in addition to its providing an adequate space for the implementation of its Islamic and political agenda. Its acceptance of – or strong belief in – the elections led to the evolution of the concept of control and power from the theory of the Islamic state to that of the Islamic society, as well as to the promotion of the Islamic movement’s constitutional situation. We will endeavor to describe the electoral experience of *al-Wefâq* and its consequences.

**Turning to society**

According to the Islamic interpretation, the relation between the State and society was deteriorating because the State lacked a good political system, i.e. the Islamic model. The victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 further consolidated this conviction both in terms of knowledge and practice, thus allowing the prevalence of ideas picturing an Islamic state and system as a political alternative. From the end of the 1970s to the mid-1990s, an Islamic state and it virtues were the basis of the Islamic movement’s political rhetoric, whether in religious sermons or in the ongoing process of religious education in most Bahraini regions.
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It is worth mentioning that the Bahraini knowledge-production process did not create any specific cultural product; rather, it still relied on the production of other Islamic movements and on general knowledge about the Islamic state, or the so-called Islamic government. This is due to the Islamic movement’s self-perception compared to similar Islamic groups as a part within a whole, and to its belief that Islamic thinking is unique and applicable everywhere and at all times. In fact, the closer a political movement is to the local reality, the harder it seeks to retain its specificity within the framework of the general picture. This drove the Islamic movement at the time to adapt its theses to the more general ones, as it had developed an interest in public and world issues, albeit with none to address on the local level. Local rhetoric flared up in the early 1990s and eventually triggered a reevaluation of statements and objectives within the Islamic movement. Indeed, regional circumstances were recorded, starting with the end of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988, the debate over democracy following Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990, and the emergence of elite youths among Islamic action leaders in the shape of clerics returning from the hawza (traditional religious school) of Qom with local and world objectives. All of the above reasons urged Islamic leaders to undertake to this assessment and look for some local position to be used as support for integrating the State.

One of the results of this assessment was that Islamic movement leaders joined a national alliance (the Popular Petition Committee) aimed at restoring parliament and political participation with others in order to resolve the crisis plaguing the State and society. Yet a minimum of guarantees of democracy and civil peace were enough to stress the Islamic movement’s pivotal slogan of a good society instead of a good State.

This transformation was more clearly and strikingly outlined in the general platform, which defined al-Wefâq’s vision of the political system “during Imam Mahdi’s absence as one where the nation’s referential authority chooses its governments based on consultations among its components and on taking advantage of the modern democratic mechanisms that were developed by various human experiences through legal methods and peaceful political tools in order to ensure the alternation of power under the constitutional monarchy.” Al-Wefâq currently believes in “building a modern nation and good governance that guarantees the people’s participation in decision-making while upholding the

13 For further details about this committee and its underlying aspects, refer to Rabiha (2007), Marhoun [et al] (2007).
principles of freedom, justice and equality in keeping with the Islamic vision.” The strategic aim underpinning this vision is “a political system based on the constitutional monarchy, the rule of law and separation of powers”, a system where “citizenship – rather than racial, tribal or sectarian distinction – matters most.”

It is still difficult to complete this transformation and relinquish other principles that counter the concept of the nation’s being the master of its own self, especially since such rhetoric seems to be quite condensed and purposeful, such as the declarations made by Sheikh Issa Qassem on several occasions. In truth, speeches tackling the Guardianship of the Jurist (wilāyat al-faqīh) theory, made by some referential religious authorities for whom al-Wefaq is much obliged should not prevent us from realizing the importance of this transition, its positive outcomes and the possibility of developing it at the service of the democratic process and national integration. This transformation is actually necessary, and even inevitable, in the case of the Islamic movement in Bahrain for the following reasons: First, there is no realistic chance of forming an Islamic state in Bahrain; and second, the process of striking political alliances with parties that reject the principle of an Islamic state in the first place compels the Islamic movement to look for common ground.

One also notes that there are no Sunni or non-Shiite members of al-Wefaq. In light of the divisions plaguing society, which relies on traditional circles for sociopolitical education, any demands in this respect would eventually undermine any kind of citizen education or – in many cases – would transform citizenship into a hybrid product to be violated for the benefit of primary communities.

The constitutional vision

What is the secret behind the attachment of al-Wefaq to its constitutional demands and to making the decennial constitution one of its strategic objectives?

This vision is justified for several reasons, the first of which is that the Islamic

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15 For additional information, refer to Al-Mershed (2002).
movement considers it has been entrusted with overseeing the 1973 Constitution. Furthermore, the religious bloc that took part in the 1972 Constituent Assembly elections left its distinct imprint on the constitution, especially with regard to defining the State’s identity according to Islamic and Arab standards. This dimension acquires a special importance upon examining the positions of political movements vis-à-vis the Constituent Assembly and their call for boycotting the elections in 2002 at a time when the Islamic movement used to represent a political minority on the political landscape. For the Islamic movement and al-Wefâq, the fact that Islamic movements acknowledged the referential status of the 1973 constitution is a victory for their political vision, which has been proven right ever since\textsuperscript{16}.

Another important reason lies in the fact that the 1973 constitution granted the elected legislative authority broad powers. The practical exercise of this authority resulted in al-Wefâq’s hegemony over legislative power despite the unfair electoral districting, which allowed horizontal and sectarian division. This is added to other elements enabling the opposition, including Islamic forces, to exercise a control function and even hold the prime minister accountable\textsuperscript{17}.

The third reason, which makes the previous one all the more important, pertains to the Islamic movement’s responsibility for the constitutional upheaval of 1994, which lasted until the proclamation of the National Action Charter in 2001. The upheaval mainly called for the resumption of parliamentary life and the complete implementation of the 1973 constitution.

The Islamic movement’s attachment to the constitution led it to insist on the top leaders of the political regime prior to the announcement of the National Action Charter to make clear, public statements on the need not to harm the powers of the elected legislative authority by enacting others that undermine them. A few religious leaders managed to obtain written guarantees in this respect from the king when he visited the Majlis (salon) of Alawi al-Gharif\textsuperscript{18}, in addition to having the crown prince\textsuperscript{19} emphasize this in a press conference followed by

\textsuperscript{16} Even though this is not apparent in the political rhetoric, this reason is invoked in several cases when the position of the al-Wefâq Society in the democratic process is questioned.
\textsuperscript{17} For further details on the difference between the 1973 constitution and the 2002 constitution, refer to: “Documents of the First Constitutional Conference, 2004” (in Arabic).
\textsuperscript{18} Al-Gharif is one of Bahrain’s religious figures and is now the second-in-command in the Islamic Scholars’ Council behind Sheikh Issam Qassem.
the Justice minister’s assertion that legislative power was held exclusively by the elected parliament. The February 2002 coup and the proclamation of the results of the Constitutional Amendment Committee came as a surprise and a shock not only to al-Wefāq, but also to all political forces within the opposition. It was as though things had gone back to square one, for these amendments gave the elected parliament’s legislative powers to the appointed Shūra Council, and deprived the elected parliament of its control and legislation powers while exaggerating those of the king and the executive authority. This was, in practice, tantamount to a return to the 1990s formula, which the opposition rejected.

Hence, al-Wefāq boycotted the 2002 elections and took part in the municipal elections. The decision to boycott was based on the argument that “the 2002 constitution steals the people’s powers, lays once again the foundations of political tyranny and renders popular participation devoid of any meaning.” This decision, however, was not an easy one to make and was the object of much controversy both within the Society and outside it. Al-Wefāq was compelled to hold an extraordinary congress in the Society of Engineers headquarters in order to come out with a democratic justification of the decision to boycott.

Paradoxically, this polemic debate over the position on the constitution (constitutionality) undermined and almost unsettled the Society. Indeed, the current secretary general, who chaired the Board of Directors at the time, was in favor of participation in the elections, as was the case with the key iconic figures of the religious establishment. In contrast, other leading figures within al-Wefāq, such as Hassan Mshaymeh, and outside the Society, such as Abdel Wahhab al-Hassan, remained intransigent and decided to boycott. The sole gateway for the Society was to find refuge in democratic principles and to allow conflicting points of view to expose their arguments while steering away from the religious establishment, which endowed political executives with decision-making power and abstained from commenting on the issue. Al-Wefāq was thus able to transcend the ordeal of secession and splitting.

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20 The late Prince Issa bin Salman made a preemptive gesture in 1992 by establishing an appointed Shura Council in order to avoid meeting with the Popular Petition delegation. This so-called elitist petition, which was signed by more than 300 figures, called on the prince to reinstate the 1973 constitution and was followed by another, popular one signed by more than 25,000 citizens.

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Given that democracy is not deeply rooted in *al-Wefâq’s* structure and that its internal interactions are subject to various criteria, the Group of the Educated\(^{22}\) seceded from the Society under the pretext that abiding by the boycott until after the 2006 elections would lead to utter political failure. Thus, the constitution upon which *al-Wefâq* Society was founded and built ultimately caused its dissociation. Far from being influential, this secession was met with outbursts of joy by many groups, and the Society’s deputy chairman, Hassan Mshaymeh, even referred to it as the process of dumping waste out of the body\(^{23}\). Nevertheless, it paved the way for a similar decision taken by Hassan Mshaymeh and other members when the issue of registration under the 2005 law for political associations was raised. The claim was that this law was a blatant violation of the spirit and articles of the constitution, and the group opted for withdrawing from the Society rather than accepting the result of the vote, which came in favor of the registration process.

Still, the current political experience has not led *al-Wefâq* to forsake the constitution or the constitutional vision it calls for. The Society is not opposed to the adoption of constitutional provisions with a liberal or lay spirit, but it has expressed many reservations on laws pertaining to Islamic provisions, such as the personal status code or the law on moral corruption. *Al-Wefâq* Society took part in the Special Investigation Commission into the moral excesses resulting from plays run as part of the Spring of Culture series in 2007. Even when it was outside parliament and committed to the boycott, it supported the parliamentary decision to ban a Nancy Ajram show in 2005 and joined other Islamic forces (Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood) in signing once again a request to ban singer Haifa Wehbe from entering Bahrain for a concert in 2008. *Al-Wefâq* leaders do not see this as a violation of the constitution or as conflicting with their calls for implementing this constitution, which organizes personal freedom, since these are “issues that are harmful to the Islamic identity of society, and the Islamic movement is entitled to voice its opinion in this respect, albeit without having recourse to violence in order to impose it”\(^{24}\).

All this leads to a question about the possibility of wavering commitment to the constitution in the democracy-building process. In fact, the preservation of the constitution was behind the Society’s boycott of the elections as well as its secession and splitting, even if this happened a while after the democratic vote.

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\(^{22}\) This group was composed of Dr. Nizar al-Baharina and attorney Abdel Shaheed Khalaf.


\(^{24}\) Secretary General of the *al-Wefâq* Ali Salman, exclusive interview, June 4, 2008.
Also, this same constitution justified *al-Wefāq*’s support of positions regarded by some as contravening the personal freedoms guaranteed by the constitution and even had it sign statements issued by Islamic blocs, which hamper the constitutional process.

**Obtaining the majority**

When hawkish *al-Wefāq* personalities withdrew from the Society and formed a separate political movement, *al-Haqq* Movement, the internal balance of power changed, and it became possible to say that the Society edged closer to rallying behind one opinion and acting as a bloc with the same vision regarding issues and conflict management. Therefore, it was quite easy for *al-Wefāq* Society to opt for participation in the 2006 elections and end its boycott, which hawkish members had been sponsoring until reaching an agreement with the political regime over an adequate constitutional solution. This does not mean that the Society no longer harbors any figures who express reservations on the role of the religious referential authority and its direct meddling in party action. These personalities remained in *al-Wefāq*, but this did not prevent them from always seeking to derive advantages from this relation. We will see later on how this category would exert a noticeable influence in the formation of electoral lists according to this dynamic.

Taking into consideration the secretary general’s influential position as a charismatic personality who is close to the religious referential authority, his broad roles on the organizational level and the weakness of other organizational units, *al-Wefāq* General Assembly held an extraordinary meeting during which it decided to take part in the elections. The Society had already had recourse to the system of electoral lists in the elections of its Consultative Council, which were held prior to the General Assembly meeting, in an attempt to ward off the secession shock. Even though the so-called Faith List, which is close to the religious referential authority, scored a sweeping victory, the presidency of the Consultative Council was granted to one of the winners from the other list after he threatened to withdraw if he was not appointed chairman. Sheikh Issa Qassem intervened, advising to compromise democracy in order to prevent the Society’s unity from falling apart.

The new Consultative Council played a major role in advocating the decision
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to participate in the 2006 elections, and the same held true for the General Secretariat, which was appointed by the secretary general. All that remained was to convince the political associations that were in favor of the boycott of the need to adopt a similar decision in order to secure the people’s almost unanimous support for participation in the elections. Some of these associations took similar decisions when the participation of al-Wefāq Society in the elections was confirmed.\(^{25}\)

Important as they were, these considerations could not, however, urge people to participate without the direct intervention of the religious referential authority. The Scholars’ Council thus issued a statement in which it called for taking part in the elections, arguing this was the best option to confront the prevailing reality with all its complications, and to resist schemes leading to strife, exclusion and expropriation.\(^{26}\)

In truth, there was no conflict over the issue of participation. The memorandum filed by the Society’s General Secretariat to the General Congress was, actually, the same that had been submitted to the General Assembly in 2002, albeit with the addition of some field applications. The 2002 memorandum had been rejected by the members who were present and who voted against it. The amended memorandum noticeably referred to the option of participation and constitutional demands as goods that no one buys except those boycotting the elections. This second version stressed the fact that the Society was now besieged on the international level since it was not represented in official institutions, whereas other associations, schools of thought and personalities of lesser importance were widely accepted and gained media coverage.\(^{27}\)

An internal crisis erupted over the formation of electoral lists and the criteria for choosing the candidates, and the Society appeared to be unable to find a democratic solution to the ensuing conflict of interests. The crisis unfolded on several levels.


\(^{26}\) The Islamic Scholars’ Council, “Statement on the forthcoming parliamentary elections” (in Arabic), October 8, 2006.

\(^{27}\) Memorandum submitted by the secretary general to the General Assembly of the al-Wefāq Society on June 25, 2006.
The first level pertained to the rules of procedure and the conflicting roles of the General Secretariat and the Consultative Council. According to the Society’s bylaws, electoral lists must be approved by the Consultative Council, which submits them to the Secretary General following sufficient consultations with the people and the electoral districts. Candidates also have to submit their candidature requests for approval by the General Secretariat. The crisis originated in the wish of several Consultative Council members to run in the elections and the ensuing conflict on whether they should run in the municipal or parliamentary elections. The question was: How can the Consultative Council ratify an electoral list that includes several of its members? What would happen to the Consultative Council if its members were to ratify their own candidacies? The easy answer was that the secretary general is responsible for forming the lists and is entitled to have them include those he deems worthy of running for the elections. Actually, this solution further undermined the Consultative Council to the benefit of the General Secretariat and provided yet another opportunity for the emergence of a new political unit, namely the Parliamentary Bloc, which would become second in importance within the Society after the General Secretariat.

The second level pertained to the field process of choosing candidates and its compatibility with the competences needed to become a member of parliament or of a municipal council. While Al-Wefaq took part in the 2002 municipal elections, it was not confronted with the same problem due to the limited nature of that experience and to the fact that any decision was then linked to several forces within the Society. The parliamentary elections, in contrast, were a much more important experience in which the diversity of forces was replaced by conflicting interests in the same organism within the Society.

The electoral list was formed based on these dynamics and was composed of candidates from a variety of vocational backgrounds, including academics, clerics and civil servants, not to mention their varied ethnic composition (native Bahrainis and others of Iranian descent) and referential tradition (local references and others linked to Najaf and Qom). The methods of choosing candidates and their personal capacities prevented this diversity from playing any conflict-raising role. Most candidates were loyal either to the secretary general or to Sheikh Issa Qassem, or even to both of them, and several competent personalities were left off of the list because of their independent behavior free from personal loyalty. This was the case of Saleh al-Qatari, whose candidacy was rejected and replaced by that of Khalil Marzouq. This also held true in the region of Al-
Janousan, where the Candidature Committee overturned the regional decision to back the candidacy of Ali Mirza (Abu Nabil), and allowed that of three other candidates, one of whom was cleric and current MP Makki al-Wadaai, who is close to Ayatollah Sheikh Hussein Najati.

The news spread rapidly within al-Wefâq’s inner popular circles, and the crisis grew worse. The Society thus needed a stronger unifying factor than its organizational structure or loyalty to the institution, as the Consultative Council rejected the secretary general’s list.

Surprisingly, the list was subsequently approved with a greater majority in the Consultative Council than in the General Secretariat in order to please the religious referential authority, which intervened to rectify the secretary general’s decision and put forth the so-called Faith Bloc composed of 17 members who won in all districts but one.

Al-Wefâq Society soon found itself in a second crisis regarding coordination with allied associations, especially the National Democratic Action Society (Wa’ad). Closed electoral districts were formed as some societies started calling for secure seats in them. But al-Wefâq Society settled the issue with clear political pragmatism, preferring to retain its districts in order to achieve a consensus majority that could be used politically at the expense of a unified national list. A proposal was made for al-Wefâq to relinquish some seats in secure districts in favor of candidates from the four-party alliance, which included associations that boycotted the 2002 parliamentary elections, i.e. al-Wefâq Society, the Islamic Action Society, the National Democratic Action Society and the National Democratic Gathering. The situation remained unchanged following several contacts and discussions regarding the electoral alliance. At the same time, there were attempts to give a positive image of the alliance when the secretary general attended the inauguration of the electoral seats of the Democratic Action Society and the Islamic Action society candidates, and when Sheikh Ali Salman dedicated his speech during the inauguration ceremony to the Democratic Action Society candidate, Munira Fakhro. The exact opposite happened in Al-Nuaim and Madinat Issa, where al-Wefâq candidates ran along with others from the Democratic Action Society and where Islamic Action Society candidate Zahra Mouradi ran against Abdel Rahman al-Nouaimi, who was representing the Democratic Action Society.

28 The National Democratic Action Society was established in 2001 and is considered an extension to several leftist and nationalist movements in Bahrain.
Though aware of their limited chances to achieve victory, some political associations insisted on knowing the number of supporters they had in these districts and on proving their geographical expansion and their competitiveness. This was the case with Zahra Mouradi, who won a high proportion of votes in the Arad district, or Ibrahim Kamaledidine, a Democratic Action Society candidate running against al-Wefâq’s Sheikh Jassem al-Moumen.

In a last attempt to put right its image of electoral supremacy, al-Wefâq Society fully backed the independent candidate, Dr. Aziz Abl, and gave him precedence over a candidate affiliated with the Islamic Action Society so that al-Wefâq MPs aimed for a projected equation of 17+1 with only a slight hope in the victory of three candidates representing the Democratic Action Society. al-Wefâq’s electoral campaign team was involved in the second electoral round with great efficiency, especially in Abdel Rahman al-Nouaimi’s campaign. This, however, did not prevent al-Wefâq’s allies from holding it responsible for the failure to elect a national list instead of its predominantly-Shiite one.

The results of the 2006 elections

The election results did not come as a surprise for al-Wefâq Society, which won the majority of seats with more than 80,000 votes out of approximately 210,000 eligible voters. All of its candidates achieved victory, save one in a mixed electoral district. These results proved that it was capable of channeling Shiite votes from various backgrounds and levels in its favor, and that it was the primary choice of Shiite voters. Yet, at the same time, the results proved its inability to win votes from outside the Shiite community for several reasons, including the electoral districting law and its responsibility for the categorization of closed districts. Besides, al-Wefâq’s political platform included other issues of no interest to the Sunni community, which perceives them less as national causes than as attempts to promote the welfare of the Shiite community. The media campaign led by pro-government blocs and the government succeeded in discrediting many neutral issues, such as the calls for the restoration of the

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29 These candidates are Abdel Rahman al-Nuaimi, Ibrahim Sharif and Munira Fakhro. Their victory in the elections was strongly predicted as long as there was no fraud, or public centers were not used to tamper with the results.

30 Refer to the report of the High Committee for Monitoring the 2006 elections.
1973 constitution’s principles, the electoral districting law, politically-motivated naturalizations or sectarian discrimination. Indeed, merely raising these issues would predictably exacerbate sectarian tensions so dangerous as to undermine social cohesion.

The parliamentary elections experience was beneficial to al-Wefaq Society in order to consolidate its organization and mobilization capacities, and to promote its status within the political system. The Society thus put up a good performance despite significant political and popular pressure. Still, the same experience revealed the Society’s failures and shortcomings, particularly with regard to its conflict-resolution capacity and its total reliance on solutions provided by the religious establishment and its reference, Sheikh Issa Qassem. In reality, it rather needed to promote internal democratic mechanisms and create means of pluralistic partisan education that would counter the negative effects of the phenomenon of isolation, secession or even withdrawal.

This experience shed light on al-Wefaq’s attachment to its political status as a lone player that could elaborate independent national strategies even without referring to historic allies or other parties to the opposition. It eventually became prey to the illusion of the powerless majority as opposed to the active minority. al-Wefaq had won the majority of parliamentary seats (16 members of parliament), hence its right to obtain several advantages in absolute democratic terms, or at least the position of parliament speaker. Yet this did not occur, and al-Wefaq Society, despite having gained the majority, represented the opposition and was still excluded from important parliament departments, such as the position of parliament speaker, the General Secretariat Office and all main parliamentary commissions.

Membership in parliament nonetheless forced al-Wefaq Society to reorganize its political situation and come to terms with its reality as a newly-established political party with no experience in parliamentary action. This drove al-Wefaq bloc to look for political parliamentary alliances and disregard its previous ones, which had been exposed to several blows during the period of electoral campaigning and which collapsed once the results of the elections came out. The government actually controlled the parliamentary majority and was capable of foiling any draft backed by al-Wefaq without having recourse to the second chamber of the National Assembly since the current parliament was divided along sectarian lines, not to mention that the existence of a parliamentary bloc was dependent on the government’s political and financial support. The
concomitance of failure and sectarian division was likely to label the parliament as weak and to question its capacity to provide citizens with adequate output, knowing that the generalization of this image leads to the people’s disengagement from the legislative institution, replacing it with reliance on the government and acceptance of its performance, even if it is unsatisfactory.

Though controlling the largest parliamentary bloc, al-Wefāq Society did not manage to attain any of the objectives set in its political platform, because it rapidly fell into the trap of sectarian polarization upon which parliament is based due to electoral districting or to pro-government parties and the nature of their political action. The bloc merely submitted a few questions and draft laws without any response from the government or other blocs. Parliament thus rejected the draft law on the criminalization of sectarian discrimination and turned down the Society’s petition to question Minister of State Ahmad Atiatullah in connection with the so-called al-Bandar report. It also repelled a draft law on amending some articles of the constitution as well as the bylaws. In addition, the bloc was unable to discuss the law on electoral districting, the law for political associations and the anti-terrorism law. Parliament forced al-Wefāq bloc, in return, into compliance with a series of unpopular laws, such as the law on the 1% deduction to the benefit of the Unemployment Fund and the law on the criminalization of Molotov cocktails.

On the internal level, the parliamentary experience was extremely influential and wearing following the formation of the Parliamentary Bloc, which became the primary organism within al-Wefāq Society and the most privileged one in terms of its activities and political output. The bloc holds a weekly press conference and is responsible for the development of the Society’s internal and external relations as well as for the definition of a political opinion regarding current issues. The expansion of the bloc’s role made it impossible for the Consultative Council to exercise its control function since several of its members were, at the same time, members of the bloc. Another reason lies in the fact that the remaining Consultative Council members had little political experience and knowledge, and but modest experience in the management of alliances and crises. Knowing that the Consultative Council and the General Secretariat had formed a committee for the supervision of parliamentary action, the bloc’s role had expanded so much that this denomination was rejected and replaced by a mere reference to a follow-up committee. Hence, al-Wefāq Parliamentary Bloc undercut the Society’s role and hijacked its activities.
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**POLITICAL RECRUITMENT AND MOBILIZATION**

The relation between the State and society was characterized by confrontation and mutual questioning, and most political movements were born in an oppressive political environment, which explains the extreme antagonism in the relation between the State and these forces. The Islamic movement succeeded in filling the void left by the State by tending to the psychological needs of large swathes of the population, which deemed that the Islamic movement was able to provide for their political needs, especially in terms of national loyalty. In turn, the Islamic movement exploited this loyalty in order to develop its aspirations and objectives, a trend that became more pronounced once it developed into political associations.

Political institutionalization meant looking for channels to use for political recruitment and for the multiplication of political figures and platforms in order to maximize representativeness, thus allowing the Society to reach decision-making positions and important political functions, and to take advantage of these positions in order to gain votes and hands working almost free of charge.

All political associations have their own vision on youths, women and the media, all of which are dealt with as factors aiding the success of political action. Even though the objective heralded by al-Wefaq Society emphasized the role of youths and women, there was no positive practical implementation of this vision, and the relevant strategies in force should be reviewed in order to promote interest in them as well as their role and functions.

**Mobilization channels**

The process of mobilizing youths and women within al-Wefaq Society relies primarily on non-governmental institutions, such as memorial gatherings, mosques and civil associations. Shiite funerals and mosques play an undeniable

31 Article 6 of the rules of procedure of the al-Wefaq stipulates that objectives include “promoting the role of women and empowering them to exercise all their political, economic and social rights …” With regard to youths, the same article stipulates the need to “care for the youths, draft policies and strategies for their development and train them so that they take on responsibility for building the nation and foster its progress …”.

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political role through 'Ashura rites and other religious ceremonies, such as celebrations marking the birth and death of various imams. Moreover, mosques and memorial gatherings provide locations for constant religious sessions and lessons supervised by Islamic cadres. Here, Shiite mosques played a major role through the impact of Friday sermons on political mobilization throughout the past period since, according to tradition, the preacher would earmark a section of the Friday sermon for discussing the political situation on the local and international levels. The number of Shiite mosques is currently estimated at 724, including 339 in the Northern Governorate, which is categorized as Shiite. According to the classification of the Directorate of Jaafari Endowments, 65% of these mosques do not generate any revenues and are able to tend to their needs only thanks to a 3% cut in the resources of wealthy mosques. As for memorial gatherings, they officially exceed 500 in number all over Bahrain. Ever since the 1990s, those responsible for these institutions started being elected by the inhabitants of the region compared to earlier times when they were run by some families. This allowed the Islamic movement to tighten its grip on these institutions and exploit them for its own benefit.

In light of political and religious efficiency at the service of social harmony, these institutions abide by a rhetoric whereby political Islamic action is an act of worship requiring patience, jihad, perseverance and progress, hence numerous political positions voiced by imams and clerics who endured pain and hardships so that justice reigns supreme. Such an education takes political action to the highest levels on the one hand, while dealing with it, on the other, through worship and the religious referential authority. There was a clear differentiation between religious commitment based on worship and rites on the one hand, and, on the other, religious commitment based on ideology and linked to political action. The former was often overlooked since it focused on the individual to the detriment of society and involvement in societal issues. On the spiritual level and with regard to its societal image, political action from an Islamic standpoint refers to correspondence between these individuals and top scholars and referential authorities, such as Imam Khomeini, Mohammad Baqer al-Sadr and other clerics who delved into political action.

This quasi-total dependence on this kind of institution for recruitment and mobilization leads to the prevalence of a preferential scale according to which

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the exercise of political action ranks higher in value than any other kind of action, thus transforming these institutions into “incubators” of cadres and energies. At this stage, it becomes necessary for al-Wefâq Society to supervise and sponsor these institutions. The fact that the Society shared mostly the same sociopolitical vision with them was quite helpful, and the Islamic movement derived extensive benefits from it in its long struggle against the government, using its output in a very organized manner and without any complications, considering that these institutions were widely found in society and were free from official dominances and trends.

This dependence resulted, in practice, in the mobilization of great numbers of youths and women and their registration as members of the Society, which – thus – ranked first among political associations in terms of membership. Al-Wefâq Society has nearly 35,000 registered members, the vast majority of whom were registered after the Ministry of Labor banned political associations within the opposition from gathering signatures on a petition calling on the king to recant the 2002 constitution and abide by the 1973 constitution, knowing that the ministry limited the right of associations to gather signatures from their own members only. This drove many people to register as members of political associations in conformity with their political orientations, and it was only normal then for al-Wefâq’s share to be this important since it led a popular campaign calling for registration so as to sign the petition. In order to curb this expansion, the government arrested several activists gathering signatures and registration to join in the Society. al-Wefâq probably benefited from the important membership volume in order to magnify its popular role and the trust it enjoys within most social sectors. Such a high number of adherents was, actually, of rare occurrence in Bahrain and neighboring countries, but this did not prevent the emergence of similar difficulties, which al-Wefâq Society did not manage to avoid.

The main difficulty was that most members were not politicized or did not care much about political matters, and many responded to the call of the religious referential authority to sign the petition and protect al-Wefâq Society. Therefore, it became impossible to organize all these members or even to unify their political options and channel them in conformity with those of al-Wefâq. Rather than party members, they were just considered ready masses, not to mention the lack

34 For further details on the role of memorial gatherings and mosques in the political process, refer to Khoury (1983); for additional information on the role of women religious associations, refer to Abbas Fadl (2008).
of qualified and active cadres within the Society. Based on these considerations, fewer members are paying their annual subscription fee without which a member loses the right to exercise his rights and duties within the Society. During its third and fourth congresses, al-Wefâq managed to convince no more than 1,200 members to pay their annual subscription fees.

For all these reasons and others as well, one cannot be convinced of al-Wefâq Society’s capacity to lead any mobilization campaign since its mobilization capacity hinges on the orientation of the religious referential authority, the efficiency of non-governmental institutions and their involvement in the Society’s political project. This phenomenon gives rise to many crises on the level of the Society’s organizational structure since the wider popular base is not part of it. This base is, therefore, deprived of any party rights and obligations, and many within it are unable to have the benefit of constant and continuous party culture.

Youth as an inclination to autonomy

In reality, al-Wefâq Society did not manage until recently to move beyond the effects of this phenomenon, and the Youth and Students Committee, which was formed in the early days of al-Wefâq’s establishment in 2001, did not manage to contain the youth and grant them autonomy until early 2007, when the Youth Center was officially merged into the Society. This manner of dealing with youth is still better than in other political associations where the majority of top executives have a negative opinion of the youth capacity and political orientations.

In light of the failure of the Youth and Students Committee, a group of young al-Wefâq members established their own organism under the denomination of the Bahrain Youth Center in a preliminary attempt to lay the foundations of an autonomous entity loyal to al-Wefâq Society, albeit not affiliated to it. It is worth noting that efforts to establish this organism revolved on two axes that were wholly different from those of al-Wefâq and the non-regular institutions loyal to it: First, to minimize the political dimension and avoid politicizing the Youth

35 The center was first established under the denomination of the al-Wefâq Youth Forum, but a conflict with another youth organism, namely the Bahrain Youth Forum, called for amending the former’s name to avoid any confusion.
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Center in order to attract the greatest number of young people; and second, to soften the stereotyped image of religious youth.

Given the high ambitions of the Youth Center, it realized that the Society was not interested in it due to the existence of the Youth and Students Committee, knowing that two of its members were among the center’s founders. These members called for elaborating a clear strategy that would define the Youth Center as an executive body benefiting from financial sponsorship and support. A proposal was made to establish an honorary consultative council with five members, three of whom would be appointed by al-Wefâq and the remaining two by the center’s board of directors for the purpose of offering advice, providing financial support and opening communication channels from which benefits could be derived. Nevertheless, this council had but slight performance because members of the Society failed to understand the Youth Center’s function and role.

The current Youth Center does not meddle in political details, nor is it much aware of the importance of political action; rather, it has taken an interest in college students and working for their cultural development. The center’s philosophy is based on building culture and opening up to other types of thinking. This is manifested in the fact that many guests with orientations different from al-Wefâq’s on the intellectual and political level were invited by the center, and debates were held with them.

The list formed under the slogan “Students first” is one of the most important achievements of the Youth Center. Established in 2002, this student list is active in the University of Bahrain, and its electoral section often scores victories in the Student Council elections. This promoted the status of the Youth Center within the university and fostered its image of relative autonomy vis-à-vis al-Wefâq Society. Despite the tremendous success achieved by the “Students first” list and its Islamic image, which was promoted thanks to student activities, the center is confronted with the tougher challenge of destroying the stereotype prevailing among some religious referential authorities regarding ethics at the university.

Yet the strategy adopted by the youth sector of al-Wefâq Society does not take into consideration the scope of the sociopolitical transformations occurring in

36 Mohammad Matar, Youth Center member, exclusive interview, May 28, 2008.
Bahrain for the past decade at least. These transformations in the social structure are intrinsically linked to the rise and fall of the elites. Indeed, economic and political developments induce changes in the standing, importance and strength of various social categories, which soon seek to increase their own power in order to control and harness these new conditions\(^3\). For instance, the issue of unemployment was behind the emergence of the Force of the Unemployed as a pressure group that managed to act as a lone force and even attempted to compete with *Al-Wefāq* Society. The Force of the Unemployed was able to achieve some of its objectives, the most important of which was the promulgation of the Unemployment Insurance Law. On a similar, albeit slightly different, track in terms of content, one cannot help but notice the rise of a new category of college-educated academics who spread in great numbers, especially as tuition fees at the University of Bahrain underwent a major reduction in parallel to the opening of several training and educational institutes, thus encouraging the rise of youth in touch with technology, especially communications technology. The indicators of the youths’ rise as a new force competing with historical personalities were apparent in the propensity of large numbers of high school students to support *Al-Haqq* Movement\(^8\), which was formed by personalities who resigned from *Al-Wefāq* Society in the wake of its registration under the newly-promulgated law for political associations. The resignation of these personalities brought about those of several youth cadres and activists, including Media Committee official Hassan Mshaymeh, some members of the Research and Studies Committee, youth activists and others who had played a key role in *Al-Wefāq*’s activities.

*Al-Haqq* Movement’s undeniable success in attracting a large category of school-aged youth is linked to its harsh rhetoric against the government. It actually describes itself as a resistance movement with no intention to bargain. This image was promoted when the government arrested Hassan Mshaymeh, rights activist Abdel Hady Khawaja and a group of activists supporting the movement. These arrests brought to mind the events of the mid-1990s and the launch of the 1994 constitutional upheaval upon the results of which *Al-Wefāq* Society built its own political image.

These experiences show that youth do not have just one political orientation and are divided in keeping with political division. While this is the case in all

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37 For further details on the rise of elites and their political role, refer to Bottomore (1988, p. 95).
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political societies, this experience reveals the scope of frustration among youth and their strong ambition to play political roles that mitigate their frustration and compensate for the bleak prospects of the action undertaken by political associations, which have merely become tools to produce political leaders.

Women as a future chance

Women represent 50% of the Bahraini population, 49% of people aged between 20 and 29, 50% of voters in parliamentary elections, 26% of the labor force and 61% of students in the University of Bahrain. Nevertheless, female membership in political associations does not exceed 16% (Moussawi and Assiri, 2003). According to a survey, more than 60% of women justified their deficient participation in forums and seminars by invoking a lack of time and owing they would rather stay at home with their families once their regular morning chores are done (Feiruz, 2003).

Regardless of the point of view of political associations on women, they remain absent from these groups, including from al-Wefâq, a situation that goes against the slogans and objectives defined in the rules of procedure or in the political platform. Women seldom reach the upper organizational levels, and in several cases, elections were rigged so that a few women were allowed to win in order to draw a better picture of reality within the Society and strengthen its position regarding women.

No women members of al-Wefâq Society made it to the Board of Directors when it was still an elected organism, even though women made up to 13% of the Society, which had at the time 1,850 members. Women achieved representation in the General Secretariat in 2006 when two of them won in al-Wefâq Consultative Council elections, in addition to a third one in complementary elections in 2008. A thorough analysis of the situation reveals that al-Wefâq’s standpoint on women and the limited interaction between women and men play an important part in defining the situation of women on the political and party level. In fact, al-Wefâq Society represents an extensive section of a male-based society where women are supposed to tend to daily life issues and avoid interaction with and involvement in public affairs. As a result, women no longer have time for political and party activities, thus cultivating in women an inclination toward fear of failure and of challenging the religion-dominated societal vision. According to a controversial
Dynamic, the absence of women’s activity in the Society leads to fewer seats earmarked for women and to their submissiveness to men, and the result is expecting women to fail in parliamentary, municipal and trade union elections.

Traditional social concepts, whereby women are of a lower status than men, probably play an important role in this respect, but the picture is complete only with a close examination of the effects of the past political experience in the country and the prevalence of suspicions regarding an upheaval of the political system and its recourse to violence. This experience is, thus, as responsible for the situation of women as these concepts are.

In the minds of a large section of the population, political action is tantamount to a political confrontation of unforeseeable results, at the top of which comes official violence. Here, we are confronted with a broader law including all political associations within the opposition, which have gone through a harsh political experience influenced by imprisonment and torture. In other words, the political society in Bahrain still adheres to a vision of politics as soldiers and armies going to war. This conception is further promoted by the government method of dealing with peaceful political events and the crackdown of security authorities on many peaceful events, regardless of their protestation aspect or lack thereof. This was the case when the 2005 “labayka yâ Hussein” (under your command Hussein) march was intercepted, and participants, including women, children and top clerics, were subjected to violence by security forces.

The position of al-Wefâq on women’s candidatures in parliamentary elections remains ambiguous. Even though there is no religious vision that bans women from political participation or that calls for such participation, the extremist interpretation of some religious referential authorities regarding virtue and women mingling with men plays an inhibiting role in this respect. Therefore, al-Wefâq Society may back the candidature of women in upcoming elections not out of its conviction in their rights and political and scientific competence, but rather to avoid pressure and being put in a delicate position vis-à-vis several observers.

To tell the truth, women’s political role cannot be dissociated from the activities of women’s associations loyal to al-Wefâq with regard to the education of women and the definition of their roles and functions. The Women’s Future Association (Jam‘îyya al-mustabâl al-nisâ‘îyya) “aims to have women attain decision-making positions through training and awareness-raising, and has encountered no opposition from Sheikh Issa Qassem, who recommends the need for a
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strong female presence on the field.” In contrast, the Women’s Committee of the Islamic Enlightenment Society (al-Lajna al-nisâ‘iyya fi al-jam‘iyya al-taw‘iyya al-islâmiyya), which is affiliated to the Islamic Scholars’ Council (al-Majlis al-‘Ulamâ‘i), merely promotes an Islamic education for women and children (Abbas Fadl, 2008, p. 145).

The gap between the two societies is apparent on several levels in the nature of the targeted women. The Future Association takes tremendous interest in educated and working women, whereas the Women’s Committee seeks an audience among housewives. Furthermore, The Future Association asserts the autonomy of women and aims to develop their competences, whereas the Women’s Committee emphasizes the Islamic aspect and religious commitment.

The field activity of these societies supports the predominance of a conservative trend over another one calling for women’s participation in the political process. This was confirmed by a field study on the political education of Bahraini women. According to this study, active women abide by the decisions of the religious referential authority, which take precedence over those of the political referential authority, thus minimizing the impact of political education, which is often linked to the vision of the religious referential authority (ibidem, p. 232).

This divergence with regard to objectives and methods is based on the closeness to the religious referential authority and the relative autonomy of women’s associations. Indeed, while these associations abide by Islam and religious concepts as a reference, they are also able to propose a jurisprudential vision that does not violate the general religious concept. Hence, the empowerment of women within al-Wefâq can be tackled only under two intersecting headlines: First, restoring the peaceful character of politics and freeing political activity from the specter of war, and second, recommending the development of independent women’s action for the sake of effective political empowerment of women.

Money and media

Media and money are two essential components of any political process. Political projects, especially democratic and development-related ones, often falter due to the lack of financial and media power within political institutions.
Bahraini political associations have different means of dealing with these two factors. Indeed, some abide by rigid financial centralization, which no individual or region can overstep\textsuperscript{39}, while others seem to have troubled or hostile relations with some local media, as is the case with the Al-Minbar Islamic Society\textsuperscript{40}.

On the financial level, \textit{al-Wefāq} issues every year a final statement signed by the secretary general and \textit{al-Wefāq} Consultative Council and proofed by a legally-recognized audit company in order to avert any fraud or mistakes. In order to perform its mission, the audit company requests evidence to back the amounts and details included in the financial statements, and it has so far approved all financial statements submitted by \textit{al-Wefāq} since 2006. The strict centralization of spending in \textit{al-Wefāq} is regarded as an adequate and requested course of action in order to avoid any miscalculation or abuse of influence. Hence, no amount higher than 100 Dinars can be spent without the signature of the secretary general and the treasurer, knowing that spending is done through checks written on one of the Society’s four accounts in local banks\textsuperscript{41}. According to the 2007 financial statement, \textit{al-Wefāq}’s income increased from 179,055 Dinars to 363,083 Dinars. This rise is due to the inflow of revenues that had been unavailable prior to December 2006, which is equivalent to an increase in the support provided by the Ministry of Justice from 15,000 Dinars to 51,000 Dinars, in addition to 119,450 Dinars in cuts from MPs and municipal council members. The same statement reveals that the Society’s electoral expenditure in 2006 amounted to 53,326 Dinars. Following the participation of \textit{al-Wefāq} in the elections and its obtaining 16 parliamentary seats and 17 municipal council seats, its expenses increased drastically, as it decided to rent headquarters for members of parliament and municipal councils in the same electoral district in addition to headquarters outside \textit{al-Wefāq}’s main building so as to host the meetings of the parliamentary and municipal blocs. \textit{Al-Wefāq} started making successful investments, which generated extremely high inflows estimated at more than 450,000 Dinars resulting from real estate investment within the course of one year\textsuperscript{42}.

\textsuperscript{39} This is the case with the Democratic Action Society (\textit{Waad}).
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Al-Ayam}, May 23, 2008.
\textsuperscript{41} Interview with the deputy treasurer, June 10, 2008.
\textsuperscript{42} The numbers are taken from the 2007 financial statement, which was included in the financial report submitted to the Fourth General Congress held in May 2008.
The Society’s expenditures encompass regular items, such as *al-Wefâq* bulletin, the Martyr’s Fund, activities, forums and the printing of *al-Wefâq* literature. On another level, *al-Wefâq* bloc members are often confronted with a series of questions on the MPs’ financial quittance before and after the elections. While these questions never revealed any violations or acceptance of covert donations⁴³, concerns also arise regarding the legitimacy or right to benefit from such public donations compared with the prospective services and performance of bloc members in parliament or municipal councils⁴⁴.

In any case, the endurance of this financial policy and its preservation of the current inflows are likely to transform *al-Wefâq* from a poor political society to a rich one that can promote the use of financial assets to foster additional political activities and provide itself with a secure financial clout allowing it to launch gigantic electoral campaigns.

On the media level, *al-Wefâq* currently spends around 8,000 Dinars a year in order to publish a biannual newspaper that covers the positions of the parliamentary bloc and raises some sociopolitical issues. This newspaper lacks the standards of partisan press since it does not publish the Society’s official positions; however, this experience is quite advanced compared to previous media projects that failed or were not published on a regular basis. The General Secretariat does not subject *al-Wefâq* newspaper to any censorship with regard to the level of freedom and expression of opinions, even if the deputy secretary general follows up on each issue prior to its publication⁴⁵.

Furthermore, the Society seeks to hold quasi-alliances with local dailies in order to gain adequate press coverage for the bloc’s activities or the Society’s news. A delegation from the General Secretariat visited several local newspapers, such as *al-Ayam* and *al-Waqt*, specifically for this purpose. Therefore, the Society does not take much offense when some reporters twist the declarations of its

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⁴³ MPs receive two kinds of presents from the government, namely public ones – such as some financial donations (presents distributed on the occasion of feasts or occasional financial rewards) – and other overt donations calculated according to each MP’s positions vis-à-vis the laws proposed by the government. The closer a MP is to the government, the greater his chances of obtaining such donations as land, money or even measures to facilitate some trade transactions.

⁴⁴ For further details on these questions, their nature and their popular source, refer to: Interview with Sheikh Ali Salman, *Al-Wasat* newspaper, September 27, 2007.

members, nor does it ask newspapers to correct or apologize for these mistakes. For instance, a local newspaper published an adapted version of a declaration made by an Al-Wefâq MP on the construction of apartment complexes, thus leading to a wave of objections on behalf of the people and Al-Wefâq members. The altered statement had allegedly supported vertical rather than horizontal building as a means to resolve the worsening housing crisis, knowing that this contravenes Al-Wefâq bloc’s general platform and the demands of those who were prejudiced by the housing policy.

**Conclusion**

The democratic wave that swirled across the Arab Gulf played a role in the modernization of political regimes and their acceptance of a democratic framework as determinants of political legitimacy to the detriment of other tribal determinants. Starting in the early 1990s, this wave led to a qualitative evolution in Bahrain: A call was issued for holding democratic elections, and political movements were allowed to organize themselves under the law for political associations. This affected the structures and orientations of these movements, which underwent internal restructuring and witnessed the emergence of new agendas that altered their strategies.

The Islamic movement was the most important beneficiary of this evolution, for the limited security and political détente allowed it to reorganize itself and put its slogans into practice. It also prevented this movement from falling into the trap of self-armament and getting entangled in a violent confrontation with the ruling regime. The various components of the Sunni Islamic movement merged to a great extent the religious referential authority and political action so much that it was almost impossible to dissociate the political and religious dimensions from one another. In contrast, the Shiite Islamic movement maintained the supremacy of the religious referential authority over the political one on two levels at least: First, the Shiite Islamic movement did not have direct relations with the political regime; rather, it was locked in a public confrontation with it over power and influence; and second, the political wing represented by Al-Wefâq is subordinated to the religious referential authority. The only means for Al-Wefâq to protect its cohesion or gain acceptance within Shiite circles is to maintain a strong relation with the religious referential authority.
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This relation sets the background for several challenges with which the political organization of al-Wefâq Society is confronted, some of which pertain to the understanding and internal implementation of the concept of democracy and to allowing the emergence of opposition currents within the Society without their having recourse to isolation or secession. Other challenges are related to external political performance and to the Society’s capacity to adopt independent political positions that are not necessarily in keeping with the orientations of the religious referential authority. Therefore, al-Wefâq has been compelled to form an internal religious referential authority in conformity with its religious orientation, or to convince religious referential authorities to join al-Wefâq Society in order to minimize the scope of the danger entailed by these divergences and to mitigate the conflicts of interest between the two parties. In addition, al-Wefâq Society is confronted with the challenge of its evolution into a professional political party in line with the recommendations of the 2005 Second General Congress. The Society is required, for this purpose, to examine its practical roles and functions within the framework of the rules of procedure.

In conclusion, the experience of al-Wefâq’s transformation into a political party still calls for additional research in order to define the elements underpinning such an evolution. This includes looking for methods to go beyond the traditional dynamics, which constitute a basis for the Society’s political elite, or looking for means to reach an alliance between al-Wefâq as a political association and the religious referential authority instead of this authority’s current dominance and supremacy.

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6

SOCIALIZATION AGENCIES AND PARTY DYNAMICS: FUNCTIONS AND USES OF HIZBALLAH SCHOOLS IN LEBANON

Catherine Le Thomas*

A look at the careers of Hizballah activists and supporters in Lebanon\(^1\) often reveals close ties to the party’s satellite institutions, and especially the different schools situated in the party’s sphere of influence. Many teachers of these schools are party supporters, activists or even fighters. Some well-known experts linked to the party are also involved in these schools, including the economist Abdel Halim Fadlallah, some local officials (head of the Khiyam municipality in South Lebanon) or MPs (Hussein Haj Hassan) and even Hizballah Deputy Secretary General Naïm Qassem, a former teacher himself.

What kind of schools are these? Who supports them and who is enrolled in them? More importantly, what do they reveal about Hizballah and its program, and what methods of allegiance to the party do they seek to emphasize and reinforce? Also, how do they affect the future of the party’s popular support base?

This chapter will explore facts pertaining to Hizballah as well as social development sponsored by the party from an original angle, that of education. Educational strategies are less likely to be affected by short-term change than political strategies, in which alliances are made and broken. The educational sector is therefore less sensitive to fast-paced political change, and offers interesting

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\(^1\) Refer in particular to al-Bizri (1995, especially p. 25-35); Harb (2005, especially p. 203 sq); Deeb (2006) and Le Thomas (2009).
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insight into Hizballah circles. In addition, it illustrates the nature and degree of party allegiance, and how that allegiance is expressed at various levels of social development in Lebanon.

In the consociational Lebanese system which is characterized by its relative inability to adapt and its closed nature, social development, which was traditionally delegated to communities and private groups, is a central point for assembling material and symbolic capital that may later be converted into political resources. This study will use the school as a point of analysis to study the role of Hizballah in this system, the resources it can draw on, as well as the limits this very system imposes on Hizballah’s action.

In addition to the Islamic institutes, or hawza, which gravitate around Hizballah or were established by its leaders, schools which provide standard formal education and prepare for official state exams appear to be an essential intermediary resource. The party uses this resource to mobilize supporters and widen its influence, both in schools established by the party and preexisting schools. Schools provide an interesting opportunity to observe Hizballah in many respects: the numerous and diverse educational networks that are more or less linked to the party, the speed at which they develop, the diverse profiles of people who attend them as well as the importance that the party leaders seem to attribute to them.

At the sociopolitical crossroads of party and society, Hizballah schools allow us to shed light on the group dynamics within the hâla islamiyya, or “Islamic sphere” in Lebanon, and to gain a better understanding of how this sphere fits into the social fabric of the Shiite community.

**HIZBALLAH AS A POLITICAL PARTY AND AS A PRODUCER OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS**

The rise of a “resistance movement” with social ramifications

Hizballah (literally the “Party of God”, referring to Koranic terminology) began to develop progressively in 1982 as a response to Israel’s invasion of

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2 Still, groups supporting the Islamic Revolution in Iran started forming as early as 1978 in Lebanon.
Lebanon, through the coalition of various Islamic groups, such as the Islamic Amal Movement, the Association of Muslim Students, and the Da’wâ (“Islamic Call”) Party (Shapira, 1988, p. 124), a Lebanese movement originating in Iraq. Established by a group of young clerics in their thirties, including Abbas al-Moussawi and Sobhi Tufeily, the party benefited right away from the decisive support and sponsorship of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iran played an active role in the party’s foundation and sent a 1,500-strong Pasdaran (revolution fighters) contingent to the Bekaa region in order to train Islamic resistance (al-muqâwama al-islâmiyya) fighters in November 1982 (Mervin, 2008, p. 79).

The movement was officially formed when it submitted Hizballah’s open letter during a press conference in Beirut’s southern suburbs (known as al-Dâhiya) on February 16, 1985. It went on progressively to become a new player in the political and militia arena at national and regional levels. Hizballah took control of al-Dâhiya following a violent conflict with the Amal Movement between 1987 and 1989; Amal, established in 1974 by Imam Moussa al-Sadr, was the most prominent Shiite movement to that day. During the 1990s, Hizballah acknowledged the regime born after the Taif Agreement and initiated a process of “Lebanonization”: It postponed indefinitely its project of establishing an Islamic republic in Lebanon and joined the political game. Since then, Hizballah has taken part in the 1992, 1996, 2000, 2005 and 2009 legislative elections as well as the 1998 and 2004 municipal elections. Hizballah is also suspected of involvement in several attacks on Westerners in Lebanon during the 1980s, or abroad in the early 1990s. It therefore remains an outcast movement in the eyes of the international community, especially the US administration, which labels it as a “terrorist” organization (Droz Vincent, 2008).

On May 25, 2000, Hizballah, which was already popular within the Shiite community, was greatly consolidated and legitimized nationally when the Israeli army withdrew from the large strip of territory it occupied in South Lebanon – all except for the Shebaa Farms and a few villages along the border, whose incorporation into Lebanon remains controversial. The party then gained even more power and influence in the Lebanese political arena. In September 2004, the United Nations Security Council issued Resolution 1559 that called for the disarmament of all militias in Lebanon. Former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was assassinated on February 14, 2005, and Syria withdrew from Lebanon in April 2005. In the wake of these events, Hizballah repositioned itself on the political stage and joined the government in July 2005, following the parliamentary elections. Even more important was the 2006 July-August War against Israel, which ended
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with Hizballah’s “Divine Victory” according to its own terms, and led to the party’s reinforcement. From this point on, Hizballah became a major, if not the major, player in the Lebanese political scene. Its spectacular alliance with General Aoun’s Free Patriotic Movement on February 6, 2006 demonstrates its wish not to remain politically confined within the framework of its own community.

In parallel, the party has been active ever since its inception in social and economic development, offering aid and services to an increasingly large and diverse number of people within the Shiite community. At first, these services often emanated from organizations that were mere Lebanese branches of Iranian mother associations. The Martyr Foundation (mu’assasat al-shahîd) was thus established in 1982 under the aegis of Iranian organizations; the same holds true for the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation (Harik, 1994, p. 24). Charities were already present in al-Dâhiya prior to 1982, but the Iranian Revolution supplied them with a new dynamic and unprecedented resources. Hizballah’s organization for real estate, jihâd al-binâ’, was established in the middle of the 1980s and was acknowledged by the state in 1987 as an organization dedicated to providing support for the poor. These agencies began providing services in education, whether directly or indirectly, during informal courses or sessions organized by Hizballah. It was in the 1990s however that the party launched a large-scale, structured initiative in the field of education by opening its own schools. Gradually acquiring expertise and with the diluted efforts made during the conflict (Harik, 1994), the party rapidly became a new key player on the educational scene in Lebanon. Several institutions came to represent Hizballah, the most important of which were al-Mahdî schools, established in 1993 and directly linked to the party in its early stages.

Hizballah’s institutions within their institutional environment: effects of system, and isomorphism

Since the 1990’s, Hizballah’s social development program has been characterized by its considerable size and coherence, despite the complexity of organizational networks responsible for implementing it. As an integral part of the party’s program, education holds a special place in its operations. This comes as no surprise in Lebanon, where social work and education are often supported by private and/or communal actors. In fact, the Lebanese state, through political sectarianism, encourages institutionalization within separate communities who
are urged to organize themselves by creating their own associations, whether directly or through the political and religious entities who represent them. This encouragement is particularly significant in the areas of law, education and religion. Educational developments supported by communities are explicitly acknowledged and protected by Article 10 of the Lebanese constitution\(^3\). In practice, the foundation and management of these schools is in line with values of evergetism as well as social or religious obligations. An element of political strategy for “traditional” leaders, the opening of schools is supported by newcomers in politics and political parties, alongside actions taken by religious groups.

Despite the novelty of *Hizballah*’s actions in the area of education, namely its temporality and specific religious and geopolitical affinities, this process mimics in fact a phenomenon observed among various groups at different times in the Lebanese system. Historically, it was the Catholic educational model that left its mark on the organizational development of the various communities, influencing the other Christian sects and then the Sunnis in the 19th century. More recently, this phenomenon of school institutionalization was observed within a particularly dynamic Shiite community. The Shiite involvement in the Lebanese political system is the result of relatively recent socioeconomic and demographic changes which led to an increase in the number of social and charitable institutions established by this community, even before *Hizballah* undertook any specific action. Education became the preferred development area for a community that was previously almost absent on this level. Even though it is more discreet and progresses at a slower pace than the Shiite political upsurge, this social mobilization is proof of important structural evolutions. It reveals the process of community consolidation that has been taking place since the 1960s. The involvement in education, which gained strength particularly after the end of the civil war, extends and consolidates the political benefits acquired by the Shiites in the last decades; it also lays new foundations for Shiite institutions and identification processes. While *Hizballah* has been the figurehead of this overall

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\(^3\) Refer to the Lebanese constitution of 1926, which was amended when Lebanon gained its independence in 1943 and was modified substantially once again in 1989 with the Taif Agreement, which led to the establishment of the Second Republic. Article 10 of the constitution stipulates that “education is free insofar as it is not contrary to public order and morals and does not interfere with the dignity of any of the religions or creeds.” The articles particularly stressed that “there shall be no violation of the right of religious communities to have their own schools, provided they follow the general rules issued by the state regulating public instruction.”
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dynamic since the 1990s, we must also take into consideration other players in Shiite education. These include the network of schools established by the Amal Movement, Hizballah’s partner and foe at the same time, or the Mabarrat, a series of institutions established by cleric Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah. Hizballah’s action take place within the framework of this newly-established, albeit diversified and dynamic, educational landscape, but it differs from other networks in how it is articulated to political and religious spheres.

Hizballah Schools as Mobilization Agencies for an Integrated “Society”

To some extent, Hizballah can be perceived as a social movement similar to many Islamic or Islamist movements in the Muslim world, which use more or less formalized social networks to substitute for or complement political action in the strict sense of the word (Wiktorowicz, 2004, p. 10-12).

In reality, the party’s strategy seems to include the slow process of mobilization which takes place at a local level through the NGOs that revolve in its orbit. Janine Clark (2004), Linda Herrera (2003; 2006) and Quintan Wiktorowicz (2001; 2004) have described how these types of organizations (schools, hospitals, cultural centers) can play the role of mobilizing mediation structures for Islamic activism across the Middle East. Far from being restricted to Lebanese movements, this type of “social development strategy” is also used by the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan or Hamas in the Palestinian Territories. The result is an increase in the party’s material and symbolic resources as well as a “mobilization of loyalties” (Chazel, 1993; 2003, p. 119-120) by consolidating solidarity between supporters and users.

School, in particular, is seen as the spearhead of a broader social movement, especially as it performs numerous functions and can affect several generations of users, whether directly or indirectly. In addition to being used by a leader or a party as a platform for action and electoral mobilization, school appears as a family-oriented institution of public interest, a significant source of local job opportunities, a socializing group for students and a potential springboard for social climbing.

Islamic schools therefore become levers for the action of Islamist movements such as Hizballah. As such, they fall within the classification suggested by C.
Tilly (1978, p. 73-74) who distinguished between defensive and preparatory mobilizations. A defensive mobilization works against the threat of other groups, while a preparatory mobilization prepares for future threats or opportunities. While the opening of a school may be seen as the response to a certain threat of “de-Islamization” or Westernization (defensive mobilization), it also springs from Hizballah’s desire to expand and promote its position, as a place where resources and allegiances are hoarded (preparatory mobilization). Hizballah schools are the result of past mobilization processes and at the same time, they are stepping stones for future actions in a process whose dynamic character is expressed in the very name of the party’s educational group, “Mobilization for Education”. In addition to its educational and social roles, schools then participate in a series of “integrated mobilizations” at the social and political levels, in the short or long term.

The mobilizing and socializing functions of schools actually interact and reinforce one another. Mobilization, in its dynamic nature, can offer a socializing experience to its players. Conversely, socialization can also be seen as a form of preparatory mobilization. Socializing is tantamount to the potential strengthening of allegiances, thus creating new resources that can be mobilized at a later stage. These functions, though separable, are constantly overlapping in practice and are implemented in a very conscious way. This reflects the holistic aspect of Hizballah’s project and its philosophy of action, operating both at the highest levels as well as in ordinary daily life.

In the system of action formed by the party and its supporters and voters, the question arises as to how the two functions interact. Often described as “client-centered” in Lebanon, the network of relations between political leaders and the so-called “civil” society is indeed characterized by a dyadic, asymmetrical relation in which services and votes seem to interact. As Myriam Catusse and Joseph Alagha (2008) point out however, there is a complex relation between the provision of services and electoral benefits, and it becomes all the more complex in Lebanon given the fact that voters do not cast their ballots in their place of residence. Although the establishment of a school does not automatically

4 Schools close to Hezbollah are not always established in villages known to be party strongholds; conversely, they are not located in “mission territories” the party seeks to win over. The relation between the presence of a school and the party’s score in the municipal elections is far from being apparent, as proven by the results of the 1998 and 2004 municipal elections. Besides, local strategies must also take into consideration the logic of families, which is as influential as (if not more so than) party considerations in villages (Favier, 2003, p. 58).
Returning to Political Parties?

guarantee electoral benefits, the political loyalty which results from the provision of educational services does exist. The expression “client-centered” is insufficient however for understanding such larger and more complex processes. Support, for that matter, does not only take the shape of votes, but also of more general or symbolic allegiances to the Islamic resistance or to certain causes supported by the party. Support can be expressed in different ways, such as participation in mass protests, loyalty to Hizballah media as a source of information, and the support – or simply the lack of criticism – of the party’s action.

On the whole, Hizballah’s Islamic schools open against a backdrop of client-centered practices which are sometimes binding and to which they are sometimes obliged to adhere. Yet these schools go far beyond this somewhat instrumental outline as they seem to be organically linked to the community. By spreading normative as well as practical models, Hizballah-affiliated schools are, in fact, building foundations. First, they are building a social foundation that is likely to channel mobilizations; second, they are potentially training some of the movement’s future leaders; and third, they instill cognitive principles which “make sense” to their audience. As a host for potential supporters as well as for confirmed militants, Hizballah Islamic schools blur the sharp division that is sometimes made between “civil society” and “partisan society.” In the case of Hizballah, or, a major portion of the Shiite community, this distinction seems to dissolve. Instead, we observe the establishment of a true “resistance society”, supporting the fight against Israel on the outside and promoting the party’s ideals and projects on the inside.

In doing so, Hizballah aims to fulfill a global mission by installing an alternative society. This holistic approach justifies its being labeled as a “social movement” with its own agenda, its strategies, its mobilization agencies as well as its set of values. The various missions of the party, which all revolve around the notion of Islamic resistance, are substantiated in different sectors of social life. This high level of integration enhances the party’s remarkable capacity for political mobilization (Harb, 2005, p. 27). In a much sharper yet different way than the older associations which shaped Lebanese society, Hizballah uses schools as building block for an “alternative society”. This social universe may even be described as a “counter-society”, mirroring the concept used by Annie Kriegel (1985) to describe the structure of the French Communist Party, which was later adapted to the Hizballah’s case by Waddah Chararah (1998). School takes place within a global institutional complex comprised of mosques, leisure centers, local

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5 On the issue of the relation between the “civil” and party spheres, refer to Karam (2006).
aid associations and scouting groups. All these structures provide opportunities for users to get closer to the party and become supporters. Once again, *Hizballah* innovates more in terms of the magnitude and meaning of its project than in terms of organization. Indeed, since the 1980s, other movements within the Shiite community have strived to develop a more or less integrated system of social institutions\(^6\). In the case of *Amal*, these structures were linked to the State or even attached to public institutions. This whole system however, may work to serve its clients but it has no vision for an alternative society. In this respect, *Amal* blurred the limits between the public and private sectors. This phenomenon is observed through the party’s control over some public schools in the South in addition to its own educational network, *Amal at-tarbawiyya*. In the case of *Hizballah* institutions, the frontier between public and private sectors has been more or less restored\(^7\); meanwhile, the divide between the private institutions which depend directly on the party and those which do not is greatening. More importantly, the rational and “holistic” approach to the needs of individuals or groups gives *Hizballah’s* project a whole different dimension. Entering a *Hizballah*-affiliated institution means potentially adhering to a whole new value system and joining the party’s stratified and “total” society.

**A Complex Educational Network at the Service of the “Resistance Society”**

Despite *Hizballah’s* reputation as a centralized and authoritarian party, a number of semi-autonomous organizations work in its shadow, *via* several types of social institutions which revolve around the party without being officially attached to it. In the area of education, this flexible functioning operates on two levels. First, it appears in the management of *Hizballah*-related schools with the existence of different networks which are more or less related to the party according to their

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6 For a detailed description of these institutions, refer to (Bannout, 2008; vol. 10: *al-Mu’asasat wa al-muchāraka*).

7 Nevertheless, it is necessary to qualify some cases on the local level, such as in the municipalities of the southern suburbs of Beirut, where one witnesses merging phenomena between some of the party’s social organizations and local public institutions. When organizing youth-oriented activities, the municipality of Ghobeiri is, thus, using the school buildings of Islamic networks or even Hezbollah leisure facilities (Le Thomas, 2009, p. 258-259).
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history, their operating methods and their type of clients. While some owe their existence to the party (al-Mahdî schools), others predate Hizballah and joined the group only later, under the influence of leaders (al-Mustafâ schools and Naîm Qassem). Others still branches of Iranian associations, which were set up in Lebanon during the civil war (al-Imdâd). Al-Mahdî, al-Imdâd and al-Mustafa networks constitute the three pillars of Hizballah’s educational program; together, they were providing formal education to more than 25,000 students in 2005.

Second, Hizballah’s sphere of influence goes far beyond these networks in that it encompasses a whole section of the Shiite educational and recreational sector in an indirect way. The “spirit” or the “atmosphere” which are characteristic of Hizballah schools are displayed in other networks that possess varying degrees of importance and autonomy. The unclear relationship between some of these associations and the party, and the ambiguous affiliation of some so-called “individual” schools reinforce this phenomenon, which can be spatially described as a set concentric circles or ellipses drawn around Hizballah.8 Defining the limits of these “circles” to determine which schools are more or less close to the party is not an easy task. It becomes even more complicated when we consider the ever-changing borders of the group and the high degree of porosity in its margins. In addition to the major networks which are notoriously linked to the party, it is important to take into consideration a “gradation” of schools which are more or less formally integrated within the hala islamia9. This institutional complexity as well as the determination of supporters who wish to consider Hizballah as a lifestyle or an “attitude” rather than as a party in the classical sense of the term, lead us to explore both institutions which are linked loosely to the party as well as those which are at its very heart. The difficulties encountered in attempting to define the borders of the circle of “Hizballah schools” are proof of a wider question, namely the very nature and influence of the party.

8 Drawing on Annie Kriegel’s approach with the French Communist Party, Waddah Chararah (2004, p. 19) used the image of concentric circles to understand a party like Hezbollah. He thus described the party and its circle of influence as an ensemble of four concentric circles: the two largest circles are public, whereas the remaining two central circles, which are intended for “the initiated”, remained closed and secret (cadres, fighters, families of martyrs). Accordingly, schools can be located in the third and fourth circles according to the networks, or even between the second and third circles in the case of the al-Mahdi schools, which are more inaccessible to an outside public.

9 Interview with Hussein Hajj Hassan, February 2007.
At the heart of Hizballah’s educational network: al-Mahdî schools

The first schools which come to mind when we consider Hizballah-run schools are al-Mahdî schools, which the party started in 1993. These schools rely on the Islamic Institution for Education and Teaching, an association established by Hizballah members including MP Hussein Hajj Hassan, formerly the head of education within the party. Al-Mahdî schools developed at a spectacular rate in their early days. In 2001-2002, 9,864 students were enrolled (Ghorawi, 2004, p. 146) in Lebanon and in 2004-2005, that number had jumped to 13,500. This substantial growth was achieved “internally” through the construction of schools, as well as “externally” when preexisting institutions acquired the “al-Mahdî” label and adopted its methods and procedures. While the Islamic Institution for Education and Teaching was directly related to Hizballah’s educational unit (Mobilization for Education) in the beginning, today it enjoys a certain level of administrative and financial autonomy under the aegis of its president, Sheikh Mustapha Kassir.

The development of this school network seems to have leveled off in the mid-2000s, even though a new school is set to open in Hadath (al-Dâhiya) toward 2010. The fifteen al-Mahdî schools were providing formal education to approximately 14,000 students and 800 employees in 2006. These schools are located in the three Lebanese regions which have a strong Shiite majority (seven schools in the South, four in the North Bekaa and three in the southern suburbs of Beirut). Through these schools, the Islamic Institution for Education and Teaching aims to provide a formal education that is both rooted in a corpus of Islamic values (such as the party imagines and applies them in society) and is adapted to Lebanese official state school requirements.

10 To consult the organizational chart of this association, refer to: http://www.almahdischools.org/newsite/_structure.php?filename=200708130326300 (Retrieved, February 7, 2009).
11 Hussein Hajj Hassan was responsible for education within Hezbollah in the 1990s. During the first decade of the third millennium, he became an honorary member of Hezbollah’s educational structures (interview with Hussein Hajj Hassan, February 2007).
12 According to the president of the association (Interview with Mustapha Kassir, February 2005).
13 Especially thanks to school fees.
14 For more information of the al-Mahdî schools and Hezbollah’s Educational Unit, refer to: Le Thomas (2008).
In *al-Mahdi* schools, teachers are chosen according to a variety of criteria defined by the Islamic Institution for Education and Teaching. These criteria include teaching skills, but also adhesion to Islamic culture and a respectable way of life (which can be confirmed through local inquiries if need be). Teachers at *al-Mahdi* schools and their families are, by and large, known to be committed to *Hizballah*, in which they sometimes have religious, political or even military functions. While these institutions abide by the official Lebanese curriculum, as do their sister establishments of all denominations, they also stress the importance of religion, and a specialized coordinator watches over this matter. Islam, as conceived by the party, is objectified in a religion course taught during two hours every week, as well as through a series of lifestyle rules, clothing and behavioral standards. More generally, Islam appears to provide a code for the management of time and space at school. In *al-Mahdi* schools, as in all schools which belong to *Hizballah*’s sphere of influence, girls have to wear the hijab (veil or scarf) as early as from the age of nine (according to the Hegira calendar), and the same holds true for women teachers. The calendar is marked by the dates of birth and death of Shiite imams, by ‘Ashura - the celebration which commemorates Hussein’s martyrdom in 680 in Karbala –, and by the important dates that have been marking the Islamic resistance history in Lebanon since 1982. School decorations use the same themes, as do field trips, which often take students to major sites of the “resistance society”. The desire to create a “resistance generation” goes along with an emphasis on what is seen as “modern” (technologies, the environment, health and scientific knowledge) or “citizen-oriented” (particularly the promotion of Lebanon and the Lebanese flag next to *Hizballah*’s). Politics, religion and school knowledge come together in harmony within the framework of a comprehensive model that aims to foster a resistance-oriented behavioral pattern among students.

Though well known, *al-Mahdi* schools do not include all of the Islamic Shiite schools which spread values and practices enforced in the “Islamic sphere” or in the “resistance society”. Other networks, which are linked to one another via “decentralized connections”, have joined *Hizballah*’s sphere of influence. This study will focus on the presentation of two organizations that have joined *Hizballah*’s circle, namely *al-Imdâd* and *al-Mustapha* schools. This approach has

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15 Verifying the composition of personnel and students of *al-Mahdi* schools has proven to be impossible in the field due to the difficulties encountered in gaining access to these schools, which seem to represent Hezbollah’s “educational private property”.

16 Interview with Hussein Hajj Hassan, February 2007.
the advantage of shedding light on the diversity of structures and audience in Hizballah-related institutions; it also stresses the relatively flexible methods of allegiance or identification to the party.

Al-Imdâd and al-Mustapha: Two allied networks with different profiles

Al-Imdâd, an association of general interest, was established in 1987 as the Lebanese branch of the Iranian association with the same name and was licensed by the Lebanese state in 1988. Today, it has definitely acquired a Lebanese identity even though it is still administratively linked to its mother association. Al-Imdâd has been headed since 2008 by the mayor of Khiyam, Hizballah-affiliated Ali Zreiq. The association was originally founded to help families in need and it has been active in several fields, including education. Al-Imdâd manages several centers for the handicapped and five school complexes that were initially built to reduce the number of street children during the war. Four thousand students are enrolled in these schools today. The association’s charity initiatives are clearly more present than in other associations within Hizballah’s sphere of influence. Still, only 20% of the students enrolled in these schools come from “very poor” environments, while the others belong to the lower middle class (employees, craftsmen, retail traders) of underprivileged regions, since the organization has relatively low school fees. In Hadath for instance (southern suburbs of Beirut), the Imam Khomeini School, which is part of Al-Imdâd group, was providing formal education to around 2,000 students in 2005. It was also managing, in partnership with the State, a public technical teaching center located in the same building.

The Al-Imdâd association chose to settle in al-Dâhiya as well as in regions where the Shiite community is less predominant, such as West Beirut, Batroun or the West Bekaa. Al-Imdâd also runs a school in the village of Mueisra in the Nahr

17 Al-Imdâd helps families who have lost their main source of support and who do not have access to other institutions close to Hezbollah (Deeb, 2006, p. 90).
18 Interview with Al-Imdâd’s PR official, February 2005.
19 Idem.
20 Interview with the headmaster of the Al-Imdâd school in Hadath, January 2006.
Ibrahim valley (Jbeil area, north of the caza of Kesrouan). This unusually situated Islamic school was established in 1993 in the context of the growing assertiveness of the Shiite minority in the Nahr Ibrahim valley, a predominantly Christian region (Dumontier, 2004). In 2007, the school was providing formal education to approximately 225 students, a number which continues to increase according to its headmaster. Even though it is located in a Shiite village that is far away from the main strongholds of the Shiite community, the school displays all the symbolic Islamic icons and accessories of the hāla islāmiyya and respects the major dates of the Shiite religious calendar. It therefore contributes to a process of greater mobilization of the region’s Shiite inhabitants based on a sectarian divide. It also promotes the consolidation of territorial, religious and partisan identities, reaching out to Shites who did not previously benefit from this kind of institution.

The Al-Imdād Mueisra school also benefits from a Jaafari Shiite endowment (waqf), which bears witness to existing relations between private associative networks and community assets. In Mueisra, as in Beirut, enrolled students belong to the poor and middle classes. School fees within al-Imdād network vary according to the level of education and to the region (from $300 in an underprivileged region to $1,200 in Beirut, for high-school classes). Past this amount, school is only accessible to the more well-off Shiite middle class, which is targeted by another network situated “further” within Hizballah’s circle of influence, namely the schools of the Islamic Religious Education Association (jama‘iyat at-ta‘alīm ad-dīnî al-islāmî, JTDI).

The JTDI association, which manages the Mustapha schools, has become a key institution in the field of general and religious teaching within the Shiite community. This association was established in 1974 by a group of clerics supported by key religious figures of the Shiite community. Its aim was to ensure the religious education of young generations by training religion teachers who would be active in public and private schools across Lebanon. The JTDI is officially headed by Sheikh Ali Sinan and comes under the more informal supervision of Hizballah’s Deputy Secretary-General Na‘im Qassem. Qassem headed the JTDI for a long period of time (between 1974 and 1988) and he still participates to this day in all of its major events. After a chaotic start due to the war in Lebanon, the Islamic Religious Education Association opened a teachers’ training school for religion teachers in 1977 and obtained a license

22 According to Dalîl al-madâris, the guide issued by the Lebanese Educational Center for Research and Development, 2004-2005, p. 206.
23 Interview with Ali Zreiq, director general of the al-Imdād association, February 2005.
from the Ministry of Interior in 1981. It has continued to grow ever since, and today it trains some 25 to 30 religion teachers every year in its “Teachers House.” The association advocates a practical conception of religious teaching that is adapted to students’ needs; more implicitly, it also spreads a version of Shiism that conforms with Hizballah’s religious and sociopolitical principles.

The JTDI staff, comprising about 300 teachers in 2005, is spread over public and private schools in predominantly Shiite regions. In class, the vast majority of teachers use the textbook published by the JTDI, *al-Islâm risâlatunâ* (“Islam is our message”). This religion textbook is the most widely used in the Shiite community in all classes up to the Baccalaureate level. It offers children and adolescents a “simplified and scholarly” form of religion, which promotes their insertion into the Islamic sphere.

*Al-Islâm risâlatunâ* is particularly used in Mustapha schools, which were established by the JTDI as of 1984, first in the southern suburbs of Beirut, then in the South and the Bekaa. The six Mustapha schools had approximately 8,300 students in 2005; they aim to “provide all Shiite regions with excellent schools.” School fees in these relatively elitist institutions can reach up to $2,000 US a year for high school classes. The existence of these schools therefore contradicts the idea that Hizballah institutions and, more generally, those established by Islamic movements in the Arab world would only educate the poorest of the

24 These principles can be found, for instance, in the chapters dedicated to the concept of jihad (*Al-Islam Risâlatunâ*, a grade 9 school book, chapters 10 to 13) or in the summer sessions organized for the benefit of the JTDI teachers (See Moussawi (1995, chap. 4)). These commitments remain implicit, as the JTDI aims to spread an “apolitical” vision of religion that is broad enough to concern the whole community.

25 Interview with the inspection official at the JTDI, September 2005; this paragraph is based on interviews with JTDI managers and teachers and on observations conducted in some of its schools.

26 It is competing with the book entitled *Al-Tarbiyya al-dîniyya* (Religious Education), which is published by the Higher Islamic Shiite Council but is less widely used than *al-Islâm risâlatunâ*. *Al-Tarbiyya al-dîniyya* is mainly used in some southern schools as well as in the schools that are close to the Amal Movement.

27 Interview, JTDI, Haret Hreik, September 2005.

28 Especially in Beirut and Tyre (*al-Hawsh*) schools; the schools affiliated with the association do not charge the same school fees, as there are differences between well-off regions and other, poorer ones, such as the North Bekaa.
poor, based on charitable efforts. In fact, it seems as though *Hizbullah*-related institutions span all levels of the Shiite community, much like the party’s voter base.

_Al-Imdâd_ and _al-Mustapha_ schools target different socioeconomic levels and complement one another geographically in terms of covering Shiite regions. They also contribute, however, to the potential homogenization of Shiite areas on cultural and ideological levels. Rites, ceremonies and conferences organized in these schools are remarkably similar. The icons are also similar, even though they are sometimes more discreet in _al-Mustapha_ schools. The two school magazines, Al-Midad and Ajial _al-Mustapha_, published by _al-Imdâd_ and _al-Mustapha_ respectively, discuss – each in their own way – the themes which prevail in the Islamic sphere: “resistance” and its great figures, the life of the 12 imams or the Prophet, as well as some practical issues (hygiene, the environment, and common knowledge). These two networks also use the same history and religion textbooks despite the diversity of options available for these two subjects. They are partly financed by the _khums_: Every year during Ramadan, they organize one or more _iftâr_ (meal served at the end of the day during Ramadan to break the day’s fast) to which some of the key religious and political figures of _Hizbullah_’s circle of influence are invited, as well as rich donors.

These two networks also have in common days off, including strike days, in a context of strong political polarization in Lebanon. Politicization is very evident here, whether it be “spontaneous” (emanating from students or teachers) or by decision of the schools’ administrations. The militant dynamic in schools is further reinforced by the latter’s role as a soundboard for outside events, which

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29 With regard to Islamic education and its public, Linda Herrera (1999) questioned this concept as far as Egypt is concerned. Janine Clark (2004) speaks of a similar phenomenon in the institutions affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan. For more general information on Islamism and middle classes, refer to Kepel (2003).

30 On the importance of the middle classes among Hezbollah’s supporters, refer to Harik Palmer (1996, especially p. 55-56); Haddad (2006); Norton (2000). Harik Palmer and Haddad both suggest that support for Hezbollah spans across the socioeconomic spectrum and that the party has a relatively complex social base (p. 56).


32 Shiite religious tax, which is equal to one-fifth of the profits made by the believers and which may be transferred to duly authorized charity associations.
Hizballah Schools in Lebanon

are frequently commented on within the institution. Furthermore, political figures close to the party use the schools as a stage, such as in the case of Sheikh Naim Qassem with *al-Mustapha* schools, and Mohammad Fneish – to cite just one example – with *al-Imdâd* schools\(^{33}\).

**Diversity of schools on the fringe of Hizballah’s circle of influence**

Just on the fringes of *Hizballah’s* close circle of influence, or within a “grand peripheral ring”, more modest structures extend and spread the party’s action in a less formalized manner and contribute to the creation of a common vision for action within the “resistance society.” This society seems to grow thanks to the active creation of mobilizing structures, but also by “coalescence” or “accretion”, i.e. by impacting existing institutions established by private individuals.

For instance, a dozen schools in the region of Baalbek united in the early 1990s – even before the establishment of *al-Mahdî* schools – for a *Tajammu’ al-madâris al-islâmiyya al-fardiyya* (Gathering of Individual Islamic Schools). The goal of this gathering was to obtain *Hizballah’s* protection and pedagogical services, and become part of the party’s sphere of influence. Among the schools which fit in this category is the school personally owned by Mohammad Yazbeck, one of Khamenei’s representatives in Lebanon, in Bouday, as well as *al-Manâr* school near Baalbek. *Hizballah’s* sponsorship in these schools takes shape in the organization of training sessions for teachers and granting scholarships\(^{34}\). Associations like *al-Imdâd* may also offer financial aid to students from poor families.

Other schools also spread *Hizballah* models and act as satellite organizations in the southern suburbs of Beirut and in South Lebanon. Here, this often takes the shape of a more informal influence on small-scale associations, such as *al-Nur*, an association located in al-Dâhiya that manages five schools clearly modeled on *Hizballah*-run institutions. Other individual schools in al-Dâhiya adopt more or less spontaneously symbols and practices that are likely to earn themselves the label “school allied to *Hizballah* schools” in the broadest sense.

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\(^{33}\) Speech delivered by Mohammad Fneish in an *al-Imdâd* school, December 15, 2006 (partly broadcast on *al-Manâr*). Fneish was, at the time, (resigning) minister of Energy.

\(^{34}\) Interview with the headmaster of a private school in Baalbek, January 2007.
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Intermediate situations such as these underline the vague character of the associative and social universe connected to the Hizballab sphere of influence and bear witness to the party’s numerous relations, to its influence in these regions and also to its methods for expanding its base. This halo effect is further emphasized when the public system itself becomes permeable to party influences under the aegis of a school headmaster or other important person from the world of education in regions loyal to Hizballah. As a whole, we can consider that a large proportion of Shiite schools show signs of a more or less pronounced “Hizballah-ization” under the combined influence of mimicking, the spreading of social and religious models, the use of similar pedagogical techniques, not to mention the resources made available to party followers. The spread of Hizballah education is therefore often less a result of coercion than a result of the party’s strong cultural hegemony on Lebanese Shiites in the 2000s. All these schools — from al-Mahdî network to Hizballah-affiliated individual schools — feature strong endogamous communities since they are located in predominantly Shiite regions and target Shiite followers. They mark the territory in the regions of Bekaa, Southern Lebanon or the southern suburbs of Beirut; such institutions undoubtedly contribute to bringing these regions closer together on the cultural and political levels. Beyond the image of a closed “counter-society”, in the end, Hizballah emerges as an alternative social model, which spreads within the Shiite community.

Variable degrees of autonomy

In Hizballah-related associations, foreign relations, especially with Iran, vary from one institution to another according to the circumstances of their establishment, evolution, financing and leaders. While the “parent company” of some associations, such as al-Shahîd35 and al-Imdâd, is located in Iran, this does not hold true for the JTDI or for al-Mahdî schools. These two networks do receive Iranian funds, however, whether from private institutions or from networks within the Iranian regime itself (Eisenlhor, 2005). As for al-Imdâd, it has maintained connections with its country of origin (Fawwaz, 2004), as shown

35 Al-Shâhid, or the Martyr's Foundation, used to manage the al-Shâhid school in Dâhiya; however, this school has been run since 2004 by the Islamic Institution for Education and Teaching. Al-Shâhid visibly shifted its focus on medical services in Dâhiya and also manages a technical center affiliated with its hospital, al-Rasûl al-’atham.
by the fact that many Iranian personalities frequently attend ceremonies and events organized by the group. Still, the association manages several technical centers and schools for handicapped children, and as such, it is one of the most active collaborators of the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs, which subsidizes this kind of institution. In addition, *al-Imdâd* owns at least one “free private” primary school for which it receives subsidies from the Lebanese Ministry of Education, as is the case with many private subsidized schools. In addition, Ali Zreiq, president of *al-Imdâd* organization, is considered a public figure as head of the Khiyam municipality.

Conversely, the JTDI was established by Lebanese clerics and was originally close to the Higher Islamic Shiite Council (*al-Majlis al-islâmî al-shi‘î al-a’lâ*), the official representative body which is partly financed by public funds. It later moved away from the council however and became autonomous. Today, it has taken over the Council’s task of paying religion teachers who are assigned to predominantly Shiite public schools. Furthermore, the JTDI has a much more distant relationship with Lebanese ministries than *al-Imdâd* since *al-Mustapha* network has no technical or “free private” schools in its network. The classification of NGOs that are allied with *Hizballah* as partners of the Lebanese state, or conversely as elements of a hypothetical “state within the state”, or even as elements which depend on a foreign state, is therefore a much more complex and subtle process than it would seem. Allegiance and dependencies are far from being definitive and mutually exclusive.

As to the insertion of these “*Hizballah* schools” in the broadest sense of the word into the Shiite educational landscape, it seems to be more about competition than about genuine cooperation. Relations between Shiite networks, which were still in an embryonic stage in 2005, gained a somewhat formal aspect with the creation of the “Meeting for Cooperation among Islamic Schools” (*Liqa’ li tawthiq al-madâris al-islâmiyya*) in 2006. This meeting brings together the *Amal al-tarbawiyya*, *Mabarrât*, *al-Mahdî*, *al-Mustapha* and *al-Imdâd* networks to coordinate festivities and holidays, and even share some educational methods. This new association organizes joint competitions for sports and recitals of the Holy Koran and it also aims to eventually standardize some of the books used in these schools, such as English language textbooks. In 2008, the meeting, which was based on an initiative undertaken by *Amal al-tarbawiyya* rather than by networks close to *Hizballah*, had yet to succeed in achieving concrete results in the area.

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of education. Apart from monthly meetings held by the directors of its five member associations, the initiative is characterized by the lack of any genuine cooperation or successful centralization of the various Shiite networks. This is in sharp contrast with their Catholic counterparts, who coordinate a special-interest group to express demands and defend interests.

In the end, in contrast with its original idea of promoting radical change from former practices and institutions, *Hizballah* maintains more or less solid and direct ties with local and national institutions whose rules and regulations it has come to accept.

**ON PARTISAN SOCIALIZATION MODELS AND THEIR USES: FROM THE PRODUCTION OF MEANING TO THE EMERGENCE OF NEW SOCIAL GROUPS**

**Hybrid models**

*Hizballah*-run schools are somewhat similar to those run by Catholic nuns in terms of organization as well as certain methods of time and space management. The movement of employees from Catholic to Islamic educational networks, particularly a number of Shiite teachers, promotes the acclimation of preexisting organizational models. Based on this common basic framework, institutions develop according to variable educational, religious and political models at local or international scales. Such models are, in turn, used to promote objectives which are very different from those promoted by Catholic evangelists since the 16th century. By spreading specific socialization models, *Hizballah* schools intend to play the major role of producing, rationalizing and expanding the universe of the “resistance society.”

Constraints which are specific to the Lebanese market of private education limit however the possibilities of these associations with regard to identity and education. The promotion of ideological models is combined with the objective of scoring good results on official state exams, which tends to standardize the content of courses across all communities. Socialization models therefore develop via extracurricular channels rather than during actual classes as such. The types of history and religion textbooks that are used and the messages transmitted orally
in the classroom endorse different visions and perspectives and clearly reveal the existence of some political biases. Yet these models are primarily expressed through conferences, clubs, school plays, religious ceremonies such as 'Ashura, or graduation ceremonies, all of which represent markers and symbols which spread the party’s vision regarding religion, Lebanese society and, of course, the party itself.

The taklîf ceremony, organized for young girls who have come of age and who are ready to wear a veil and to assume their “religious responsibilities”, was imported from Iran in the 1980s and is one example of these religious and partisan events. It also bears witness to certain processes of hybridization. Indeed, this female rite of passage, while borrowed from the Iranian society after the Islamic Revolution, gives rise to speeches and plays that are rooted in the Lebanese context and that glorify the Islamic resistance against Israel as well as the heroes of this resistance. The taklîf ceremony aims to develop religious and partisan identities from an early age; it is part of the Hizballah device of narratives and symbols which cements allegiances. This is especially true since the ceremony is broadcast by Hizballah media and therefore shown beyond the circle of school goers. Theatre in particular, by staging the local and regional issues which face members of the “resistance society”, aims to create an “emotional community” that is likely to reinforce bonds within the militant system.

As for the individual, going to a Hizballah school is tantamount to progressing from being a non-initiate to a “prospective initiate” (Sironneau, 1982, p. 423), from the status of “them” to that of “we”, through the knowledge spread by the party, the sociability it promotes and the rites it abides by in these institutions. Nevertheless, such religious and ideological models, which come in several versions according to each network, are not received passively; they are rather actively integrated into diverse local or family paths and configurations.

Constructing or reorganizing partisan identities around schools

Some Hizballah officials make no secret of their desire to partly reshape society through Islamic schools which are a vehicle providing indirect access to the family circle, in an effort to normalize and rationalize its functioning in the long run. The spread of social and religious models via the school environment is a result of this effort to broaden the scope of a militant religious program.

37 On this issue and regardless of the school context, refer to Mervin (2007).
The idea is to “discipline” and make religious practices public (Deeb, 2006) by verbalizing them, by granting them a meaning within the framework of the Islamic resistance and by making children the vehicles of a movement aimed at extending these practices into society. Though risky, this attempt at socialization by reaching out to children and their families in a seemingly random way becomes obvious when teachers give remarks and advice to students as well as instructions to their parents during school and religious events.

Interviews with teachers in *Hizballab*-affiliated schools suggest that for some of them, religious belief and practice grow with time, which may lead to the hypothesis that the teachers themselves are also sensitive to the socialization models to which they are exposed and which they are asked to implement in their schools. Such an assertion must be qualified and contextualized however. As far as students and teachers are concerned, socialization seems to be an interactive process that is never passive or complete. Furthermore, understanding the meaning of the Islamic sphere can happen in different ways and for different reasons, and can even be selective at the religious or political level.

The complex political socialization processes are theorized in different models, which seek to balance the influence of family and of secondary socialization agencies such as school. The “life-span change” model which stresses the importance of learning processes throughout life opposes the so-called “model of persistence”, which emphasizes the cause-to-effect relation between learning processes and subsequent experiences (Joignant, 1997, p. 540). In the case of *Hizballab* and its institutions, and regardless of the importance of this or that socialization agency, the stability of social environments which an individual experiences in the “resistance society” helps cement the acquired norms and values, since they remain valid from one institution to another. The scope and diversity of the environment in which each member can play an active role contribute to making such standards efficient and relevant on a daily basis. The existence of cumulative processes among the various institutions can be observed in a region such as al-Dâhiya. For instance, the relationship between family, school and leisure institutions is often characterized by congruence and complementarity rather than competition. Student or peer groups that are formed in school are important in influencing the political socialization process. Individuals draw their own paths and networks within these binding

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structures and abide by prescribed methods in their own way while maintaining a certain distance. This distance increases the further we move away from al-Mahdi schools, which are the closest to the party. We will hereunder attempt to understand the effect of the party on the “outer edge” of the party’s core.

Diversity of paths and uses of pro-Hizballah Islamic schools

According to questionnaires distributed to teachers in al-Mustapha schools, while the Islamic character of schools does not totally condition their vision and strategies, it is correlated to their representations and practices within the school, suggesting that the approach of these teachers is far from being purely instrumental vis-à-vis the institution where they work. Faith enables these teachers, here more than anywhere else, to give meaning to their real-life experiences. Nevertheless, faith does not make teachers insensitive to more pragmatic considerations in Hizballah schools. For instance, one teacher says that he joined one of al-Mahdi schools in the Bekaa because he needed a job, but that he quit his position one year later for another Hizballah-affiliated school because his salary was not high enough. Although he said he was generally in favor of the religious and political principles spread by al-Mahdi schools, he also questions whether or not he would one day enroll his own daughter in one.

Meanwhile, many other – mostly Shiite – teachers in Hizballah schools perceive teaching as a mission (risāla), if not a vocation. Religious and moral incentives are frequently evoked to describe the activity within the school. Yet when these same teachers have to choose a school to enroll their own children, they almost always take into consideration other elements such as the level of education or the quality of teaching in foreign languages.

As for parents who have chosen Islamic schools such as al-Mustapha and

39 Survey performed via a questionnaire in two al-Mustapha schools in parallel to other Islamic schools in the autumn of 2007.

40 This is similar to the “sense of mission”, which was mentioned by M. Fawwaz (2004, p. 361) about the personnel of Islamic NGOs in the southern suburbs of Beirut, especially the duty to help the community, for religious motives. Also, refer to Wiktorowicz (2001, p. 85). According to Wiktorowicz, this sense of mission to be accomplished is what distinguishes Islamic NGOs from their secular counterparts more than the nature of the activities as such.
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*al-Imdâd* schools, the level of education is said to be as important as religion⁴¹. Religion is often perceived as an ethical model and a set of life rules within the school environment, more than just a spiritual and dogmatic learning process. Little does it matter then that it be an exact replica of the religious practices learned at home. Indeed, many parents – at least within these networks – want their children to acquire a corpus of moral values and standards, albeit without glossing over the quality of education.

A municipality councilor who was elected on the *Hizballah* list in one of the party’s stronghold cities explains that his children went to schools close to *Hizballah* because he believes that although not sufficient by itself, an Islamic education is the key to successful integration into society. By contrast, a tradesman from Tyre who is not an extremely devout Muslim says that he enrolled his children in a nearby *al-Mustapha* school due to its high academic standards. He only takes into account the religious dimension of the school for the ethical values it advocates. He does not mind the fact that his teenage daughter takes off her veil outside of school, knowing that she had previously been in a school run by nuns. Another young man from al-Dâhiya explains that members of his family went to Islamic schools, such as *al-Imdâd*, since these schools were offering protection from precarious situations (handicap, poverty following his father’s death, war), thus using the schools for a more charity-oriented than a religious purpose. Different types of families can integrate *Hizballah* schools into their systems of moral values, especially since the schools target a socially, if not politically, heterogeneous public that is sometimes volatile on the educational level.

In consequence, and in line with their pragmatism, students of institutions such as *al-Mustapha* and *al-Imdâd* tend to move around a lot. Exchanges among these *Hizballah*-affiliated schools are not uncommon, as well as with other private (Islamic or not) schools, including schools run by nuns. Schools run by nuns remain a safe option, including in predominantly Shiite regions, despite the diversity of educational offers. *Hizballah* members themselves do not hesitate to enroll their children in Catholic schools, giving them precedence over schools like *al-Mahdî* where the level of education has yet to be proved.

The political opinions of the teachers surveyed greatly vary, beyond the basic

⁴¹ According to the interviews conducted with teachers and parents of students in these schools in the autumn of 2005 and 2006.
consensus which serves as an axiom within Hizballah’s sphere of influence (the legitimacy of the Islamic resistance against Israel and the superior “Lebaneseness” embodied by Hizballah in this struggle). Teachers in peripheral networks, such as al-Imdâd and al-Mustapha, are not always the “organic intellectuals” one would imagine, as they do not necessarily perceive the party “in absolute terms” (Sironneau, 1982, p. 428). Their positioning vis-à-vis Hizballah takes into consideration the various components of its political and religious identity and the various aspects of its program, and sometimes disassociates its military actions from its political and social actions. Allegiance to the party is diverse and selective in its reasoning and it also varies in intensity. While the reasons behind the resistance are unquestionable, Hizballah’s involvement on the Lebanese political stage all the way up to the ministerial level can be perceived differently (at least in private), as it naturally entails some compromising. The party’s social institutions are sometimes questioned by the most secular minded supporters, who nonetheless acknowledge the benefits of efforts made by Hizballah to compensate for the Lebanese state’s deficiencies in social development.

42 Abi Abisaab (2005) quotes, in particular, Gramsci’s concept when referring to the hawza-trained clerics.

43 On the secularized components of Hezbollah’s base, refer to Palmer (1996, p. 57-58). Based on a quantitative survey conducted in 1993, Harik argues that the level of religiosity is only weakly related to political leanings within the Shiite community. In contrast, Haddad (2003, p. 31) contradicted his own previous conclusions. He underlines far more than Harik the importance of religion within the framework of affiliation with Hezbollah. Nevertheless, the two studies are not as incompatible as it may seem since a section of secularized Shiites consider themselves more or less close to Hezbollah depending on circumstances and on the party’s policies.

It is worth mentioning that the abovementioned surveys were conducted in the autumn of 2006 at a time when Hezbollah benefited from an impressive rise of popularity on the political stage and within the Shiite community. Crowned with the prestige of “divine victory”, it had the advantage of being in an unprecedented, “abnormally enlarged” position (according to the Taif Agreement system), which modified – as a result – the guiding principles within the group and beyond it. The classical division between Hezbollah and other Shiite forces did not disappear; rather, it seemingly led at this stage to an increasing distinction between practicing and non-practicing Shiites within the framework of the same circle of influence, which is favorable to Hezbollah and to its policy of resistance.

44 However, it is worth noting that many managers of these networks that are close to Hezbollah insist, in their “official” discourse, on the need to improve the public system and emphasize the palliative character of Hezbollah’s educational actions in this field.
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Teachers, parents and former students who were questioned perceive the party’s religious dimension differently and have varying opinions about the importance of religion. On the whole, these Hizballah supporters, who maintain complex partisan identities, combine religion and politics smoothly.

Teachers and families are more or less clearly attached to the “resistance society”, which appears to be a group of institutions that exercise strong social control based on some non-negotiable rules and principles. Beyond these indisputable key principles, however, there is no real consensus in the party’s periphery. Nuances exist among Hizballah supporters, or “fellow travelers”, with regard to their opinion about the efficiency of Hizballah’s social institutions, about the importance of religion in the party’s ideology or about the relation between the state, the party and other communities. As the first alumni of Hizballah-affiliated schools begin to join the party’s supporters and militants, partisan dynamics may further evolve.

Growing up in the “resistance society”

A second generation of supporters is growing up in Hizballah Islamic schools and is being trained, according to Albert Hirschman’s typology (1970), on the principles of “loyalty” more than on the “exit” or the “voice”. In this respect, former students sometimes prove to be more politically committed and radical than their teachers, as revealed by some interviews conducted in schools allied to Hizballah. While it is still too early to interpret this reality as the result of age or generation, or even as a temporary situation, these emerging groups undeniably display new frames of reference, different from those which prevailed when the previous generation began to show interest in politics in the early 1980s. This new layer within the community, supervised from an early age by Islamic institutions and schools suggests new methods for accessing the world of politics: these methods are based on a pattern of continuity rather than radical change. For the youngest supporters, the social organization established by the party is perceived as “natural”, as something that goes without saying (Deeb, 2006, p. 226-227). Some students perceive it not only as a cause to defend, but also as an attractive work environment.

45 Refer to Deeb (2006, p. 226-228); and Harb (2005, p. 365-67) on the renewal of Hezbollah’s political base.

46 Interviews with Shiite students, June 2003 and the autumn of 2006.
This phenomenon, which is particularly pronounced in Hizbullah’s case, is also partially noticeable within the Amal Movement despite an entirely different relation with the state.

The educational models implemented in these institutions can be particularly restricting and holistic, but they are nevertheless in constant evolution. Indeed, they are open to negotiations and undergo more or less marginal modifications. The presence of prayer in school (prayer at school was cancelled for secondary classes in al-Mustapha schools due to time constraints), mandatory learning of Koranic verses in preparation for internal competitions at the end of the school year, relative strictness regarding the issue of school uniforms, the separation of boys and girls in class when they become teenagers or at an earlier age… all these issues are dealt with in a pragmatic and incremental way. In this sense, Hizballah schools also become a place where social dynamics are produced: some are centripetal of course, but some can also be centrifugal as far as the party is concerned. Some students toy with the codes and seek to distort them, whereas others never miss an opportunity to highlight the existence of certain standards and the need to respect them. In a major Islamic school for girls in al-Dâhiya, for instance, some high school students complained about a certain “decline in moral standards” within the school, thus stirring a debate and embarrassing the school supervisors47. Such situations ultimately reflect the social negotiations and changes which take place within and around Hizballah’s circle of influence.

The party is then confronted with the question of consolidating loyalty among this new support base related to Islamic schools, while it also has to control the social change that is induced by these institutions. Though currently modest in number, these future graduates of Hizballah schools are likely to play a key role in the near future due to the demographic and sociopolitical configurations in which they fit. It remains to be seen whether their network will be limited to the sphere of the hala islamiya, whether they will broaden their reach across society and spread the party’s values and practices, or whether they will distance themselves from Hizballah. Their actions will depend on the degree of control Hizballah leaders and institutions will be able to retain, using their symbolic credibility and, at the same time, their capacity to meet defined social and political expectations.

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CONCLUSION

Hizballah’s sphere of influence gives rise - more or less clearly depending on the network - to a social project characterized by a holistic approach to the individual, a complex set of institutions embedded in different social development areas, and the emergence of highly-structured and standardized life models. These models aim to reinforce a cohesive “Islamic resistance society”, which – according to party officials – is called upon to shape the Lebanon of tomorrow.

This sociopolitical and religious action allows Hizballah to build a “cultural hegemony” on a much broader foundation than that of its active militants, by relying on a moving institutional network to which it is linked more or less clearly. In this respect, a considerable portion of the lower middle class graduating from the schools covered by this study is undoubtedly less under the direct control of Hizballah than under its indirect influence, via the educational networks linked to the party. These new Islamized lower middle classes are the result of decades of consolidation of the Shiite community, as well as the product of Hizballah’s more recent efforts in the field of education.

While the future of these schools is currently unpredictable, these institutions still give rise to multiple questions for the researcher. On a theoretical level, they explain politicization methods, partisan dynamics and the various types of relations between the state and society as expressed by some Islamist parties. On a more concrete level, at stake for the party are the perpetuation and expansion of a base of supporters and militants through these socialization agencies. It is difficult to tell what the future has in store as far as the development of these institutions is concerned, keeping in mind that national and regional dynamics play a key role in local politics. Yet these educational structures still propose models that are likely to rewrite the current sociopolitical equation in Lebanon, regardless of whether they are eventually adopted or challenged. Through such institutions, the future of the Shiite community and – implicitly – of Lebanon itself is in question.
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Hizballah Schools in Lebanon


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Parliamentary “representation” is both a “staged performance” and an attempt at institutionalizing compromises amidst quite fragile social and political equilibriums. To examine the role of legislative elections in the recruitment of political elites, the sociographic method of analyzing the composition of parliament has shown itself to be particularly illuminating.

Going beyond the publicly displayed issues both large and small, beyond all electoral bookkeeping and without overly dwelling on the ups and downs of the administrative interventions, this text is a contribution to the observation of the process of diversification and “notabilisation” of a significant proportion of the representatives of the nation in the context of the consolidation of monarchical power in Morocco. In particular, this paper analyzes the variations in the socio-political divisions and alliances linked to the codification of new
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norms in the principal pathways to the very highest echelons of the official political establishment.¹

After a review of developments in parliamentary recruitment since independence, I will look at one of the highlights of the legislative elections of September 2007: not the surprising absence of an Islamist tidal wave, but the change, along with its electoral decline, in the composition of the elected representatives of the main organization of the left, specifically its transformation - at the electoral level - from a party of “militants” into a party of “notables”.

THE PRODUCTION OF PARLIAMENTARY ELITES: FROM POLARIZATION TO FRAGMENTATION

A strong continuity seems to permeate the history of political recruitment in Morocco. Before the advent of the Protectorate in 1912, tribal leaders dominated the countryside while the ruling elite in the cities belonged to bourgeois Andalusian families (Fez, Tétouan, Meknès, Salé), active in trading and crafts, makhzenian² families of recent vintage, dependents of the Royal House, and chorfa, descendants of the prophet, who arbitrated disputes in relation to their social prestige. During the Protectorate, French schools ensured the renewal of urban elites, while the army was the chosen career for rural elites. The leadership of the National Movement was drawn mainly from the urban bourgeoisie (Marais, 1964).

Allies in the nationalist struggle, the monarchy and the National Movement became rivals after independence in 1956. Fearful of the hegemonic goals of the nationalists, the demands of the urban elites and proletarian upheavals, the monarchy established a multi-party system and reversed its alliances: rural notables were promoted as “defenders of the throne” (Leveau, 1985). In this context, the Parliament is thought of less as a locus of power than as an instrument of control of the political class and restraint of potential competitors. However, variations over time in its composition are not due to monarchical strategies alone.

¹ I conducted field surveys, particularly during the legislative elections in 2002 and 2007, in Casablanca, Rabat and the north of Morocco. Interviews were held with elected representatives of the USFP during the Spring of 2008.

² Families associated with the traditional state administration of Morocco (translator’s Note).
The Parliamentary “Notablisation” of a Party of Militants in Morocco

The electoral analysis conducted by Rémy Leveau during the 1960s identified “solid blocks of opposing tendencies” (Chambergeat, 1961) reflecting divisions that were geographic, social and cultural. Based in the old cities and great agricultural plains of the North, the Istiqlâl, founded in 1944, appeared as the party of the “old bourgeois guard” which was nationalist, urban and drawn from the merchant class. The National Union of Popular Forces (UNFP), born in a 1959 split in the Istiqlâl, emerged as a “group of the petty bourgeoisie and the middle classes”, younger, more modest, consisting of many intellectuals with a modern education (lawyers, teachers, students), more or less to the left. Its electoral base was in big industrialized cities and the countryside of southern Morocco (due to the influence of the Liberation Army, whose members remained close to the UNFP) (Leveau, 1985; Waterbury, 1970). Crystallized in the competition between the monarchy and the National Movement (UNFP and Istiqlâl), the main political dividing line of the 1960s was that between the urban zone and a rural world, led by local elected or administrative elites (Marais, 1972), made up of land owners, sensitive to the status of the land. Conversely, the cities, which made up only 20% of the population, appeared more open to speeches of the opposition shaped by the National Movement. What happened to this pattern marked by the confrontation between rural notables, “defenders of the throne,” and the heirs of the urban National Movement in the wake of half a century of accelerated changes (a rejuvenated population and an urban majority, etc.)?

A process of fragmentation put an end to the polarization of the sixties. Following the attempted coups d’état in the early 1970s, the building up of the Sahara case into a national priority gave the monarchy the opportunity to begin stabilizing the regime, to reformulate a pact, and to try to broaden its social base beyond the rural world. After having opposed an alliance between the landed aristocracy and the urban elites, the monarchy began to break up the hegemony of the nationalists and the left in the cities, using both the carrot and the stick. In 1973, it made possible the rapid enrichment of a part of the bourgeoisie, through the policies of Morocanization and easy access to bank loans. Meanwhile, it began a program of recruitment of “urban executives”.

This new dynamic inevitably influenced the pathways of production of new parliamentarians. The particularly young Assembly elected in 1977 (75% of those elected were between 25 and 44 years old) expressed an opening to the middle classes, to executives and civil servants. While rural areas remained a privileged source of recruitment, the urban dimension was reinforced (Sehimi, 1979, p. 98). While farmers were important in the Istiqlâl and the MP, the Socialist Union of Popular
Forces (USFP)³ and the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS)⁴ continued to appear as parties of teachers. The “Independents” continued to be characterized by their diversification. This category promoted and supported by the Administration, named candidates who were not nominated by parties (Santucci, 1979, p. 221). In 1978 most of this category joined the National Rally of Independents (RNI), founded by Ahmed Osman, former Prime Minister and brother-in-law of Hassan II.

This trend was reinforced in 1984, in the wake of the first social effects of the Structural Adjustment Program. Support for the birth of the Constitutional Union (UC) in 1983 by the Administration was the main novelty of this election. Nicknamed the “pressure cooker”, the party borrowed along with the name of this cooking utensil the idea of accelerated “cooking” because the party had just barely been born when it had already won the elections. Its aim was to conquer the “post-Independence generation,” to mobilize young people, civil servants, executives and professionals, who remained outside of the political game (Schimi, 1985, p. 44).

The Parliament elected in 1993 reflected a change in the general course of events at the expense of the Administration and farmers. It “no longer aimed primarily at regulating traditional elites: it became a place for co-opting urban and urbanized elites, recruited mainly from the modern professions” (Parejo, 2002, p. 144).

A fundamental shift occurred in the late 1990s, following the “alliance” between the monarchy and the heirs of the National Movement. While drawing their force from their history in the struggle for independence and the democratic transition, the main justification of the alliance was to register “the gravity of the situation”. Explicitly, Morocco was “on the verge of a heart attack.”⁵ Implicitly, the end of the reign of Hassan II was imminent, and a particular concern was aroused by the continued strengthening of an Islamic counter-elite, recruited from the middle and lower classes in the large cities. In Parliament, the Justice and Development Party (PJD)⁶ made a “targeted” breakthrough and replaced the left in the opposition. Faced with the gradual loss of its popular social base, having ceased to be an alternative,

³ Born in a 1975 split in the UNFP between the Rabat wing, formed by party leaders, intellectuals and the party youth, and the Casablanca wing, which was dominated by trade unionists.
⁴ The most recent name of the Moroccan Communist Party established in 1943.
⁵ According to Hassan II in his 1996 speech presenting the results of the World Bank.
⁶ Name given in 1998 to the People’s Constitutional Democratic Movement (MPCD) - led since 1967 by Dr. Khatib, close to the monarchy - after they were joined by members of the MUR (Mouvement unicité et réforme).
the USFP opted for “alternating governmental power by mutual consent”, under the Koutla. Also outlined was the silent hope – soon to be disappointed - that the alliance with the monarchy and the accession of the leftist party to government would enable the party leadership to regain control over a divided organization.

The faces of the new MPs elected since the 1997 election, an election marked by the introduction of a bicameral parliament, exemplified the formation of an expanded front around the monarchy. The number of entrepreneurs elected to the House of Representatives by direct suffrage mushroomed in the elections of 1997, a trend which continued in 2002 (Catusse, 2004, p. 58). From this point on, two channels of recruiting MPs were dominant: first, teachers, reinforced by the very sharp rise in those elected from the PJD (42 seats in 2002) and, secondly, those under the statistical headings of “merchants”, “industrialists”, “businessmen”, “company directors” and “entrepreneurs”.

Graph n°1: Pathways of Recruitment to the Moroccan Parliament between 1977 and 2002

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7 Coalition of the USFP, Istiqlal and the PPS in 1992.
8 This graph should be read with caution. It was established on the basis of the chart in M. Bennani Chraibi (2004, p. 27). First, sources for the data presented in percentages are varied: for the elections of 1977 and 1984, see A. Claisse (1984, p. 665); for 1993 and 1997, see M. Catusse (2000, p. 60); for 2002, data were supplied by the Ministry of Communication. At the time this text was written, the figures for 2007 were not available. Second, there is a fundamental bias due to the fact that the figures for 1977, 1984, and 1993 refer to a single chambered parliament (of which one third was named in indirect elections). For 1997 and 2002, I chose to retain only the data concerning the House of Representatives, elected by direct vote since the introduction of bicameralism in 1996. Finally, it is important to emphasize that the category under the label “entrepreneurs” did not appear in the various data under the same designation: in 1977 and 1984, it referred to “merchants” and “industrialists”; since 1993, the category “industrialist” has disappeared; in 2002, those of “businessmen” and “company directors” have entered the ministry sources. This means that this graph only draws trends in a rather imperfect way.
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The socio-professional breeding grounds for the liberal professions, education, and civil service which in a democracy such as France predispose to entry in politics are rivaled in Morocco, if only at the parliamentary level, by others such as “farmers” and “entrepreneurs”. But this can be clearly seen only by crossing these categories with the types of recruitment pathways, including militancy and “notability” that are constantly being redefined in the recent history of the kingdom. These are first linked to the social, economic and cultural transformations at work in society and can then be connected to the changing identities, social bases and strategies of the political parties themselves.

To address these phenomena, I will deal here particularly with the case of the USFP, interesting for several reasons. Having been the symbol of opposition in Parliament for several decades, it became a governmental party. Main loser in the 2007 legislative elections, it went from 1st to 5th place. In addition, it has been violently shaken by crises and repeated divisions. Since its birth, the left wing of the National Movement has split into eight parties, four of which were born after the 1998 establishment of a system of “alternating governmental power” under the auspices of the USFP. This means that the transition from oppositional to governmental party had not been assimilated. The party lost the support of “its” union, but also much of its youth as well as some of its intellectual figures. These changes have had an effect on the physiognomy of its electoral group in the House of Representatives in 2007.

**The New Profile of USFP Deputies in the Light of the Party’s Transformation**

From 2002 to 2007, the USFP group elected to the House of Representatives declined from 50 to 38 members while developing a new profile. Competition

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10  On these mutations, see M. Bennani Chraïbi (2002).
11  The left was also represented by the PPS and the Organization for Democratic and Popular Action (OADP - Organization pour l’action démocratique et populaire). Founded in 1983, the OADP has its roots in the wing of the Marxist-Leninist movement of the 1970s which in part came from the UNFP. It was the hard core of the consolidation of several small organizations of the new left, under the label of the United Socialist Left in 2002, later, in 2005, the United Socialist Party (PSU – Parti socialiste unifié).
between the two main socio-economic pathways of recruitment to the Parliament as a whole now takes place within the same movement: USFP teachers have for the first time been surpassed by newcomers: the “businessmen”! How can we interpret this change and the electoral sanction inflicted on the party? Are they connected in one way or another?

*Graph n°2: Socio-professional careers of USFP elected officials between 2002 and 2007*

Various hypotheses could be developed concerning the electoral defeat of the USFP, which also resulted in the non-reelection of some government ministers as well as of several members of the political bureau including the former chairman of the group. In the more or less long term, the electoral sanction suffered by the party could be considered as the result of the transformation process changing the party’s identity, the widening gap between a heterogeneous militant base and its leadership bodies, themselves divided: joining the government may have “thawed out” internal contradictions whose rise to the surface was relatively slow as long as the organization was in the opposition. On another level, even USFP members evoke the “compromises” of the left organization, its silence,

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12 This chart is based on data available on the Parliament website (for 2002) and that of the USFP (for 2007), which I have converted into percentages. For ease of readability, I created a “modern professions” category grouping together lawyers, engineers, journalists and doctors.

13 The entry in the government was far from having been as costly to the Istiqlal, first in the number of deputies, second in number of votes by which it trailed the PJD. It had often participated in the government prior to 1998. Moreover, since the split of 1959, it has been seen as a party of notables and its “social base” has not fundamentally changed.

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its support for widespread repression, the break with its traditional social base, the race for ministerial portfolios, etc. Those disenchanted with the party also question its functioning and the absence of internal democracy. The method of governing the party based on its “historic leadership” became obsolete during this phase of the liberalization of its politics. Finally, the method of managing the 2007 election campaign may also have helped amplify the discontent.\footnote{Among the many points of contention were the “political opening” that marked the selection of candidates, but also highly criticized candidacies of the son and the chief of staff of the party’s First Secretary.}

After having suffered these losses, the party launched a “political opening” in order to strengthen its ranks. First, the recruitment philosophy was fundamentally changed. During the period more or less marked by conflict with the monarchy, the USFP functioned as a “closed” party of militants with limited recruitment through a system of checks and sponsorship for membership for fear of police infiltration. The public demonstration of reconciliation with the monarchy and the consequences of the period spent in the government led the leadership to change these recruitment norms and to open the doors to applications for membership, including those of defectors from parties accused in the recent past of having been created by the Administration. Then, on the eve of elections in 2007, new criteria for selecting candidates for the legislative elections were codified: with few exceptions militant capital gave way to individual capital, i.e. the personal capacity to mobilize support and win votes beyond the party limits. Thus, local notables were solicited by influential members of the political bureau.

Crossing the profiles of the USFP representatives elected in 2007 with their degree of “seniority” in the party helps clarify these points. More than one third of the group consisted of new recruits. “Businessmen”, the overwhelming majority, were to win districts for the USFP which so far had escaped party control, especially in the Sahara: Laayoune, Oued Eddeheb, Boujdour, Ouerzazate, Zagora, Asilal Demnat, Nador. These elected officials were drawn from two distinctive but complementary groups: prominent positions as notables in their community or tribal group thus opening the possibility of employing strategies involving group identities and even a degree of social control;\footnote{On the characteristics of electoral mobilization in the Sahara see V. Veguilla (2004).} possession of economic capital that gave them an active reputation, vital to the development of client relationships. Amongst these elected officials was the prominent figure of
Hassan Derhem, 54, president of a municipal council, formerly a parliamentary figure from the RNI, Laâyoune “notable” from a large Saharan tribe, and the head of a large commercial trading and industrial firm (frozen cephalopods, distribution of petroleum products, etc.) It is worth recalling that in the Sahara, the fishing sector is a central economic activity creating wealth and jobs. In addition to foreign interests, the beneficiaries of this windfall are mostly the senior military officers and, more generally, those who are close to the Royal Palace. In other words, it is a fundamental part of the clientelist system set up in the Sahara by the monarchy. By recruiting a person such as H. Derhem the USFP began to be a part of a network from which it had been excluded for a long time. Not only did it have access to a businessmen’s “catnet”, but also to its “expertise” in judging the potential for mobilizing support for a local actor. Indeed, it is through him that people having the same profile were invited to be candidates under the USFP banner.

The women USFP officials elected on its national list are also new faces in other ways. They deserve special attention to the degree they have become deputies “automatically”, not without having created a deep uneasiness within the party. Indeed, the creation of a quota of women had two main consequences. First, it fuelled the competition between women activists of each political party for a position of eligible rank on the national party list. Because, according to the party’s overall vote and the arrangement of the list, candidates could be assured of winning a seat, regardless of the effort they had made personally during the campaign. Secondly, such a reform strengthened the grip of the party apparatus on the selection process, having even more decisive influence than for local candidates. Therefore, the criteria for drawing up the list are indicative of the strategies adopted: militancy or “family ties” and clientelism? Seniority

16 The term coined by C. Tilly (1978) is well suited to this scenario, at the junction between a category and a network.
17 To ensure a better representation of women in the House of Representatives and to limit male domination, both within society as well as in partisan bodies, a national list was designed in 2002, following advocacy work by the women’s movement. Some 295 members were elected from 95 local constituencies, 30 (in practice women candidates) at the level of a national constituency. On a single ballot, voters were asked to indicate two choices: the first on the list of candidates at the local constituency (local list), the second relating to the candidates list at the national constituency level (national list).
18 The drawing up of this list provoked a crisis, after which four “poorly ranked” members of the political bureau withdrew in protest.
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and political experience or “novelty” and “opening” to other sectors of society in order to facilitate generational renewal, regional balance and opportune alliances? In the case of the USFP, it is the “opening” that prevailed. Of the five women elected on the national list, there are one woman who was an activist in the Democratic Socialist Party (Parti socialiste démocratique)\(^{19}\) (S. Saadi, 65), two candidates with “entrepreneurial” and/or “technocratic” profiles (S. Karkri-Belkeziz, 46, entrepreneur, founding president of the Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Morocco; N. Lahrachi,\(^{20}\) 60, university professor, adviser to the Prime Minister until 2005, CEO of the Moroccan Society of Export Insurance); a candidate with a regional and “notable” profile (F. Boussole, 40, belonging to the family network of Saharan notable H. Derhem) and finally an example of generational renewal (A. Guellaa, 33, lawyer, USFP activist since her years at the university).

Latefa Jbabdi is one of the four women to have been elected at the local constituency level, the only one under the banner of the USFP. Aged 53, a teacher, she is best known for her feminist struggles with the Union for Women’s Action of which she was one of the founders in 1987, for her decisive participation in the mobilization between 1992 and 1993 for a “million signatures” in favor of reforming the personal status code, and more recently for the introduction of a quota promoting women’s representation in Parliament. With multiple affiliations, most of her career as a political militant has been outside of the USFP. Indeed, she personifies one of the typical pathways of the conversion of a Moroccan Marxist-Leninist militant of the 1970s, having been successively active in the Party of Liberation and Socialism (former Communist Party), the March 23 Movement, the OADP, then the PSD, before its recent merger with the USFP. More importantly, she represents one of the female Moroccan figures who has suffered the most from the repression and torture. Despite being strongly solicited to appear on the national list, Latefa Jbabdi refused to take part in what, in her view, had degenerated into an organized competition between women. It is in the light of this rich capital of feminist militancy, which was in no way due to the activities of the USFP, and a sign of the opening vis-à-vis the former members of the PSD, that M. Lyazghi, then First Secretary of the USFP, might have given up “his” constituency, (in fact, until 2002 the electoral stronghold of Fathallah Oualalou, USFP Finance Minister from 1998 to 2007) better known as that of Mehdi Ben Barka in 1963: Rabat-Océan. While at first sight this might

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19 The PSD came from a split in the OADP. In 2005 it merged with the USFP.

20 She resigned her position as incompatible with that of CEO.
have been seen as a “reward” for militancy, on the eve of the election it looked more like a poisoned apple. The personal role which Latéfa Jbabdi represented would in reality help the USFP to keep control of the symbolic district in an election which was particularly disputed, at least on the left, and dubbed by the press “constituency of death”. Victory was won by a mobilization ensured by activists and supporters of the UAF and from the hard core of the PSD. In addition to the party, the campaign was funded in Rabat-Océan through the contributions of activists and through subscription campaigns. Note, finally, it was not necessary to recruit and pay for outside electoral workers, which had ceased to be the rule in the USFP.

Two main profiles stand out among the long-standing USFP members. First, a little less than one third of the group (12 deputies) who had been candidates in “their” circumscription, survived from the previous session of the House of Representatives. Abdelawahad Radi is the prototype: a university professor aged 73, member of the House from Beni Hssen Kénitra since 1963, he chaired the House of Representatives from 1997 to 2007, and became Minister of Justice in 2007. Secondly, some activists are characterized by a local base measurable by their municipal mandates (presidency of town or regional councils, etc.) and/or by their networks of support among local elected officials. All of these deputies “took care” of their base during their mandate: “they did their work,” which means “they solved the people’s individual and collective problems,” “they defended their community” (interview with a re-elected deputy, April 2008). Thus they gave preference to the “politics of action.” Therefore, possession of a local mandate or a close connection with local elected officials became essential.

In return for mobilizing support among their clients, the municipal presidents expected that the representatives of the nation would assist them during their mandate: resolving problems such as those linked to infrastructure; a mediation role not only in the political capital, but also with the governor; an active presence during their own election campaign. To summarize, with a few

21 If M. Lyazghi had run, he would have had to deal with leaders of parties that had split from the USFP: the Socialist Vanguard Party, founded in 1983 and the PSU. Other leaders of the Istiqlal, the RNI and the PJD were also included among the other candidates.

22 Again, it would be interesting to compare the change in voting patterns from one election to another.

23 This formula has been borrowed from C. Goirand (2000). See also in this regard L. Zaki (2004).

24 Note that the reform of 1976 which established the municipality as a place of power launched a system of municipal patronage.
exceptions, the success of these deputies seemed to record their adjustment to the socio-political changes in the country, to changes in the party and, most importantly, to the functioning of the Moroccan electoral system and to the remodeling of clientalist relations in a competitive direction, giving increasing importance to individual or collective interests of “clients”.

**NOTABILITY AND ACTIVISM: CHANGING CATEGORIES**

What lessons emerge from going through an analysis of the profiles of those elected on the left? Except for deputies on the national list, those who were elected under the banner of the USFP owed little or nothing to the reputation of the party: in the electoral arena, the party has tended to become a “party of notables.”

Beyond a simple opposition between a “party of militants” and a “party of notables”, implying different resources and ways of going to the people, a most important distinction appears, namely the degree of candidates’ dependence on partisan capital: “The meeting of collective partisan capital and individual social capital produces (...) three types of relations - always changing - in which politicians either owe their resources to their party, or are relatively independent of the party, or thanks to the party were able to accumulate their own capital with which they were able to create their own autonomy” (idem, p. 48). In the recent past, the USFP “label” could be an asset to “unknown” candidates - rewarded for their activism and who owed almost everything to the party - in constituencies considered being dominated by the USFP: the voters voted for the party and not for the person by loyalty to a political identity, to its symbols, to its social activity, etc. The candidate then took up the whole repertory of party values (justice, integrity), of some of the founding struggles of the party,

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26 This hypothesis has been raised by M. Tozy (2008, p. 40).
27 Usually, we tend to believe that parties of militants offset the absence of their own social resources by providing “partisan collective capital”: acronyms, a political label, emblems, etc. See in this regard M. Offerlé (2002, p. 45 et ss).
28 We should not forget that elections have been held under the supervision of an openly interventionist government until the mid 1990s.
of the presentation of the “popular forces” in the party’s popular oratory. After joining the government, the USFP’s candidates could no longer effectively use the record of “past conflicts”\textsuperscript{29} which they have used for a long time: those who are elected under the party label now owe their election either to their individual social capital or to their specific stature as a militant or to their own capital which they have personally acquired. In the latter case, the party label might even become a handicap.\textsuperscript{30} This suggests that the leadership’s new emphasis in the selection of candidates on the “personal capacity to win a district” would be an attempt to adjust to the devaluation of the partisan capital in favor of the USFP, a record of the dissolution of its electorate of “granite” of the past.

At a second level, the rise in the number of entrepreneurs in Parliament not only reflects the monarchy’s efforts to see the development of competency amongst the elected officials,\textsuperscript{31} which would then be transmitted by a component of civil society\textsuperscript{32} as well as by those parties trying to adapt to this model by choosing candidates based on their technocratic profile. Certainly, in the 1990s, we saw two parallel dynamics interact. On the one hand, the employers were strengthened in the public arena during the “clean-up campaign” of 1996 (Hibou, 1996; Catusse, 1998) On the other hand, “an ‘epic narrative’ in various versions was forged with its heroes and anti-heroes, amongst whom the ‘entrepreneurs’ and more recently and to a lesser extent the ‘technocrats’ and ‘city managers’ could act as symbolic figureheads” (Catusse, 2000).

But on the parliamentary level, the elected “entrepreneurs” do not represent a homogeneous social and political category, which would represent a sort of bourgeois opposition or even a center of “technocratic” competency. Their dominating role in the House reveals, first, the overwhelming weight of clientelist

\textsuperscript{29} According to D.L. Seiler (1993), the political parties translate and consolidate basic social cleavages and thus are “witnesses of past conflicts.”

\textsuperscript{30} In the context of the 2007 election campaign, a USFP deputy organized focus groups and through them had seen that the party label had hurt him amongst the executives and professionals. From then on he relied more on his personal balance sheet and achievements as an incumbent deputy (interview, April 2008).

\textsuperscript{31} On the monarchy’s efforts to renew the recruitment of elites, see Tozy, M. (2008). According to the author, the appointment of technocrats by the Palace was an attempt to compensate for the weak competency levels of elected officials.

\textsuperscript{32} On this point see L. Zaki (2009) on the campaigns of the Daba 2007 association, founded by an active member of the Moroccan civil society, also close to the royal circle.
mobilizations in the Moroccan electoral marketplace, already strengthened by the “notabilisation” of the main leftist party. In addition, their profiles reveal the disconnection between attempts to codify a new level of political excellence (“economization of politics” through an “officially sanctioned language”33) and modes of operation of the Moroccan electoral marketplace (“commercialization of political activity”). While economic “competency” may be “recognized” in high places and thus be politically co-opted, they are not in themselves convertible into electoral capital.

Third lesson: paradoxically, the PJD is the successor to the USFP at several levels. It is the forum for the opposition, and represents values (righteousness, integrity, etc.) which in the past were attributed to the left. Its proposals in collective indivisible and abstract goods (program, model of society) appear credible in the eyes of many voters. Therefore, it is now the only party in Morocco to be able to elect unknown candidates thanks to its party name, its activist resources, and more generally to its collective partisan capital. In addition, the profile of PJD elected officials is very similar to that of USFP deputies of the past: teachers (18 out of 46) and lawyers. Moreover, while the teaching sector continues to flourish in Parliament - even though it is declining on the left which was previously its natural soil – this is due to the electoral progress of the PJD. It is therefore no coincidence that the party has also “inherited” many constituencies in major cities which were once held by the USFP, rallying supporters mostly drawn from the more popular social categories (Casablanca, Rabat, Salé, Fez, etc.). While the USFP is undergoing a process of “notabilisation”, one form of activism has chased another – and on its own territories.

TO CONCLUDE, A NOD TO RÉMY LEVEAU AND BARRINGTON MOORE (1983)

In the late 1960s, the American neo-Marxist sociologist Barrington Moore identified three major avenues of modernization on the basis of comparative analysis of the history of France, England, the United States, Germany, Japan, China and Russia. According to him, there are three decisive factors among those contributing to democratization: a weakened monarchy, a fragile landed aristocracy and the absence of an alliance between aristocracy and bourgeoisie

33 For a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon, see M. Catusse (2006).
against the “workers”. In the mid-1970s, Rémy Leveau was inspired by this
approach in his *Fellah marocain défenseur du trône* (“The Moroccan Fellah: defender
of the throne”). According to his thesis, the alliance between the rural elites and
the monarchy has led Morocco into the path of “conservative modernization.”
Ten years after the promise of democratization in Morocco, the House of
Representatives appears to be more than ever one of the stages of consolidation
of monarchical power. Following the path of the rural population and civil
servants, the entrepreneurs and even some of the teachers are becoming the
new “defenders of the throne.”

The purpose is not to be continually fascinated by a monarchy which is an
“expert at survival”, able to handle carrot and stick with “subtlety”, and which
finally co-opts those who at one time or another in its history, had barred its
way both at the level of political organizations (the left, personalities from the
far left and even from “civil society” as well as in sociological terms (the
rural population, urban elites, a part of the intellectuals and middle layers).
For my part, I’ve tried to show the interconnections of two dimensions: the
metamorphosis at the electoral level of a party of militants to a one of notables;
the coalescence of a front around the monarchy linked to the transformation of
the left and with a common fear of the new “dangerous classes”, symbolized
by the specter of Islamism. In the terminology of Barrington Moore, we
could conclude that the kingdom is more than ever committed to the road of
“modernization from above”. It would be based on a broad alliance between
a reinvigorated monarchy, a landed aristocracy which has been reduced in size
since the 1960s, a heteroclitic urban bourgeoisie, reconstituted socially and
politically, replacing the rural population in the role of stabilizing the regime.
On the other hand, on the electoral scene, would have arisen Islamic urban
counter-elites.

Adjusting the focus helps clarify the question. Behind the entrepreneurial,
technocratic rhetoric focusing on “competency” or even “civil society” and the
accompanying transformation of the bourgeoisie, are a new “hidden cens”.

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34 At least those whose parties have left the forum of the opposition.
35 This formulation is borrowed from L. Anderson (2000).
36 See especially the “co-optation” by the Palace of association activists from the far left.
37 The “cens” was the taxation quota which marked the limit of suffrage rights in France and
was abolished in 1848-Translator’s Note]
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(Gaxie, 1978) reflecting resistance to real “universal suffrage.” These attempts to codify the restrictive thresholds of access to political institutions aim at preserving the hegemony of elites whose fates have become more or less united with that of the monarchy: not quite domesticated nor fully partners, their relations with the monarchy, while diverse, are based on a compromise made of tensions and temptations to broaden their scope of action.

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Returning to Political Parties?


The Parliamentary “Notabilisation” of a Party of Militants in Morocco


THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY IN MOROCCO IN THE FACE OF URBAN GOVERNANCE

Myriam Catusse and Lamia Zaki*

This chapter tackles the transformations that have affected the elected local representatives of the Justice and Development Party (PJD, Hizb al-‘adâla wa al-tanmiya) in Morocco since their term in office began, examining the profiles and activities of the representatives of this new party, the transformation of its ideology, the political innovations that it has brought about, and finally, the internal and external constraints that weigh upon partisan life in Morocco.

In June 2009, the City Council elections in Morocco were held. The mandate that ended the elections was singular on several accounts. In the first place, it inaugurated the institutional mechanisms of the new Communal Charter adopted in 2002, which re-divided the administrative map (districts) of the country based on a royal command for decentralization. Each of the big agglomerations that counted more than 500,000 inhabitants in the 1994 census (Rabat, Sale, Casablanca, Fes, Marrakech, and Tangier), and that were until then divided into several urban communities, were “unified” into only one commune headed by a councilor. As a result, the 27 communes of Casablanca were united into one municipality that henceforth incorporates 131 city councilors, (they numbered 1147 before the Charter). The president of the city council acquired more prerogatives, and commentators began to call him “mayor” although the term did not figure in the text of the Charter.

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The 2003 local elections were also marked by the entry of the PJD, which ran for the first time in local elections. This political group was born at the end of the 1990s of an agreement between two groups: a party without a base, the Constitutional and Democratic Popular Movement (MPDC, *al-Haraka al-sha’biyya al-dîmuqrâtiyya wa al-dustûriyya*) established in 1967 by minister and speaker of parliament, Abdelkrim al-Khatib; and the Movement of Unity and Reform (MUR - *al-Islâh wa al-tawhid*). The latter was the heir of the Islamic Brotherhood (*al-Jamâ’a al-islâmiyya*) and the Islamic Youth (*al-Shabîba al-islâmiyya*), two dissident movements that were undergoing a process of legalization during the 1990s (Tozy, 1999). In the Moroccan political scene of the 2000’s, the PJD represents the principal party that proclaims an “Islamic” point of view. In contrast with the Justice and Charity association (*al-’Adl wa al-ihsân*), led by the charismatic opposition figure Cheikh Yassine, the PJD entered the formal political field and engaged in the electoral process by participating in the 2002 legislative elections.

Encouraged by the results it achieved in the parliament that year (the party came in third position with 42 seats out of 321) and following the Turkish AKP, the leaders and militants of the party declared their intentions to “take over the cities” in the 2003 local elections. However, the Casablanca attacks on May 16, 2003 put the brakes on the party’s zeal, as it was accused by its rivals of being “morally responsible” for the political violence through the diffusion of a radical ideology among underprivileged sections of society. Some key figures went so far as to call for a ban on the party. Party officials therefore decided, without disappointing their party base, to limit candidatures to 18% of electoral districts and to only half of the *arrondissements* in cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants. None of the main party officials ran for elections, and very few PJD parliamentarians headed the electoral lists. Ultimately, the political party only supported 3.48% of the candidates.

Despite this limited participation, the PJD achieved a remarkable victory in the local elections, mainly by targeting the choice of candidatures. Arriving in 11th place in terms of elected representatives on the national level, the party was then the second most powerful of the kingdom on the scale of medium-sized cities (the party is effectively absent from rural districts). It won the presidency of 17 municipalities, among which some, like Meknes and Temara, were promoted to the frontline of the party’s politics. In the large urban areas endowed with a city council, the PJD is largely represented but does not hold the presidency. Loyal
to its strategy of auto-limitation (largely imposed by the central power), the party did not run for elections in Tangier or in Agadir, where results of the 2002 legislative elections suggested that it could have had good results. In Casablanca, where the party ran for elections, it came first in seven arrondissements out of eight (the city has 16).

The 2003-2009 municipal mandate thus constituted a phase of political apprenticeship for the elected representatives of the PJD. In addition to the fact that it included many new experiences for them, they faced, as the other elected representatives did, “teething troubles” in the application of the new Charter. They were also forced to adjust to the constraints of an ambiguous decentralization: the central power effectively strengthened the local authorities while simultaneously providing the devolved administration (autorités déconcentrée) – wali (regional prefect) and governors (prefects) – with the essential resources and prerogatives for urban action (De Miras, 2005). In this context, those who previously pretended to attack the cities today present themselves as pragmatic managers of the local in line with calls for good neoliberal governance. Religious references have become less marked, readjusting to the local level, contingent upon the public and centered around some consensual watchwords (“proximity”, “integrity”, “morality”) (Smaoui, 2009). In fact, the PJD elected representatives tend to promote a “politics of doing”, in a context of competitive clientelism and within the institutional and political limits of Moroccan decentralization. In sum, these new city managers present the characteristics of the common man; however, they are also the apparatchiks, the real kingpins of the party on the local scale.

A MANAGEMENT DISCOURSE

In a December 2005 issue, Le Journal Hebdomadaire published a feature dedicated to the “pragmatism of the PJD mayors.” The “realism of local politics” and the “efficiency of community management” of the newly elected representatives

1 We refer notably to the works of Goirand (2000) who shows that in Brazil, in the context of political liberalization, local notables engage themselves in “politics of doing,” attempting to win voters by doing more, better and differently than their rivals. See also Zaki (2005, chap. 7).

were presented as the “keys for success” of the party. After pronouncing the party responsible for the May 2003 attacks, the national media – in addition to the international one – portrayed the elected representatives as sensible managers: the journalists who so dreaded a “shift to the Algerian experience” finally announced a more “Turkish transition.”

According to them, the virtues of what PJD elected representatives perceive as Islamist political work relies less on know-how than on the will to do good, and less on practical experience than on authenticity of commitment. For its part, the PJD holds a noticeably different viewpoint. Its representatives’ discourse about the city draws on tested repertoires of urban management, and pragmatism comes first in the decision-making process on the ground. This managerial approach is at the heart of the legitimization strategies of the elected PJD representatives. When asked about their municipal track record, they highlight above all the good management of the budget: “We don’t have distinctiveness in terms of themes or programs compared with others. Our distinctiveness is perhaps more the management.” (W., PJD elected representative of Casablanca, vice-president in charge of urbanism in the City Council, July 2008)

It should be noted that the political economy of the cities has figured on top of the public agenda since the mid-1990s. The new Charter transformed the rules of the game and the scale of redistribution of resources. The arrondissements that replaced the municipalities in the big cities have neither a legal personality nor a proper budget (their restricted funds are allocated by the City Council). They were limited to only three ill-defined prerogatives: the so-called politics of proximity, the registry office, and the issuing of construction permits for individual housing. As for the elected local representatives, they are generally accused of mismanaging public accounts (due to incompetence or corruption) and are often the object of financial audits (Catusse, 2001). In all cases, the economic dependency of the local representatives on the central authorities, the ultimate arbiter to authorize expenditure, remains decisive and only leaves a small margin for maneuvering.

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4 For a comparative approach, see Leclerc-Olive (2005) and, on Morocco, Catusse (forthcoming)
5 One may thus reconcile their attitudes with the managerial transformations of political activities that may be seen in numerous contemporary contexts. See “Management” in Politix 20(79), 2007.
In reaction, the PJD representatives in the municipalities seek to prioritize their management responsibility, their capacity not only to keep accounts, but also to be accountable: “If there is an added value to the PJD, it is above all this enthusiasm and the will to have a healthy local management… without needing to disburse something to someone or to the party. Through transparency and for the good of the citizens. Not for personal interests or business issues. Trying to curb expenditures to the maximum, avoiding the squandering of public money and increasing the returns to the municipality.” (R. President of the Temara municipality, PJD, July 2008)

Putting this management ethic into practice was often learned on the job and several elected representatives confess that they discovered the accounting rules at the beginning of their mandate. Moreover, they use the metaphor of the enterprise to describe the way their municipality functions. In the case of Temara, the PJD mayor underlines not only the “capacity for synergy” of the party with other majority groups of the city council, but also the favorable collaboration of the municipality with public authorities, and in particular, with the prefecture. This “very participatory and consultative” approach allowed him to develop a “strategy of planning” over ten years, thanks to recourse to a private chartered accountancy firm that drafted the action plan. The mayor recalls the restructuring efforts of the municipal administration that he launched in order to improve the function of what he calls his “municipality-enterprise.” The economic reason takes precedence over the social one in order to justify the need to decrease staff and to outsource certain functions in order to respond more effectively to the increasing needs of the city. The loan received by the City Council from the local equipment funds contributed to the high growth of the municipality’s budget (it doubled in five years). Indeed, the recourse to credit could “provoke reactions among people [in the PJD] that were not working in the municipalities” but the mayor stated that “there should be a certain flexibility in the values [of the party] in order to adapt to realities.”

For him, it is this “spirit of entrepreneurship in the management of the city” that explains how Temara is the first municipality where a semi-public company (in French: société d’économie mixte, SEM), specializing in the construction of social housing and urban infrastructure, was established with the Funds of Taxes and

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6 The practice of usury, al-ribâ, is prohibited by Islam. This allowed the development, namely since the 1990s, of a system of « Islamic finance » (Rousillon, 1989).
Management. The municipality is the main shareholder, along with private or semi-public partners: “Different projects should be carried out without worrying too much about the social. For this reason the SEM is a good idea. (…) the staff of the municipality is not trained for this. The SEM was created for operational projects. And sometimes the municipality can also delegate mandated projects for the construction of markets [souks, covered or open], etc. The people of the municipality take care of the rest: the registry office…” (R.)

Even though the initiative for technical projects or for the rationalization of public action, often relatively consensual, does not necessarily concern them, party officials do not hesitate to take on the implementation themselves: “the idea of one counter only (for the urbanism files), it was not us, but it was us who did it… we installed electronic tickets that indicate the date on which the commission will meet. The procedures now take fifteen days instead of six to seven months previously.” (W. PJD elected representative, Casablanca, July 2008)

The economic argument therefore is omnipresent in the approach of the PJD representatives. In Casablanca, they are indignant that the law on competitiveness was flouted in an invitation for bids to set up a supermarket. In Fez and Rabat, where they are in the opposition, they request (with success) the intervention of the Audit Court in order to sanction bad management, including embezzlement by two mayors. In their own municipalities, they work hard to attract investments, while taking advantage of real estate: “Two big supermarkets were opened in the space of three months. Industries and services were set up. Temara is now the place where the square meter is the most expensive… (…) Sustainable sources of revenue for the city should be created.” (R.)

Finally, particularly in Casablanca where the party is in the majority, it is opposed to the terms and conditions of renegotiation of the management contract for the city’s water and electricity networks, awarded since 1996 to Lydec (Lyonnaise des Eaux de Casablanca), subsidiary of Suez Environment. An elected PJD representative specialized in this field for the sake of optimizing the management of public services. The review of the contract, signed in November 2008, was in this way partially controlled by the municipality thanks to the joint action of the PJD and the opposition, notably of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP), the main national and local rival of the PJD.

7 A law is currently under preparation to organize the regulation of this kind of contract.
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The party officials seem to also subscribe to the connection between public management and private management, a recurrent connection in Morocco during the years of liberalization (Catusse, 2008). So they praise the managerial qualities of the mayor of Casablanca. A manufacturer, an ex-president of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services of Casablanca, and an elected representative of the Constitutional Union, he developed his professional activities in Taroudant in the south of the country: “It is the first time in history that Casablanca has a president with a graduate background, an HEC graduate of Paris in 1974, who has been around. He was in business for twenty years as a big developer. It is those who have an adequate training, a great experience in career, in business, who can succeed. I don’t understand how a president of an enterprise who went bankrupt can do politics. Because if he did not succeed in his private life, I do not see how he can succeed in his life in the community”. (O. PJD elected representative, Casablanca, July 2008)

This management profile, however, can appear paradoxical on the part of a party that, as we will see, controls very little in the world of business. Figureheads compensate for this deficit, notably in Meknes, the biggest city in the kingdom governed by the PJD. In this city, presented as a showcase for the party after the victory it realized in 2003, the newly elected mayor is a rich property owner, dubbed so by the party on the eve of the elections. His profile as a notable constituted at the time of the election a source of legitimacy for the PJD. But his management style of urban policy demonstrates his limits and his state of favor is wearing off today. His attitude in the City Council is questioned. In order to pocket the profits of the state-owned and autonomous urban transport that he hopes to privatize, he did not hesitate to block the circulation of state buses for almost two years, provoking local protest and royal intervention in 2005 in order to reactivate public transport. Defeated in his council, he is now hardly supported by his party, which no longer presents the city as a PJD management laboratory, but controls with care the declarations of the mayor of the city. Perhaps the attitude of the mayor, insufficiently concerned with the social needs of his citizens, appeared too costly for party officials?

**The Euphemization of the Relationship with Islam**

The municipal practice of the PJD is also marked by an euphemization of the relationship with religion. The political group rarely makes reference to Arab
Islamist parties overtly associated with the Muslim Brothers (Zeghal, 2005); it seems that a division of labor has been organized between the MUR and the PJD – the former taking charge of religious mobilization, the latter of political mobilization. Though religious reference is still present, other themes shape the rhetoric of the PJD, namely in terms of local governance (the “local questions, *al-umûr al-mahalliyya*, to recapture the words of its leaders).

In the beginning of the millennium, the party opposed a law regulating microcredit, which was and still is a booming sector. PJD leaders denounced the practice of usury as contrary to *shari’a* law. In light of the municipal experience, however, the PJD councilors readjusted their position: “We are not against interest rates. To whom belongs the capitalist economy? To the Christians? To the private sector? We are against these ideas. They are outdated. All that is good for humanity is good for us.” (K., PJD elected parliamentarian, Mohammedia, July 2008)

In 2003, certain party candidates considered establishing a public transportation system, separating men and women: “As in Tehran, this would allow everyone to sit.” (K., PJD elected representative, Moulay Yacoub, Rabat, February 2003)

Today, the project seems barely feasible: “Society is not ready. We are not alone... We are working gradually. Maybe in the future?” (A., PJD elected representative, Sidi Bernoussi, Casablanca, July 2008) “It is not in Islam. These are customs. Islamic thought has to be reformed. We have windows [of interpretation] to create in Islam.” (K., PJD elected parliamentarian, Mohammedia, July 2008). The discourse on social justice addresses first and foremost how to punish thieves and the corrupt who become rich at the expense of citizens. In fact, the public rhetoric of the local leaders of the PJD is deliberately flexible with relation to the Islamic frame of reference: “We are a party of religious identity, but our religious side is not required to emerge clearly in local management.” (A.)

This relative distancing does not prevent the complex connections that the party maintains with organizations like MUR that explicitly proclaims an Islamic mission. On the ground, buildings belonging to the party host courses in Qur’anic teaching and local associations close to the party organize scout activities for children (Smaoui, 2009). Meanwhile, the concrete practice of municipal power leads the PJD to position itself in the Islamism arena by presenting itself as

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8 The interviewee refers to the religious principal of *ijtihâd*, an effort of reflection and interpretation of holy texts.
an antidote to forms of populism or radicalism using religious language. The political experience leads mainly to the implementation of pragmatic decisions. The PJD interviewees often evoked the Algerian scenario as a counter-example. They stress that the PJD protects Morocco from terrorism, but also suggest that if the Islamic Salvation Front (FSI) had been in power, “good sense” would have “naturally” pushed it towards normalized political strategies.

In fact, the favorite themes of the elected PJD representatives remain more moral and negotiable than strictly religious. Several local episodes illustrate the absence of a clear party line on the question of morals. They reveal more the positions taken by individuals and sometimes those taken by elected representatives than they are a product of national campaigns launched in defense of intangible principles. In Khenifra in 2005, a declaration by the PJD mayor of the city on the subject of its reputation as a “historical place of prostitution” provoked public controversy: one thousand people descended on the streets at the call of leftist movements to express their indignation. The debate, however, revolves less around the place of religion in the city than around the social and moral disturbance that prostitution could bring about. As for the protests, they are less about the use of morals in politics (save for the Moroccan Human Rights Association) than the stigma that such declarations could bring to the citizens of the city. In Ksar el Kebir in 2007, another PJD municipality, the county court condemned six men for homosexuality. “Public manifestations of depravity must not take place in the state of the commander of the faithful,” affirmed the leader of the PJD group at the Assembly of Representatives. But it was in a PJD town hall in Meknes that a wine party was organized in 2007. The mayor of this city is also a jury member of a beauty contest. There is no agreement on the question of bars within the party. In 2003, the PJD president of a municipality in Rabat, declared: “I will not sign a document on the planning of the corniche if hotels and bars will be found there. Even if Auchan settles there and sells alcohol. Do not insist on this.” (K., Moulay Yacoub, Rabat) Today, the position of the party is less uncompromising. In Meknes and Temara, the new PJD mayors boast about setting up hypermarkets in their municipalities, even if those markets sell alcohol. And while the PJD is opposed to the construction of a supermarket in a poor neighborhood of Casablanca, its representatives emphasize less the Muslim principle of prohibiting alcohol than the supermarket’s incompatibility with consumers from working-class neighborhoods or slums. This condescending argument with regard to the population demonstrates that the party does not necessarily make itself the spokesman of marginalized neighborhoods in the city as it has claimed (Zaki, 2005): “The question of wine was secondary. There
are groceries there, shopkeepers that will be ruined by a supermarket, and then there are minors in Lahraouiyine, streets where even a police van cannot cross, it would be a catastrophe to bring wine to these people.” (L., PJD elected representative, Casablanca, July 2008)

**MANAGING DAILY PROBLEMS: THE DISPLAY OF MORAL CLIENTELISM**

The third side of the PJD local policy is the effort that its representatives expend towards citizens and their social needs. Access to the municipal council serves less to implement ambitious programs than to put in place forms of personalized “social and institutional mediation” with voters. In the end, the local elected representatives of the party developed an ideology of local public action not much different to that of the more traditional notables. They seem to have authority only to manage daily problems on the ground: “Day after day, I realized that the real place of the PJD was in the municipality. It is there where the citizen is, there that things have to be settled. The parliament flies above like an airplane, but the real problems are on the ground: everything that is local, is the ground.” (L.)

The PJD councilors insist on the ethical dimension of this “mediation” carried out in the interest of the citizens and not motivated by personal interest: in order to economize the subsidy allocated to his district, a president of an arrondissement refused to change the furniture of his office when he installed himself in the new administrative centre, the construction of which he succeeded in finalizing. They highlight their availability, a quality that is at the heart of solving the daily problems of voters. “What concerns me the most is that citizens know that A. is here from 11 to 1:00 pm.” (A. PJD vice-president of the arrondissement, elected to the City council of Casablanca, July 2008)

They enter thus into competition with elected representatives of other parties in order to win the demands and grievances of the citizens. The vice-president

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9 Through analogy with the concept of “personalized political mediation” used by J. Auyero (2001) to underline the importance of emotion and ties within a clientelist relationship, which is not limited to the distribution of goods and/or services in exchange for votes.
of the *arrondissement* mentioned above (A.) evokes with pride the tensions that characterized his relationship with the president of the *arrondissement* for many months after the 2003 elections: “There was a line in front of my office; many people came to see me. On the other hand, on the floor [in front of the president’s office] it was empty, there was no one. My relationship with the president was difficult, he did not accept that.”

The PJD councilors’ “politics of doing” is articulated principally at the local level around two types of intermediaries: an institutional one, where the elected representatives play the role of translators of the administrative demands of voters, and a more political and social one, in which the elected representatives use the (scarce) local and political party resources which they have in order to reinforce the link with voters. Part of their work is similar to “administrative support”, consisting of collecting requests of citizens in order to facilitate their demands (to get the doctor to provide a death certificate, to obtain administrative documents, etc.) It involves explaining and accelerating procedures, no matter their nature, by approaching the manager of the ceremony hall of the *arrondissement*, for instance, in order to reserve the hall and to ensure that the reservation is validated by the signature of the president or the vice-president, or by obtaining the authorization of the president for an association to meet in the cultural center of the *arrondissement*. The elected representatives of the PJD also try, notably by personalizing their ties with the technical services of the City Council, to obtain services for their citizens. This can be easy or difficult according to whether the party is in the majority or the opposition of the City Council: “I learned that things are not given [in the City Council], they are caught, they are taken” (A.)

Negotiation is also applied toward private enterprises in charge of the organization of public services (water, electricity, garbage collection). Elected PJD representatives emphasize the need to forge special ties with the representatives of these enterprises in order to obtain better results. Finally, personalized administrative mediation goes beyond the framework of decentralized administration to be deployed in the field of devolved administration (interventions addressed to the governor in order to accelerate certain steps, namely for passports).

Even if they use their status and their networks in all these cases, the elected PJD representatives insist that the services they provide are not subject to favoritism, but are “normal” services that citizens have the right to claim
legitimately. Their action aims at optimizing public services provided within the bounds of the law, contrary to other local political patrons who sometimes circumvent the law to satisfy their voters (Zaki, 2008). However, these methods are contested: opponents of the party perceive them as the manifestation of electoral clientelism\textsuperscript{10}. The government, for its part, reproaches the PJD parliamentarians for submitting too many written questions in parliament on “local issues”, and by doing so, hindering the good functioning of institutions.

In parallel to this administrative support of citizens, who have witnessed the gradual integration of the party in normalized and regular local action networks, the municipal PJD councilors deploy social activities often in accordance with the dense associational fabric gravitating around the MUR. Most of those interviewed preside over one or several associations, and work in an informal way in order “to provide service to the citizen.” In the Mohammedia district, the representatives often attend the weekly open office of the PJD parliamentarian. The former also calls on militants or volunteer “sympathizers,” namely doctors and lawyers, who put their expertise to the service of voters. Networking is even more efficient since it relies on political party discipline (words of the PJD mayor of Temara).

Meanwhile, this investment in localized political mediation is not sufficient for compensating the reduction in institutional resources of the municipalities, notably in the context of districts-turned-arrondissements. The new constraints are politically costly since they are ill-digested by the voters. The PJD president of the arrondissement of Yaacoub el Mansour in Rabat has thus edited a manual explaining the prerogatives of the arrondissement and those relevant to the city, partly in order to clear his name vis-à-vis citizens who expected services of him that he is not able (or no longer able) to provide. The elected PJD representatives highlight the difficulties that they have in assuming their principal mission of community work and “local community-based services” (“services de proximité”), due to the low amount of subsidy allocated annually to the arrondissements by the City Council: “the elected representatives of the arrondissement have lost hope, they do not dare to say that they are elected. (…) we do not do local community-based services ourselves, we manage small problems.” (A.)

If the PJD in 2003 spoke in favor of unifying the municipalities, in virtue of the new Charter, a number of its elected representatives then had to revise their

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{10} Mohamed Saâd Alami, “Le PJD est un parti clientéliste,” \textit{Aujourd’hui le Maroc}, June 5 2006.}
position in light of facts. In their discourse, they set themselves up against “old elected representatives”, whom they accuse of wanting to regain de facto the tasks that were taken away from the arrondissements, thus serving to increase the vagueness of the Communal Charter.

**Between Dissidence and Loyalty: Adapting to the Rules of the Local Party Game**

By presenting candidates only in a limited number of arrondissements in the big cities, the PJD does not hold a sufficient majority to weigh in on local political decisions and even less so to redistribute resources of the territorial authorities. Since 2003, the president of the City Council of Casablanca monopolizes decision-making to the point of being considered the only master on board: he makes decisions with technical consultants (non-elected), he designates limited signatory authority by sector to members of the party, and sets the order of the day on the agenda.

Moreover, it is the wali and the governors who make the final decisions. The strategy of political normalization engaged by the PJD explains the ambivalence of the elected representatives’ discourse regarding relations with the devolved administration. On the one hand, they pledge allegiance to the power of tutelage, notably on the question of budget approval, demanding the replacement of a priori control by an ex post control rendering them accountable. On the other hand, they reclaim the arbitration of the central authorities: “It is not possible to manage a city like Casa without the intervention of concerned ministries in Rabat. Casa should not be left to deal with its own problems. It is a big city but its resources do not suffice for real development, the problem is that the ministers and the public funds do not intervene except in rural Morocco.” (L., PJD elected representative, Casablanca, July 2008).

It follows that the PJD councilors seem sometimes tricked by the discrepancy between the symbolic effect that the 2003 elections represented and their limited capacity for holistic action. Their subscription to the rules of the local game saps in part their image as the porte-parole of protest. In Casablanca, for example, where it is the “spine” of the City Council (A., PJD elected representative, Sidi Bernoussi, Casablanca), the PJD has to compromise in order to prove its capacity to work in a team, far from the concept of “constructive criticism”
adopted vis-à-vis the government from 1997 to 2002 (Zeghal, 2005). Thus, it counts only one elected representative in the board of the council, holding the same title as more weakly-represented parties, whereas other parties have two elected representatives. Indeed, it is the only party to preside over three commissions in the City Council and to have obtained five vice-presidencies of commissions, while these latter hold hardly any power. The party, however, has agreed to preside over an incompetent budget commission on the question of financial resources, which relieves it of its tasks in another commission. In Casablanca, where it has won in seven arrondissements, the party has obtained in the end only the presidency of Sidi Bernoussi. According to several of the councilors interviewed, it thus ceded to the pressure of power.

Nevertheless, the PJD elected representatives that we met display a strong loyalty towards their coalition in the city council. The oppositional stance is in fact associated with a certain political death at the local level: “In Morocco, in the municipality, no one chooses to be in the opposition. In the opposition, everything is blocked, we cannot do anything.” (L., PJD elected representative, Casablanca)

The loyalty of the PJD councilors to the majority of the City Council enabled particularly the arrondissement of Sidi Bernoussi to obtain important financing from the City Council, upon which it now relies. The arrondissement would undoubtedly not have won this financing without the political concessions ceded by the party within the City Council. This financial manna permitted the completion of a cultural center and an administrative center, work on which was started by the old municipal team more than ten years ago. And yet, the transfer of essential resources of the former municipalities-turned-arrondissements to the City Council (that reduced the budget of 13 million dirhams of the district of Sidi Bernoussi before the reform to 500,000 dirhams after 2003) largely limits the capacity for action of the elected representatives of the arrondissement.

These integration strategies of the majority of the City Council can turn out to be politically costly for the party and lead to the disappointment, or even disaffection, of supporters. This was the case in the district of Casablanca-Anfa, where the majority of PJD militants campaigned for Abdelbari Zemzemi during the 2007 legislative elections. This former preacher ran under the colors of the Party of Renaissance and Virtue (PRV, Hizb al-nahda wa al-fadila), though he had contributed largely to the establishment of the PJD in Anfa during the 2002 legislative elections. His candidature aimed in particular to oppose the common
platform presented by the PJD and the Party of Citizens’ Forces (PCF, *Hizb al-quwwât al-muwâtana*) – an alliance that formed part of the PJD’s policy of normalization implemented by its management. While Zemzemi placed second, the candidate of the PCF was not elected: his defeat constituted an important setback for the PJD in a district where it obtained two elected representatives in 2002 (Wasif, 2009).

Entry into the city councils, however, did not totally blunt the capacity of the PJD to mobilize its supporters. During the last legislative elections of 2007, the party won in Casablanca with high results in six of the eight districts in which it ran. In Rabat, it also won, to the detriment of the USFP, another opposition party in the City Council (Bennani Chraïbi, *in this volume*; Salgon, 2008).

**Professionals of Urban Governance?**

While the 2003 Communal Charter requires candidates to prove a minimum level of education, equivalent to that of primary education (article 28), the PJD prides itself in an elitist ethic of political action. If party devotion is based on accreditation of the party, the choice of candidates also guarantees the “competence” (*kafâ’a*) of elected PJD representatives, and essentially focuses on the professional and sociological profile of individuals: “We have managers, doctors, people who know how to talk…not illiterate people. We have graduates and well-known people, in order to represent the party well. We have to be representative of the party. We cannot choose just anybody to represent the PJD.” (A.)

Several political science studies point to an “entrepreneurization” of political representation. Despite the rise to power of businessmen and local notables on the electoral stage, notably to the detriment of representatives from the educational sphere, the PJD recruits more from the civil service than from private domain. Teachers represent a quarter of the PJD elected representatives in the City Council, while they represent 10.28% of all parties on average.

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11 In these 8 constituencies in Casablanca, PJD had 72,980 votes. Just after PJD, Istiqlal party had 47,272 votes.
12 See the contribution by M. Bennani Chraïbi to this volume.
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(Elyagoubi, 2005): time management is easier in the civil service, while private enterprises penalize the repetitive absence of their employees. In this regard, several elected representatives mention that they could not have taken up their posts without the help of a decree in 2005 facilitating the anticipated retirement. If teachers do not have at their disposal their own resources to redistribute, as do local notables, their profession allows them to mobilize and build up the loyalty of militants or future militants, to take part in relations and in “local popular practices” (Mischi, 2003, p. 91), to equally develop a multiplicity of relations with the party through the development of sports associations, night classes, etc.

In 2003, the PJD elected municipal councilors who for the most part had hardly any political experience. The candidates were chosen in a rather deliberate way outside the ranks of party parliamentarians, in order to “widen the political camp for many militants.” (W. PJD elected representatives, Casablanca, July 2008) In a common “rejet de la brigue” (Bennani Chraïbi, 2005, p. 119), the elected representatives recall that they did not choose to present themselves to be representatives, but rather the militants selected the candidates of the party through their vote. The deliberation of the local section is critical for the make-up of the lists: the electoral adventure thus escapes suspicion of personal ambition while it seems to be mainly a matter of devotion.

The elected PJD representatives are characterized notably by their youth, presented as a pledge of candor and dynamism. In 2003, the average age of the new elected local representatives in Casablanca was 47.2 years; it was 39.8 years for the elected representatives of the PJD. 13 Political inexperience paradoxically appeared as a guarantee of efficiency: deprived of any past experience in the arena of power, the newly elected PJD adopt more easily the attitude of elected representatives of the arrondissement.

In parallel, the party demands expertise and professionalization in local governance. After devoting itself to the issue of reforming the Charter in the 2003 parliament, it called for reform of the electoral law, by defending notably the abolishment of the threshold of representation in order to avoid the balkanization of City Councils and encourage the formula “a city =a party”. The PJD considers itself the spokesman of the local space and pays particular

13 Figures are based on a 2003 membership list of the Casablanca city council published by the Wilaya, and on which elected officials’ birthdates were listed.
attention to the specialization of its representatives. To that goal, the Association of the local elected PJD representatives (jām‘īya mu‘takhabīn al-‘adāla wa al-tanmiya) organizes training sessions for elected representatives of the party. It is presided over by the emblematic mayor of Temara, and supported by the vice-president of the City Council of Casablanca, in charge of urbanism.

More than an individual professionalization (the elected PJD representatives have difficulty living on their political salaries and highlight the material challenges that they face), it is an institutional professionalization that is at stake. The latter operates through a rationalization of political work where the individual makes way for the party and relies on a distinct militant devotion.

The ethos of professionalization can also be found in the division of labor between the elected PJD representatives according to their experience in the professional world. It goes without saying, for instance, that the management of finance issues is assigned to a graduate of financial economics and business management from Toulouse. On the other hand, the management of the Lydec file by an aesthetic surgeon seemed less directly evident and provoked amused but also admiring remarks by party colleagues. At the same time, it shows the importance and the prestige accorded to the degree itself: “At this level of studies, we can understand everything,” confirmed the elected representative in question.

Political party discipline and specialization are also manifested in the coordination of work: “When we interfere in the Council, we interfere with knowledge of the cause, it is a responsibility. We prepare the interventions, we coordinate among each other.” (A. elected PJD representative, Vice-president of the arrondissement, elected to the City Council of Casablanca).

The integration of the PJD in the local political game thus contributed to its normalization. At the same time, the forms of authority deployed by its representatives, as well as the repertoires of action they draw upon, renew the rules of local power. The elected PJD representatives claim the status of novice and the professionalization of their role at the same time. They present themselves as generous notables engaged in causes where only the interests of their voters matter, while also donning the garb of disciplined servants of the party, devoted to the interest of the party machine. Through their outsider discourse and their
rhetoric of renewal and of political virginity, they advocate for a representation of the cities, simultaneously virtual – by trying to explain what the power of the party would be if they had not limited their candidatures – and virtuous – the accredited candidatures are “transparent” and the candidates “competent,” capable of inventing a dynamic political life and of engaging citizens in decision-making. Combining mediation activities, non-profitable practices and moral representations of the authority, the elected PJD representatives seek to impose themselves as new “social authorities” in politics. This new form of notables paradoxically associates militant trajectories and territory base, professionalization and vocation. But the comparison with more classic notable figures ends at the threshold of the strong dependency that links them to the party.

CONCLUSION

The election of Abdelilah Benkirane to the post of secretary-general during the PJD congress in July 2008 created surprise outside as well as inside the party. The pundits effectively banked on a new victory for Saâd Eddine El Othmani (elected for the first time in April 2004), who embodied the strategy of normalization and political integration of the party. The new leader chosen by the militants is known for his polemical declarations, sometimes judged as intolerant and populist. Meanwhile, he is still considered a moderate. Indeed, he hopes to “moralize political life”, but the application of values created from the Islamic referential that he invokes has to contribute primarily to the fight against corruption. On the national as well as the local level, the application of an Islamic ethic has to contribute to the reinvention of a political morality based on consensual values; a morality which the Islamists want to be the only ones to implement, through their party discipline.

The experience of the PJD in the municipalities since 2003 shows an

14 « Pour une commune efficace et un développement complet » (For an effective municipality and a complete development) [in French], PJD program for 2003 local elections.
15 Ibid.
organized and disciplined political group, which however promotes sometimes contradictory strategies and watchwords: budget management versus political reform, dissidence versus participation. The PJD councilors, by presenting themselves as the local elected representatives par excellence, embody new political figures and follow the royal command and the international calls for decentralization. Faced with the limited means offered by local institutions, the members of the party push to rethink the technical and political modalities of the municipalities.

The elections held in June 2009 renewed the process. The PJD managed to field candidates in 40% of all electoral districts, including all cities and some rural communities. The party announced its goal to be first. In Meknès, established as a laboratory for PJD management, electors disowned the party and the PJD was beaten. The General Secretary of the Modernity and Authenticity Party, a new party founded by Fouad Ali El Himma, a close collaborator of Mohammed VI and a direct competitor of the PJD in the Meknès poll, explained, “The PJD was sanctioned because the party had management Meknès poorly. Moroccans saw for themselves that the PJD did not have a monopoly on virtue”.

If the PJD is the sixth party in terms of the total number of seats controlled (out of a total 1513 seats) it remains the strongest party among the large cities (745 seats). In other words, party development continues to be focused on a strategy of winning among the kingdom’s urban circumscriptions.

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This study addresses the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), one of the most authentic ideological and class-oriented parties in Iraq. It is the legitimate father of centralized hierarchical (Leninist) organization as well as secular and socialist thoughts. The party was victim of organized repression starting 1948 and then 1963, as well as the breakdown of socialist countries in the 80’s and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, which led to the downfall of leftist ideologies in the world in general, and prompted the remainder of leftist movements to turn to democratic action, away from radical orientations.

It goes without saying that the emergence of political parties and social movements is an aspect or a preface to political transformation and regime change, namely during phases of transition on the way to democracy. In Iraq, the emergence of the parties’ phenomenon wasn’t a step towards political change and a transitory step towards democracy. In fact, the external political change and the political economic liberalism imposed from above (by the current coalition authority headed by the US ambassador Paul Bremer) are the main factors that spurred the surfacing of a large number of parties and latent social movements since 2003.

The situation in Iraq is quite similar to that of the Soviet Union where the foundations of the unilateral power broke down, allowing the latent social movements to break loose and enter the political scene as liberal, nationalist, ultranationalist, leftist, and monarchical movements, and allowing tensions between ethnic groups to resurge and express themselves.

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The social culture evolved from civil-secular ideas to a religious-political culture, allowing popular religiousness— the biggest bearer of political Islam—to grow. In this launch, political powers crystallized on several foundations: doctrinal (ideological), nationalist/ethnic, religious/confessional, clannish/familial, and area-related (extremism in protecting cities and villages). The biggest schism was religious/confessional and nationalist/ethnic. It is a situation where sub-national identities emerge as major identities and where these sub-national identities are broken down into smaller identities. In this situation, the Iraqi Communist Party and other civil parties worked and still are.

**GENERAL BACKGROUND**

The Iraqi Communist Party is one of the oldest known parties in Iraq. It was established in 1934, almost one decade after the new state was created amid the British mandate. Throughout the monarchy (1921-1958) and the next four republics, the party worked in secrecy except for short periods where it worked in a semi-public manner during the first year of the July revolution (1958-1959) or a streamlined public manner (the mandate of the National Front with the Baath (1973-1978).

The Communist Party presents itself as the political tool of workers, peasants, and intellectuals, stating that its ultimate goal is the establishment of the socialist society on the basis of the Marxist theory (previously). Although the party is, in this respect, an international party that’s part of the World Proletariat and the International Solidarity Movement it has designed to itself several political, economic, social programs and a local Iraqi culture, as it is a national party that operates within the legal framework of the Iraqi state. The party used to divide its actions in the past on the basis of the following stages: the national democratic revolution, the non-capitalist development, and the socialist construction. The party sought on this basis to meet democratic (non-socialist) goals represented in the following priorities: achieving political democracy; agricultural reforms in rural areas/against property-owner feudalism; industrializing the country; leaving military alliances and getting rid of foreign (British) military bases; providing freedom for women and Arab Unity.

The party gave up the concept of peaceful democratic transformation adopting “violence” as a means of political change in the second congress in 1957. As a
result, it encouraged secret military organizations and coordinated with the free officers, thus accelerating the eruption of the July 1958 revolution that founded the first republic. The Communist Party turned to the largest popular Party in 1959, polarizing workers, peasants, and parts of the middle class, which frightened all the liberal, centrist, and conservative movements, as well as the regional and international anti-communist states, the party failed to maintain sociopolitical alliances that support the major changes which were stirred by the July revolution, and this period ended with several schisms that led to the 1963 Baathist coup, and the scattered party resorted to secret (and armed) action in Kurdistan.

During the Aref brothers’ rule (1963-1968), the party pulled itself together and pursued secret action, suffering the largest dissension in its ranks in 1967. After Baath’s second return to power in 1968, there was a major shift in the party’s strategy towards cooperating with Baath in a national front on the basis of non-capitalist progress towards socialism. As a result, the party enjoyed overt legitimacy that allowed it to publish a daily, a weekly, and monthly magazine, and to open several headquarters.

As the Baath’s rule grew stronger and its bases grew larger thanks to the wealth that was brought by the oil frenzy, relations between the ICP and the Baath collapsed in the Spring and the Summer of 1978 after a group of ICP members were executed for being allegedly involved in developing secret organizations in the army ranks. Once again, the party turned to clandestine action before moving to armed action in the mountains of Kurdistan, until the al-Ansar movement was struck in 1988. After the 1991 revolution, the party turned again to public action in the Kurdish areas that were freed from the central authority, and attempted to rebuild its structures in the Arab part. During the Iraqi-Iranian war (1980-1988) and the siege (1990-2003), the party faced the problem of bringing the democratic orientation in its policy (under the slogan: ousting Baathist dictatorship and setting up a democratic rule) in line with the patriotic orientation: defending Iraq against any Iranian onslaught and then against the American blockade. As a result, several blocs declared dissidence from the party. And so, conflicts of a patriotic character mixed with conflicts on leadership renewal, and many members of the old guard who were barred from leadership councils were able to blow off steam by criticizing the so-called “non-patriotic” aspect of the party’s policy.

1 The Communist Party believes that the movement sustained a crushing military defeat; however, it didn’t collapse, and many cells-including ours—remained intact and several armed groups remained in border zones and managed to regain contact with the internal groups.
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The ICP will run into this problem again in 2002-2003 with the unraveling of the United States’ plans to invade Iraq and alter its political system by force.

The Organizational Structure

The party adopts the Leninist structure which is based on a very centralized hierarchy that works according to control and guidance restrictions and rules. As per this hierarchy, the lower bodies are subject to the higher ones with quasi-military discipline. Recently, centralization has been mitigated with a series of reforms and amendments in the internal statute in order to cut down on the number of bodies in the center and facilitate communication with the headquarters.

The Communist Party distinguished itself historically by founding a special organization for Kurds known as “the Kurdistan region committee” given his faith in the importance of giving Kurds the right to self-determination (autonomy). After 1991, the region’s committee evolved into a semi-independent party by the name of “the Kurdistan Communist Party” that chose a central committee and a political bureau similar to that of the root party. However, the Kurdistan Communist Party’s Secretary General is a member of the ICP’s political bureau in order to ensure connection and coordination between the Arab and the Kurdish organizations (there are also several members of bipartisan joint committees).

The party holds an annual meeting for all the central committee’s members, and this meeting issues a detailed political, organizational, and intellectual report (it doesn’t address financial aspects). After its publication, the report is thoroughly discussed by the party’s bases. The central committee’s regular annual meeting is an opportunity to follow up on the political bureau’s work and renew its election; it just might be the only democratic mechanism in the party’s life. The committee’s meetings produce a general political report and reports on the different aspects of the party’s work. As for the financial report, it is strictly for internal deliberations.

The party also holds a general conference every four or five years according to the internal statute. However, these conferences are irregular as the party only managed to hold five conferences between 1973 and 2007 (the 8th conference), which is equal to one conference every seven years.
This gives the political bureau and the Secretary General more freedom in terms of making decisions and restructuring the central committee in a centralized manner. However, general conferences started witnessing delegates’ elections from the bottom, and nobody was interfering to prevent candidacy unless it was for security reasons or organizational rules violations by a candidate.

Membership terms state that members must work on a regular basis in one of the bodies, and that they must be committed to the party’s ideology and organizational rules. They also stipulate that members must pay their monthly membership fees and unconditionally abide by higher decisions (the “execute then complain” rule). Tasks are divided between the members of the political bureau and the central committee who head specialized committees: the ideological action committee; the media committee; the military action committee (back in the days of the Al-Ansar war against the Baath between 1979 and 1989); the trade unions’ committee; the farmers’ committee; the popular organizations’ committee; the foreign relations committee… etc 2. Although these committees enjoy a certain level of freedom, their orientations and decisions are controlled by the center, i.e. the political bureau, and specifically the central committee’s secretary general.

Limiting the decision making process to the political bureau maintains a very centralized structure and gives this structure a very “stiff” character that clearly shows in the fact that the secretary general remained in his position for more than twenty consecutive years and that most central bodies remained intact. And this might greatly impede the accession of the young generation to higher position in the party.

As a result, the party’s organizational pattern is a Leninist and centralized pattern that is also a modern elitist leadership pattern based on merit and knowledge on one hand and elections on the other. A new organizational pattern was added to the party, i.e. the military pattern, which was introduced

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2 The ICP publishes its central newspaper *Tarîq al-sha’ab (The People’s Path)* as well as its intellectual magazine *al-Thaqâfa al-jadîda (The New Culture)* in Arabic. As for Kurdish, the Kurdistan Communist Party publishes the *Rekai Kurdistan* newspaper in both languages, and has one regular publication entitled *the New Thought*, it also owns the Dâr al-Ruwwad publishing house. Moreover, the Kurdistan Communist Party has 3 TV stations: *Azadai (freedom)*, as well as radio stations *Azadai* in Erbil, Dohouk, Suleimaniyah, and Kirkuk. The KCP also has a TV station in Rania and Kermian as well as 11 local radio stations.
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in the eighties. However, this pattern was abandoned after the disbanding of the *al-Ansār* movement— the party’s military wing—and the integration of its Kurdish members in the Peshmerga forces (the Kurdish militia forces), which in turn became part of the Iraqi armed forces in 2003. Furthermore, former Arab members of the ICP’s armed wing enlisted in the new Iraqi army.

After becoming able to operate publicly in the Kurdish zone following 1991, the party developed its bureaucratic model by establishing a series of offices in major cities and municipalities in order to manage its work bureaucratically. However, after 2003, the party extended its offices chain to cover all of Iraq, and today, it has more than 90 offices. When the leaderships of organizations (on the local level and above) move to office work, they turn into bureaucratic (administrative) bodies just like government and financial institutions. As a result, their work becomes much more organized, and their correspondences as well as their relations become much more coordinated and orderly with more organized records.

The bureaucratic pattern is still in its early beginnings and a far cry from complete institutional transformation, which promotes the centralized character—at least for now. The bureaucratic pattern is an organizational form of centralization, while institutionalization is the legal form of centralized organization. Since institutionalization hasn’t been implemented yet due to the absence of laws that regulate the establishment and operation of parties (there is only an electoral law for the registering of political entities), the bureaucratic pattern allows the higher body to better control financial and human resources, which turn into a top-down guidance and control tool, considering that the party’s cadres who work willingly and are evaluated according to their competence and achievement become paid employees (paid cadres). There is no difference between employees and party members (similar to the British Labour Party). This applies to all the parties that switched to the bureaucratic pattern, whether their leaderships were charismatic (religious), traditional (clannish), or modern elite (secular parties).

Given all these facts, the policy and decision making processes remain in the hands of the higher elite, regardless of its nature. This takes its toll on the internal democratic character despite its remarkable predominance in the Communist Party. This also makes the transfer of authority (i.e. the change of leadership in the bureaucratic pattern— to a lesser degree compared to the charismatic pattern) slow and bound by the will of the decision-making elite, namely the political bureau, and to a greater extent, the Secretary General.
It all depends on the Secretary General and his willingness to negotiate authority transfer issues in a democratic manner or otherwise.

It is generally noted that both traditional and modern parties tend to maintain their leaderships, as an indicator of stability, coherence, and steadiness. This general social inclination marks the Iraqi society (and probably the region’s societies), which lacks specific change dynamics that can be found in modern, industrial societies. Hence, the persistence of certain leaderships for certain periods of time reflects this tendency just as it reflects the leaders’ individual desires.

**The Social Environment**

In its organizational and mobilization orientations, the party relies on its Marxist-Leninist ideology that focuses on awareness-raising, the organization, and the mobilization of workers, farmers, and revolutionary intellectuals who belong to the lower and medium categories of the middle class who rely on knowledge or property (or both) as long as they’re biased to socialist choices. As the social structure changed, this abstract theoretical framework changed accordingly during implementation. Given its commitment to secularism, the party was a trans-religious and trans-confessional party, just like it managed to be a trans-ethnic party thanks to its nationalist principles. True to this reputation, the party reached out to Muslims, Christians, Jews, and Aramaics. Practically, it is the only trans-confessional, trans-religious, and trans-ethnic Iraqi party. Hence the party’s strong tendency to strengthen the Iraqi identity besides the interest it dedicated to the Kurds’ right to self-determination and to the minorities’ cultural rights as well the attention it dedicates to Arab unity. And this proves the party’s ability to attract poor classes and minorities that are afraid of marginalization.

This tendency was reinforced when the party addressed the social question such as workers’ rights, land for farmers, and women’s freedom, and all are class rights that surpass confessional, religious, and nationalist identities. During the period between 1940 and 1970, the party established a trade union movement (despite the decrease in the number of industrial workers), as well as farmers’ movements, a student movement, and a women movement, relying on the social changes that marked the industrial rush in the 50’s and the 60’s, as well as the growth of the proletariat, the collapse of crafts and artifacts that caused
craftsmen to turn to the left, and the growth of education institutions which caused the number of poor students to rise. Moreover, the party profited from women’s entry to the job market, which gave them ever-growing social weight.

Nevertheless, the period between the late 70’s and the late 90’s witnessed several transformations and turning points that took their toll on the party’s popular bases: for example, agricultural reforms in rural areas and the persistence of rural exodus to the cities shrunk the party’s farmer bases and stripped it of one of its mobilization assets, i.e. calling for the distribution of rural lands to farmers. Moreover, and despite its relative expansion, the industrial workers’ class grew under the umbrella of the state that was under the Baath’s authority both organizationally and union-wise, which deprived the party of its power in terms of trade unions. Moreover, the successive blows that were directed to the party in 1963, 1970, 1978, and 2003 by the Baathist security apparatuses weakened its capacity to mobilize and organize. As a result, the party was rendered unable to mobilize the masses, let alone to expand student bases. While the oil revolution that the country witnessed since 1973 stirred a major expansion of the middle class (around 54% of city inhabitants starting the 90’s) that counts on the salary or properties. However, these social powers were attracted to the ruling party under several motives, namely ideological and interests-oriented ones.

This social change (the growth of the cities, the expansion of the middle class), political change (the rise of the only party regime), and economic change (the oil frenzy) accompanied by the state’s rising economic might took its toll on the party’s growth. Moreover, security blows brought down the party’s apparatus from 70 000 members in 1978 to around 10 000 a year later. However, the biggest setback that the party sustained was the fall of the socialist camp in the late 80’s and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, which seriously undermined the attractiveness of the socialist thought globally and on the Iraqi scene of course, just like Germany’s defeat by the Soviet Union in 1945 was a major factor behind the reinforcement of communist movements in the world. The party showed no flexibility in addressing the expanding middle class and largely remained trapped in its old methods by only reaching out to social classes and categories that lost their significant efficiency (workers) or their popular majority (farmers) or started organizing themselves directly (minorities: Turkmen, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Aramaics); and to make matters worse, the party remained trapped in its inert ideological vision.

The situation worsened due to several other factors. The great urban exodus allowed the workers’ ranks to be infiltrated by several rural categories that have
a cultural and traditional tendency to natural organization: the tribe and tribal solidarity networks were transferred to the city, as well as the Shiite clerics (Sayyed) and philanthropic organizations (husseiniyates). And since the party was deprived of unions (the Baathist ban period) and public action (during the Iraqi-Iranian war and the blockade 1980-2003), the void that if left was quickly filled by the Baathist State at first, and by tribal and religious solidarity networks during the blockade (1991-2003) that was marked by a partial fall of the Baathist State and its services.

Thus, when the middle class started falling apart during the blockade (particularly after 1995), the party wasn’t present on the scene to mobilize people and attract them. In fact, the emergence of tribal and social solidarity networks in the social field that was previously filled by the Communist Party was reinforced by the rise of Shiite Political Islam and replaced in a later stage by political Islam with its substantial financial and symbolic resources after the fall of the Baathist regime subsequent to the United States invasion of Iraq.

**Sociology of the Leadership and of the Popular Bases**

The sociology of sociopolitical structure transformation is mirrored in successive parallel transformations, such as the stability or the change of the ICP’s leadership and its main cadres’ social structure. It is generally noted that the period between 1967 and 1985 witnessed relative stability in the leadership structure despite the major schisms and some block formation.

Before, several dissidences as well as the security forces’ constant pursuits and physical liquidations (executions, people dying under torture) led to quick changes in the leadership structure to a degree that prevented any stability or accumulation of political and organizational expertise. However, the period between 1967 and 1985 witnessed leadership stagnation without any changes. This stagnation hindered the accession of a new generation of leaders. However, the collapse of the front with *Baath* (1978-1979) and the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war shook the party and stirred an overwhelming current that called for the replacement of the most of the “old guard”. During the fourth (1985), the fifth (1993) and the sixth (1997) general conferences, the majority of the old guard had left the party and some of them took hostile stances towards the new leadership. One by one, the estranged leaders objected the party’s policy that was against
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that of the *Baath* during the Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988) and the blockade (1991-2003), cunningly calling for cooperating with the *Baath* under slogans similar to “defending the homeland” and “anti-imperialism”, or protesting the party’s understanding with Iraqi Liberal forces by considering them “imperial forces”. This orientation materialized in a “defensive” block that is still operating under different names.

It is worth mentioning that during the sixth general conference (1997), the new central committee was made of 21 members, 7 of whom were elected as members of the political bureau. As for the structure of the other conference delegates, it reflects the aforementioned social transformations. 40% of the delegates were Arabs, while 55% were Kurds and 5% were other ethnic groups. This major Kurdish rise was the direct result of the liquidations that targeted the Arab section of the party’s organization a lot more than its Kurdish counterpart. Among the delegates 12.5% were made of the “old guard”. More than 52% of the new leaders weren’t students in the Soviet parties’ schools, and were pretty practical and flexible as opposed to the old guard’s dogmatic stubbornness. 32% of the delegates were workers, 32.5% were farmers, 42% were city middle class intellectuals, 14% were from the upper middle class, and 66% of the delegates had college degrees.

By looking at the quantitative data of the conference’s delegates’ social structure, we conclude that workers and farmers are still the majority, and this proves the yearning to remain attached to class purity and ideological purity that are inherited from Stalinist traditions. Actually, according to the last available statistics (the 90’s), the demographic weight of social groups belonging to the working class in the Iraqi society is under 24%.

What’s new to the Communist Party’s structure is the healthy increase of the middle classes’ representation in the conference (42%), knowing that their relative weight in the cities amounts to 54% (before 2003). And during the seventh and eight conferences, the delegates’ social structure also showcases the growth of the middle class and people who hold college degrees.

Perhaps these sociological characteristics of the party’s structure explain partially at least the increase of openness and flexibility in the party’s policies in general, despite the fact that the old dogmatic orientations were never gone.

3 We rely on data that was offered in 1997 by the party’s secretary general Hamid Majid Mûsà and the member of the party’s political bureau Mufid al-Jazâ’îrî.
This openness and flexibility are mirrored in the intellectual, organizational, and political domains. Intellectually, the party replaced Marxism-Leninism with the broad Marxist legacy; organizationally, it expanded the rights of grassroots organizations and internal elections; and politically, it showed high flexibility in political and electoral behavior whether with the provisional coalition authority that was set up by the United States in June 2003, or the sundry centrist and Islamic factions.

However, it is also worth mentioning that women’s representation in the main leadership bodies (the central committee, the political bureau, or general conferences) is still very low, even when compared to somewhat conservative nationalist parties such as the Kurdistan Democratic Party or the Kurdistan National Union. For instance, there is only one woman in the Kurdistan Communist Party’s central committee and two women in that of the mother Communist Party. On the other hand, the weight of people under 40 years of age increased in conferences and leadership bodies, and we don’t have accurate data on women, age categories, and social classes in the party’s general structure, which renders these observations rather general and limited to leadership bodies.

The Participants of the Kurdistan Communist Party’s Fourth Conference, spring 2008

Table 1. Number of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>11.18</td>
<td>88.819</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 2. Ethnicities

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Aramaic</th>
<th>Turkmen</th>
<th>Chaldo-Assyrians</th>
<th>Arabs</th>
<th>Kurds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>0.621</td>
<td>0.621</td>
<td>2.484</td>
<td>1.863</td>
<td>94.409</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Idem.
The Party and the Authority

On the eve of the American-British invasion of Iraq in 2003, the party said it was against the war and called Iraqi social and political forces to take political change into their own hands in order to topple the one party dictatorship and set up a democracy. This position reflected the party’s embarrassment from supporting the toppling of the regime by the United States, considered to be “an imperial power”. This ideological barrier was and still is standing. Moreover, we have pacific aspects (world peace) in the party’s ideology and its legacy that calls for world peace and objects any war on Iran, the occupation, and the war on Kuwait. This is why the party was not able to support the war, even if it profited from its results. Still, it remained attached to its open objective: getting rid of the Baathist dictatorship.
After the toppling of the regime in April 2003, the party saw that the situation was going in two directions: the country’s occupation on one hand, and the fall of the dictatorship on the other, which allowed the party to enter the political process despite the fact that this process was under the US influence. This tactic was aimed at avoiding isolation and seeking to meet the practical objectives. Based on this, the party participated in the governance council that was set up by the provisional coalition authority and in the first two provisional governments, where it was represented by the minister of culture Moutfid al Jazaeri, and member of the party’s political bureau. The party’s Arab wing was weak in terms of financial and human resources, and suffered from the yoke of long-lasting repression since 1963 as well as the repercussions of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the breakdown of the leftist thought. It had to rebuild its organization amid the political and security chaos, as well as the rise of Islamic and radical populist movements and the emergence of armed violence against the occupation, which the party considered to be a return of the old regime and a fundamentalist terrorist movement (al Qaeda).

The party defined its pragmatic political path on the basis of participation in building the new state on the democratic model on one hand, and working on the other hand on what it called “regaining national sovereignty”, a diplomatic political expression that stood for resisting the occupation using gradual peaceful and political means. Given this course, communists participated in the formation of several provisional local governments in the governorates that were set up by the Provisional Coalition Authority under the presidency of the US ambassador Paul Bremer between 2003 and 2004 as part of what is known as a bottom-up approach to building democracy. Moreover, the party attempted to rebuild the dismantled union movement, and the largest block of industrial workers was concentrated in the state sector (the socialist department) that was made of around 200 major production units that include around 399 000 workers. However, this sector was and still is dysfunctional, and trade unions had registered around 1 164 000 workers in 1986, which is equal to 34% of the inhabitants of urban areas and around 22% of the national labor force at the time. Nevertheless, Trade unions were dismantled during the Baath’s reign according to the law number 150 of 1987 that canceled the title “worker” as well. As a result, the workers’ block was deprived of its legal significance and its organizational and institutional frameworks, and found itself confronted to a massive crowd of marginalized categories and unemployed people who totaled more than 50% (according to the World Bank statistics).
The Communist Party participated in the first constitutional and local elections in January 2005, when it ran with an independent list that bore its name; the Kurdistan Communist Party participated in the elections as part of the list formed by the Kurdistan alliance. The ICP scored meager results which came as a terrible shock; from a total 8,266,456 votes, it managed to get 69,920 votes in parliament, which is equal to 0.83%. Moreover, in the parallel local elections, and out of 7,900,920 votes, the party managed to get 140,890 votes, which equals 1.78%.

During and after the electoral campaign, Shiite movements in general started exhibiting extreme hostility towards the ICP and other non-Islamic movements by considering them secular (laic) parties and movements that is infidels according to the “Islamic” interpretation that distorts secularism. The majority of voters in Shiite areas chose to assert the Shiite identity rather than the party’s class-oriented identity, especially that there was a compelling Fatwa to vote for the Shiite list, the united Shiite coalition, from the higher Shiite reference the Great Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani. Although there are several doubts regarding the issuing of this Fatwa (due to the unavailability of such texts), Shiite mosques and holy places promoted this idea and prompted large blocks of voters to embrace it and consider it a compelling “legal duty”.

However, the voters who abided by this Fatwa during the constitutional elections didn’t abide by it during the local elections on the basis that Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani’s Fatwa was limited to the constitutional elections and wasn’t biding for the local governorates council. In fact, the Shiite coalition ran for these elections with a united list, while its components ran for the local elections each on its own, and this is why they were unable to use Sistani’s name to ask people to support different factions, despite them being Shiite. This dualism in electoral behavior that was shown by the ICP’s bases in Shiite areas clearly indicates the presence of another dualism in the concept of legitimacy, belonging, and identity, as well as the religious/confessional concept and the civil/social-class concept.

Moreover, the fraud, forging, and violations that were carried out by the Islamic forces’ armed mobs also weakened the party’s representation (100,000 votes.

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5 These numbers are based on the data of the Iraqi elections’ higher independent body. The numbers were compiled by ICP official Raed Fahmi on January 2005 after the constitutional elections.
were cancelled after the first elections and 300,000 were cancelled after the second elections).

With its independent electoral efforts, the party managed to get 3 seats in the parliament, and got 2 additional seats thanks to the Kurdistan Front. However, the party fared much better in the parallel local elections, which guaranteed it local government seats in the following governorates: Nasiriyah, Basra, Hulla, and Baghdad. However, the party lost its only government seat in April 2005 after the appointment of the first Prime Minister Ibrahim Al Jaafari, who is known for his extreme hostility towards communism and a firm, dogmatic political vision.

In spite of the fraud and violations, the elections revealed the weakness of civil secular movements in the Arab part of Iraq as opposed to the great power and influence of nationalist-civil-secular parties in the Kurdish part. This situation prompted the ICP to adopt a new tactic of allying with several centrist factions within the framework of the Iraqi List presided by the former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi to run for the general parliamentary elections in December 2005. The list won 25 seats including 2 for the ICP, which enabled it to regain its seat in Al Maliki’s government (Spring 2006) with the ministry of scientific research that was filled by official Raed Fahmi. In the Kurdistan region (Dhouk, Erbil, and Suleimaniyyah), the party also has a ministerial seat (the ministry of Transport) as well as 3 other seats; furthermore, the Kurdistan Communist Party has several seats in the governorates’ council, two in Erbil, one in Suleimaniyyah, another in Dhoun, and two in Kirkuk.

The ICP has a calm and flexible stance regarding political change, and attempts to retake its position through participation despite the weakness of its popular and politico-institutional influence. And amid the aggravation of violence, confessionalism, and corruption, as well as the spread of Islamic parties that seek to impose conservative values by means of their armed militias, the ICP takes a critical and opposing stance, hoping to regain composure to build a centrist civil block that will benefit from the public rage towards political violence (militias), and the confessional conflict, and benefit from the growing repulsion (since 2006) by conservative Islamic movements, and use all these factors in a different orientation. Moreover, considering itself a trans-religious party, the ICP hopes to polarize this anger and recover its position.
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THE PARTY’S MAIN CAUSES

The ICP’s main causes can be regarded from two sides: the first is the intellectual position that is occupied by these causes in the party’s official documents (the eight national conference’s political report and the program that was ratified by the conference), and the second is all about the practical causes that the party is working on in a direct manner.

According to the program, the current objectives are: achieving the country’s independence and its national sovereignty and building the civil society”, and the long-term objectives are the following: “social progress and socialism”. The party dropped “Marxism-Leninism” from its program, replacing it with “Marxist thought and socialist legacy” in general, thus declaring its rupture with the closed Russian model of socialism -in terms of socioeconomic policy. It is worth mentioning that the party still insists on its stance regarding the preservation of the public sector

(The State’s capitalism) and giving the State a major economic and cultural role; however, it temporarily agrees to allow the private sector and foreign investments some maneuvering space in order for them to contribute to the country’s development. In fact, the party clearly addresses diversified ownership patterns, the stance towards privatization, how to deal with foreign investments, and the oil policy. In general, the party’s stances are opposed to neo liberalism orientations that seek to impose its own pattern and model. The stance towards the private sector and the necessity of supporting it, as well as dealing with investments based on economic criteria and even reviewing State projects based on economic feasibility isn’t a temporary one according to the party’s leadership. It considers “the public sector…a main foundation of the national economy”. This is based on the party’s assumption that market economy leads to “brutal capitalism” (the term is borrowed from the French left) and doesn’t necessarily lead to democracy on the basis of separating the political authority and the economic authority.

The party doesn’t think that the State’s ownership of industry and oil sector can lead to authoritarian tendencies (anti-democratic), nor does it see any structural bon between the State’s hegemony over the economy and the emergence of dictatorship. Despite the presence of numerous economic experts in the party’s ranks, the theories of the welfare State, and the relation between hegemony on one hand the impact that was left by the absence of separation between the
political and economic fields are totally inexistent in the party’s thought, or at least they’re nowhere to be seen in the party’s official documents.

It is worth mentioning that the program addresses new economic sectors, such as tourism as well as internal and foreign trade, health, education, water, the environment, culture, media, and telecommunications. The party calls on the “State” to “manage the cultural process” in terms of expenditure, and this request doesn’t address the State’s hegemony over culture through funding and the threats that this problem poses to the independence of the cultural situation, considering that the latter needs to enjoy the highest level of independence from the State’s restrictions. The party focuses on abrogating decision 156 of 1986, issuing a new Labour code, and maintaining the amended personal status code 188 of 1959. The program also includes new paragraphs on parties thought such as “children’s rights”, “the environment”, and “civil society organizations”, all of which are titles that reflect the legal and political awareness to the new forms of modern life.

The program concludes by reaffirming the Kurdish State’s right to self-determination (including separation or the federal or confederal union) as well as the guarantee of ethnic, administrative, and cultural rights of Turkmen, Chaldo-Assyrians, Armenians, Aramaics, and Yazidis. The ICP no longer ended its programs with the issues of socialism around the world, and replaced them with study of the relations with Arab and regional countries, and Iraq’s ties with the rest of the world.

In its practical activity, the party focuses on trade unions; it always makes sure to organize a Labour Day rally every 1st of May, and dedicates considerable efforts to rebuild the disintegrated trade union movement. Moreover, the party focuses on commemorating the July 14th 1958 revolution in an attempt to revive its national symbolism and take pride in its individual symbolism; in fact, it represents the ICP’s golden age where several achievements were reached, such as the personal status code and agricultural reforms. Moreover, the party organized several women rallies and mobilized women while the constitution was being written in order to defend women’s rights and the personal status code from conservative Islamists. Perhaps the most important thing that’s missing is activity related to living conditions (prices, fuel…), a kind of activity that’s almost monopolized by the Sadr Movement.

Despite the low number of communist MPs, the ICP plays a pivotal role in the constitution and constitutional applications. In fact, the parliament entrusted
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the party with a special committee to study the Kirkuk issue and the problematic implementation of article 140 that pertains to that particular issue.

This trust in the ICP is based on the fact that the party adopts a worldly ideology that respects all ethnicities and defends their rights. Thus, its bias towards Kurdish federalism and the Kurdish nation’s right to self-determination doesn’t prevent it from upholding the ethnic, cultural, and administrative rights of ethnic minorities.

The Fact that the ICP was entrusted with this task represents recognition of its impartiality among the clashing ethnicities and its expertise and understanding of the ethnic issue and its problems. However, the Kirkuk committee’s activity remained limited due to the parliament’s weakness and lack of expertise. In fact, the parliament allocated no funds to the committee, and it remained held up. The party is able to positively play a positive role in reinforcing cross ethnic ties; it is also able to expand its role in order to solve the public sector’s problem by developing its services and liberating it from the State’s control by providing it with more independence and responsibility.

Finally, the resurgence of the Iraqi culture as a shield in the face of confessional discrimination opens new horizons for the party, knowing that it is one of the oldest parties that bear the Iraqi identity in both its ideology and its structure.

CONCLUSION

The ICP represents a model in the region (and maybe the world), which States that social, cultural, and political change led to the fall of leftist ideologies and the rise of political Islam and ethnic trends as alternatives grounded on identity politics and not the conflict of classes. It also led to the reduction of the social bases of the leftist movement in general (the reduction of the proletariat, the drain of the agricultural rural areas) and the fact that the rural displaced people turned to natural leaders (the sheikhs of clans that moved to the cities) instead of turning to modern unions, and the expansion of the middle class that is constantly looking for social progress opportunities. All these factors as well as others took their toll on the ICP's influence, and perhaps the breakdown of identity politics and its failure might pave the floor for a resurgence of the left, albeit limited.
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A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE IRAQI TURKMEN’S POLITICAL RESPONSES

There’s a strong conflict of opinions regarding the origins of Iraqi Turkmen, however, it is certain that they settled down during the Ottoman rule in the northwest of Mosul, whence they spread to eastern Baghdad. Once there, they became high ranked officers, experts, traders, and executives in residential agglomerations lined up along the vast, fertile plains, and mingled with Kurds, Assyrians, Arabs, and other confessions. With the creation of the new Iraqi state in 1921, Iraqi Turkmen managed to maintain their socioeconomic status. According to Hanna Batato’s analysis (1996), the orientations of the connection between confessions or ethnic groups and classes, which marked this century’s twenties to a certain extent, have changed in the last decade of the royal era i.e. the fifties – to a great extent sometimes. Consequently, the Turkmen social superiority in the north was progressively weakened in cities such as Erbil and Kirkuk. On the other hand, the power of clannish Kurdish Aghas was bolstered at the detriment of the misfortunate, i.e. the poor villagers, as their authority expanded on the territory1.

Currently, the Turkmen reside in the same area that connects Arabs and Kurds,

1 Batato (1996) indicates that “in the city of Erbil, Turkmen were part of the wealthy class, and their residences were built on the summit of a circular hill that stands 150 feet (around 50 meters) high, while the Kurds, who constituted 75% of the populace and represented the poor class, generally lived in houses surrounding the eastern and southern hillsides”. 
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namely in Kirkuk, Diyala, and Mosul, where they make up a substantial portion of the inhabitants of Tal’Afar, Kirkuk, Dakuk, Tuz Khurmatu, Kirat tabba, Barada, and Kafri.

In short, Iraqi Turkmen are a unique ethnic group; they are predominantly Muslim and divided into two main sects: Shiites (40%) Sunnites (60%), and have strong cultural ties with Turkey².

After the Gulf War drew to a close in 1991, a safe zone was set up for Kurds under the protection of the United States and the coalition forces, and the withdrawal of the Baath’s administration and central government gave the Kurds an opportunity to establish a local administration and hold elections that led to the institution of a semi-independent Kurdish government in Iraqi Kurdistan. As a result, Turkey felt that its interests were shaken, and the Turkish³ fears are strongly linked to the direct impact of the Kurdish independence or the establishment of a strong Kurdish federation, first in Iraq on its Turkish populace, and second on its political and economic interests in Iraq.

Several observers note that Turkey profited from the Turkmen’s anger and concern towards the Kurdish advance in the 90’s to galvanize those who support a military intervention, and that Ankara turned its attention to the Turkmen issue in 1992. Before this Turkish attention, the national Turkmen movement and Turkmen political parties didn’t exist. A report by the “Electoral Reform” organization that participated in the monitoring of the 1992 Kurdistan parliamentary elections states that the forces were divided as follows: the Kurdistan Democratic Party, the National Union of Kurdistan, the Islamic Movement, the Kurdistan Communist

² The Iraqi Turkmen Front states that Turkmen add up to 13% of the Iraqi population and 25% of the Kurdistan population. As a result, according to this report, the number of Turkmen will increase to around 4 millions. Nevertheless, according to western research centers, the number of Turkmen in Iraq varies between 1.5 and 2 millions, which amounts to 2 to 3 % of the population of Iraq.

³ There are three causes that are directly linked to Turkish interests in Iraq, and Turkey considers them the most important points that must be present in any political protocol or agreement with Iraq. These causes are: 1- preventing the partition of Iraq on a confessional or ethnic basis, which could lead to the creation of an independent Kurdish state or confederation (with Kirkuk as capital) and prompt the numerous Kurds in Turkey to develop similar aspirations to a similar entity. 2- Protecting the Turkish-speaking Kurdish minority residing mainly in Iraqi Kurdistan. 3- Wiping out the Kurdistan Workers’ Party that sought refuge in Iraqi Kurdistan after the arrest of its president Abdullah Öcalan.
Party, the Iraqi Communist Party, the Kurdish Democratic People’s Party, and independent democrats. Note the absence of any Turkmen or Chaldo-Assyrian movements or lists.

After this period (1991) the Turkmen nationalist tendency was born in the Kurdistan region in particular and was divided at first into two directions\(^4\): the first direction started supporting Kurdish nationalist projects seeking to implement federalism, hoping that Turkmen people get their full national rights as they are the second ethnic group after Kurds in the region, thus allowing them to enjoy greater political participation than the one they would’ve had if they were still in the Baathist Iraq.

The second direction adopted political stances that opposed Kurdish parties and supported the Turkish state which considered that Saddam’s endurance was in the interest of Iraq and the entire region, for he was the only man who was capable of maintaining unity and centralization in order to rein in Kurdish ambitions. This is the viewpoint of Turkey that turned a deaf ear to the situation of Iraqi Turkmen during the *Baath* reign. However, as *Baath* gradually lost the control of Kurdish regions, Turkey started considering itself responsible for preserving the Turkmen people and their interests, after realizing the threat that Kurds were posing. As a result of this situation, several Turkish factions and movements emerged during that period; some of these movements were on good terms with the Kurds, while others were not\(^5\). The years 2002 and 2003 were marked by the aggravation of political tensions between the Kurdish parties and the Turkmen Front, leading to an attack on the Front’s offices and the burning of their contents. However, these offices were re-equipped, but their number was lowered in Erbil and Suleimaniyyah.

After the fall of the Baathist regime in 2003, the political developments opened

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4 Since 1991, offices were starting to be opened by political parties such as the Turkmen National Party, the Turkmen Unity Party which became later the Turkmeneli Party, and the independent Turkmen movement.

5 Military intervention was an option throughout the 90’s, and turkey started sending military hordes through the Iraqi-Turkish borders to deter any Kurdish plans to create a Kurdish state or control the Kirkuk governorate, or to counter the PKK that commenced its military activities in the border zone since 1999. Some sources indicate that 1500 to 3000 Turkish Special Forces troops are present in Iraqi Kurdistan, and that the Turkish Army has several outposts and camps in the Iraqi heartland, such as the Bamerni region that’s under Kurdistan’s authority. The region’s government officially confirms this Turkish military presence by stating that the existence of such camps is part of a political agreement with the government of Turkey since 1996, i.e. since the internal conflict between the Kurdistan National Union and the Kurdistan Democratic Party.
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the door of political participation to the Iraqi society. Turkmen also participated in political activities, the founding of blocs and parties, the electoral process, and the formation of multiparty blocs and political alliances that encompassed people with several confessional and intellectual orientations.

And then, Turkmen political orientations started witnessing new divisions between Islamists and Nationalists, and between Shiites and Sunnis. It was noted that Islamic tendencies were much stronger among Turkmen Shiites. The rise of Arab Shiites to the Iraqi political scene and their accession to power greatly strengthened Islamic political tendencies among Turkmen Shiites, and it is worth mentioning that strong ties link them to Muktada al Sadr, al Da’wa Party, and the Higher Islamic Council. However, the other factor is linked to the predominant rural character of Turkmen Shiites. In fact, according to the 1947 statistics, Turkmen Shiites in rural areas totaled 1.1%, while Turkmen Sunnis totaled 0.3%, which means that the majority of Turkmen Sunnis resided in towns, while most Shiites settled down in rural areas.

Although this percentage changed, it has its social and political connotation, i.e. the influence of the Sunni ottoman state and its interest in Turkmen Sunnis more than Turkmen Shiites. On the other hand, the city life, with its institutions, its classes, and its lifestyle that differs from that of rural areas, attracted many Sunni traders, proprietors, and professionals. This Sunni presence was mirrored in the emergence of nationalist ideas and movements among the Sunnis to a much greater extent than Turkmen Shiites. Moreover, the influence of the Sunni Turkey on Iraqi Turkmen, which grew in the early 90’s, led to a nationalist ascent inspired by a Turkish ideological methodology among the Turkmen Sunnis. On the other hand, the Shiite role came really late; it probably started with the creation of the Islamic revolution’s higher council in Iraq, which was founded in Tehran and included some Turkmen. However, the Turkmen Shiites’ Islamic action started in 2003. As we saw, the new Iraqi state with the influential Shiite majority managed to directly influence Turkmen Shiites, and this Shiite awakening in Iraq was the main reason behind the Turkmen Sunni Islamic movements that emerged as a confessional reaction.

The main movement among Turkmen is the Nationalist and Ethnic orientation. The Turkmen National Party is considered the mother of all Turkmen nationalist parties. It was founded in 1990 in Turkey and emerged on the political scene during the Beirut conference in 1991 as an opposition party. Back then, it was headed by Dr. Mozfir Erslan and several other officials such as Mustafa Kamal.
The Iraqi Turkmen Front

Yayiji, Yashar Imam Uglu, Hassan Uzman, Ziad Cawtharlo, and Baha’ el Din Turkmen Uglu. The party led the Turkmen nationalist orientation between 1991 and 1995, i.e. until the Turkmen Front was founded. Among the parties that participated in the Front, we have the Turkmeneli Party, which was founded by the Shiite Turkmen politician Ahmad Kawnach from Tal Afar and experienced dissidence⁶ when it was overtaken by Riad Sari Kahia who profited from the president’s absence to accede to power and remain in control until today. Among the other parties and organizations, we have the Independent Turkmen’s Party, the Turkmen Brotherhood Club, the Turkmen Islamic Movement, the Turkmen Nationalists Movement, and the national Turkmen gathering.

The Iraqi Turkmen Front is considered one of the new nationalist movements, and through this study, we will try to give a historical overview of its establishment, its internal structure, and its internal organization including: the leadership model inside the institution, organizational ranks and leadership bodies, task distribution, and the decision making mechanism. We will also study its goals, political programs, and the most important issues that it raises; we will also try to study its relation with the state and the community⁷.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE IRAQI TURKMEN FRONT

In the mid 90’s several Turkmen parties and figures emerged in Erbil after the creation of the circumstantial Kurdish state, when new Turkmen parties and movements started multiplying. Due to this increase in the number of factions and parties, competition developed among them, and several people suggested uniting them, which paved the floor for the founding of the Turkmen Front⁸.

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6 Some see it as a coup and not dissension, for Ahmed Kawnach was prevented from entering Turkey as he was living in Turkish Cyprus, and Riad Sari Kahia took the helm of the party.

7 While collecting information and data, we relied on initial sources such as the Turkmen Front’s newspapers and periodic publications as well as its websites. We also interviewed several Front cadres in Altun Capri, Kirkuk.

8 The Turkmen Front is the Turkmen nationalism’s political institution that includes several smaller parties that change every once in a while. For example, several parties left the Front such as the Turkmen Brotherhood Club headed by Wadad Erslan, the Turkmen Decision Party headed by Frstouk Abdullah, the Turkmeneli Party headed by Sari Kahia, or the Turkmen Islamic Movement headed by Dr. Sami Donomz.
The Iraqi Turkmen Front was officially founded on April 5th, 1995 as a coalition of Turkmen parties and figures with direct Turkish support. Ihsan Dughermaji, a pediatrician from Erbil residing in Turkey, played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Front and rallying Turkish support for it; he was the first president of the Front’s guidance council as well. Among the Front’s presidents, we have Turan Kettana, Telli Snan Jelbi, Wadad Erslan, San’an Kassab, Dr. Farouk Abdullah, and Dr. Saad el Din Arkaj.

The Turkmen Front considers itself the sole legitimate representative of the Turkmen people. Its president is dubbed “the Turkmens’ leader”, and the presidency is an important political and organizational position for the Front’s parties and leaders. This is why we notice that Farouk Abdullah, the former president of the Front, declared dissidence after failing to renew his mandate and established the Turkmen Decision Party before participating in the Iraqi national congress list that was headed by Ahmed Jalabi in the 2005 parliamentary elections. Before Abdullah declared dissidence, the Turkmen Brotherhood Club—the Erbil branch headed by Wadad Erslan declared dissidence, and a large bloc made of prominent figures withdrew from the Front due to the fact that Wadad Erslan objected what she called the escalation of the Turkish influence and the absence of a strategy for the Turkmen Front.

The history of political relations between the Turkmen Front and Kurdish parties, namely the National Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Democratic Party, is packed with disputes and political hostility ever since the establishment of these parties. This situation didn’t change whether during the mandate of Sanaan al Kassab, its fourth president before the fall of the regime, or that of its next president Farouk Abdullah, all the way to its current president Dr. Said el Din Arkaj. For instance, Sanaan Kassab was unable to improve the Front’s status on the Kurdistan and Iraqi political map, because he had tense relations with the Iraqi opposition. We also notice that during the mandate of Sanaan Kassab and that of his successor Farouk Abdullah (2003-2004), the Front lost the Turkmen seat in the governing council as well as the seat of the Kirkuk deputy governor. It is probable that its strong ties with Turkey made it subject to numerous regional political commitments, and that consequently, it couldn’t keep on preserving Turkey’s interests in the complicated international equations, particularly in issues related to Kirkuk and the Kurdistan region federation.

For example, the Front’s supporters staged a protest in Ankara on February 15th, 2005 calling the Turkish government to dispatch its forces to Kirkuk
immediately to protect Turkmen. The protesters held several banners criticizing Erdogan's government for its policy towards Kirkuk, which they described as unsuccessful.

**THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE, THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, AND THE POPULAR BASE**

The Iraqi Turkmen Front is a political nationalist movement for Iraqi Turkmen, which was founded as a result of the alliance of several Turkmen nationalist parties operating on the basis of a Turkmen nationalist political discourse within the framework of Iraq's unity. Its political discourse intends to maintain the integrity of Iraqi territory while categorically rejecting all federalism projects and the partition of Iraq into regions and independent administrative entities except for Kirkuk. And in the event that the regions system is ratified, the Front claims an independent region for Turkmen or the creation of new governorates for them.

On the national level and the Turkmen people’s level, the Front seeks to involve Turkmen along with the rest of the Iraqi factions in the executive, legislative, and judicial authorities. They also seek to claim the rights of the Turkmen, maintain national constants, allow the Turkmen to have an influential voice in the parliament, and get the government to recognize the martyrs of Turkmen movements as those of the Iraqi struggle, provide compensation for their families, and offer them pensions as is the case with the martyrs from other ethnicities. The Front also seeks to ensure the release of all Turkmen prisoners, and has other goals that are specific to Kirkuk and other cities that are considered to be Turkmen cities, including:

- Creating two Turkmen governorates the first of which will be located in Tuz and the second in Tal Afar, and ending the suffering of the Turkmen people in this city.

- Bringing Turkmen migrants inside and outside Kirkuk back to their original regions and helping them regain their properties and belongings, as well as restoring all the Turkmen cities that were eliminated by the previous regime and compensating their inhabitants for the damage they incurred during that period.
Promoting the property claims agency in Kirkuk, where the Front considers that 90% of the confiscated lands are the property of Turkmen citizens, and this is why demands that the case be decided as quickly as possible in order to help people recover their rights.

As for the Front’s organizational structure, it is pretty similar to that of Iraqi civil parties (Leninist or bureaucratic hierarchy). Its organizational structure is made of the leadership offices, the executive body, and the Turkmen council. The Front has a large media institution that publishes several newspapers and magazines; it also has a local and satellite TV station and websites. It also has offices and representatives in the majority of regions where Turkmen live in Iraq, and several offices abroad, as well as popular institutions and organizations operating in several domains and fields.

As for leadership patterns in the Iraqi Turkmen Front, the party is based on modern elite leadership, and the president is appointed during a general congress which is held every two years according to the internal statute. Presidency is an executive position that enables its filler to make important decisions after meeting with the political bureau.

In the last congress (the Iraqi Turkmen Front’s fifth congress) that was held in Kirkuk between July 10th and July 15th, 2008, several blocks and disagreements emerged among the Front’s leaders and prominent figures as twenty members, most of whom came from Mosul and Tal Afar, refrained from voting to elect...
a president. Moreover, Turkmeneli and the Turkmen Decision Party withdrew from the congress, and the Turkmen Front became a Turkmen political party instead of a Turkmen Front made of several parties. However, the other Turkmen Front, along with other parties that were under umbrella (including the Turkmen National Party, the Independent Turkmens movement, the Turkmen Justice Party, and the Islamic Turkmens Party) called themselves the Turkmen Parties’ Council. The Turkmen Front’s blocs have contradictory orientations; for example, Turkmeneli is a well-known nationalist party in the Font, which has a nationalist Turkmen project that calls for the establishment of an autonomous Turkmen zone after dividing northern Iraq into three autonomous zones (Kurdistan, Mosul, and Kirkuk).

Parliamentary or municipal elections aren’t probably the only criterion to evaluate a party’s popularity and discover the quality of its popular base. However, they are still one of the main criteria that allow us to determine the party’s or the political movement’s capability of influencing the masses and rally votes in the electoral process which is the only means to accede to power in democratic societies. The success of any political party or entity in this process mainly depends on the psychology of its supporters, its political discourse, and its socioeconomic programs for the state and the community. Furthermore, political and regional circumstances also influence this process as well as the masses and the participating political blocs.

In the 2005 Iraqi parliamentary elections, the Iraqi elections high commission declared that the Iraqi Turkmen Front got 87993 votes, which means that around 88,000 people voted for the Front amid the acute nationalist and confessional polarization that the elections witnessed. The fact that the Front got this rate proves that it has great influence among Iraqi Turkmen.

Other than the numbers indicator, we have a qualitative indicator that can help us read the bases sociology (popular sociology) of the Front’s followers. Its nationalist political discourse has been fierce since the fall of the regime in 2003. According to this discourse, the Front believes that Iraqi Turkmen are facing great challenges five years after the fall, including: being prevented from entering the temporary governing council, and being marginalized in the Iraqi state temporary management law more than five years ago. Adding insult to injury, the Iraqi law issued a slow death sentence to Turkmen through article 140.

To make matters worse, the Front doesn’t trust the leaders of the Kurdish parties, and accuses them of fascism and racism. The use of this political tone
and discourse by the Front makes the Turkmen feel concerned, deprived, and repressed by Iraqi and Kurdish authorities. The Front also resorts to ancient history to insist that the Kurdish-Turkmen conflict is old and deep-seated; it relates for instance the July 1959 events\(^\text{12}\) in Kirkuk, pointing the finger at the Kurds as a main political side in this issue by saying: “archeology and sociology tell us that those who perpetrated the Kirkuk massacre gave birth to another anthropologic generation of people who bear the same genetic qualities and psychological habits; therefore, isn’t it probable that those who perpetrated the Kirkuk massacre might try to repeat it in Kirkuk or other places in Iraq under different pretexts, different names, and different goals?”\(^\text{13}\). Such intellectual and political orientations breed confessional tendencies in the Iraqi sociopolitical structure and divert the course of national reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

**THE IRAQI TURKMEN FRONT AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

The Iraqi Turkmen Front participated in the 2005 elections, and, according to the results that were declared by the Iraqi parliamentary elections high commission, the Front got 93000 votes in the first elections that were held on January 31\(^\text{st}\) 2005, which allowed it to get three seats in the founding assembly. In the second elections that were held on December 15\(^\text{th}\) 2005, the Iraqi Turkmen Front that participated in the elections on its own behalf without allying with other Turkmen or Iraqi parties got 82000 votes that got it one seat in the parliament\(^\text{14}\).

Currently, the Front holds one parliament seat occupied by its president Dr. Saad el Din Arkaj. As for ministerial portfolios, the Front holds none in the current

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12 In July 1959, during the mandate of President Abdul Kareem Kassem, a bloody civil conflict raged between Kurds, Turkmen, and Armenians in Kirkuk, leaving a death toll of dozens of bodies.

13 A communiqué was issued by the Front and entitled “lessons learned from the Kirkuk massacre” on June 21\(^\text{st}\) 2008 on the 49\(^\text{th}\) anniversary of the events. [www.Kerkuk.net](http://www.Kerkuk.net) 26/6/2008.

14 The Turkmen Front wasn’t satisfied with these results and considered them political deceit to Iraqi Turkmen because it believes that the Iraqi Turkmen Front’s political weight awards it a much higher score. An interview with Jamal Chan, one of the Turkey’s officials on 16/7/2008. The Front was dealt a severe blow when Turkmen Shiites voted for the Shiite coalition instead of the Front after Sayyed Ali Sistany ordered them to do so.
Iraqi government. In the forthcoming parliamentary elections, the Front might be allying with other Turkmen and Iraqi factions in order to be able to affect the decisions of the future government, especially that the Kirkuk issue and the implementation of article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution (which stipulates that Kirkuk should be part of the Kurdistan region) are imminent. True to these expectations, the Turkmen Front as well as several Turkmen and Arab factions in Kirkuk already started holding conferences, taking several measures, and establishing joint organizations in order to run for the upcoming local elections (governorates council) in October 2008.

In a statement that was published on June 16th 2008, the Front declared that it decided to run for the upcoming governorates council elections on behalf of the Iraqi Turkmen Front, and that its electoral lists will be open to all true Turkmen political institutions and prominent Turkmen figures. The Front and other Turkmen parties will run for these elections on one list that includes members of the Front, political parties, as well as other independent Turkmen movements operating in Turkmen regions, in order to keep Turkmen votes from being scattered in all the governorates where they constitute a demographic presence, such as: Kirkuk (Ta‘mim), Mosul (Ninawa), Tikrit (Salah al Din) and Diyala15.

As for the Kirkuk governorate, which is the subject of conflict between Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen, and due to the disputes that have been taking place there from 2003 to date, the governorate remained administratively and political independent from other Iraqi regions, with its own governor and governorate council that is made of the representatives of the townsfolk, Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, and Chaldo-Assyrians. The Kirkuk governorate council includes forty-one seats that are distributed on the following lists: the brotherhood list (which includes Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen represented by the national union and the Kurdistan Democratic Party) twenty-six seats; the Turkmen Front eight seats; the Iraqi republican gathering five seats; the Turkmen Islamic alliance one seat, and the Iraqi Arab gathering one seat.

15 Under the slogan “towards the reunification of the Turkmen scene”, the Turkmen Front along with other Turkmen parties (such as the Turkmen National Party, the Turkmen Justice Party, and the Independent Turkmens’ Party” held a conference in Kirkuk between June 15th and July 15th 2008 in order to unite the Turkmen political discourse in Iraq and Kirkuk and form a united electoral list to participate in the upcoming parliamentary and governorate councils elections.
Moreover, the police director in Kirkuk (Liwa Turhan Abdul Rahman Yusuf) is a member of the Turkmen Front, and there are many Turkmen employees in civil and government institutions in Kirkuk. Most of these employees are Shiites such as the Turkmen education director in Kirkuk Shen Omar Mubarak. As for other cities and districts in Kirkuk, the Turkmen Front has several members and representatives in municipal councils and government offices. For example, the Front has two seats in the municipal council of Altun Capri, a city with a predominantly Turkmen population that is part of the Kirkuk governorate.

**The Stance Towards Federalism and Kirkuk**

Iraq’s partition into federal regions and annexing the Kirkuk governorate to the Kurdistan region according to article 140 of the new Iraqi constitution are among the most important issues on the Iraqi political scene in general, and Iraqi political factions adopt conflicting stances towards that matter.

The Iraqi Turkmen Front is one of the political parties that are the most opposed to the implementation of article 140 and the annexation of the Kirkuk governorate to the Kurdistan region while also rejecting the federalization of the Kurdistan region, which seeks to separate Kirkuk from all other Iraqi regions, thus making it a smaller version of Iraq that includes all the categories of the Iraqi people. The Iraqi Turkmen Front’s leaders refuse to subject Kirkuk’s fate to a referendum, as they consider it an unacceptable compromise over this oil-rich city, as they fear the Kurdish attempts to seize this federation and occupy important positions in the new Iraqi State. The Turkmen Front accuses the two Kurdish parties of seeking to establish a closed Kurdish zone (the end justifies the means) by confiscating the dignity of other ethnic groups in the region, usurping the lands of Turkmen, Arabs, Chaldo-Assyrians, Yezidis, Shabak, and others, by intimidating them and stirring discord and unrest.

The Turkmen Front considers Kirkuk an authentic Turkmen city both historically and anthropologically, and that the Kurdish parties only resort to distortion, as well as cultural, geographic, and historical fraud. Moreover, the Front accuses them of paying large amounts of money to writers, historians, political analysts, and some state officials to prompt them to support one side over the other,
and of doing everything they’re doing to get away with their plan that seeks to establish a closed zone.

We also notice that the Turkmen Front not only considers itself a Turkmen movement that looks after the Turkmen’s interests, but also presents itself as a patriotic Iraqi movement that seeks to protect the interests of other minorities such as the Shabak, the Yezidis, and the Chaldo-Assyrians from the Kurdish greed and exploitation. The Front speaks on behalf of these people about their stolen rights and their occupied zones inside the Kurdish territories; however, most of the Yezidis in Kurdistan consider themselves Kurds and hold strong ties with the Kurdish authorities in the region. Moreover, Chaldo-Assyrians have their own parties that are able to speak on their behalf; this is why they consider this kind of behavior a political attempt to create nationalist tendencies opposed to the nationalist Kurdish discourse in Iraq and the Kurdistan region. About Kirkuk, the Turkmen Front demands international and regional protection for Kirkuk’s Turkmen, and calls the United Nations to assume its responsibilities in terms of protecting the rights of Turkmen, Arabs, and Chaldo-Assyrians in Kirkuk if the Iraqi government proves to be incapable of doing it. While refusing the annexation of Kirkuk to Kurdistan and calling for making Kirkuk an independent region, the Turkmen Front and several parties that were under its umbrella had several plans, nationalist projects, and projects for Kirkuk, most of which seek to compete with the Kurds and hinder the implementation of article 140 and constitute alternative projects for Kirkuk in case the Kurds claim it. However, their new discourse calls for preserving the unity of Iraq’s territory and people—a slogan that’s usually employed by Arabs. Therefore, it seems that the Turkmen Front and some of its allies are adopting some sort of a pragmatic policy in order to win over the Arab majority, even though this might create dualism in its political discourse. For example, Turkmeneli has a project that seeks to divide northern Iraq into three autonomous zones (Kurdistan, Mosul, and Kirkuk) with three regions (North, Center, and South).

Turkmeneli believes that this project seeks to organize the relation between the different components of the Iraqi people in the region and normalize the relation with Kirkuk. According to the project, administrative and political authorities in the north region are made of: the presidency board (three members: one Kurd, one Arab, and one Turkmen) for a seventy years mandate; the executive authority (Kurdish Prime Minister as well as Turkmen and Arab deputies), as well as 12 to fifteen ministries that are divided as follows: 40% for the Kurds,
25% for Turkmen, and 25% for Arabs. Moreover, the project includes the judicial authority that is made of nine members: four from Kurdistan, three from Mosul, and two from Kirkuk), the legislative authority (100 members with a four-year mandate and the members are divided as follows: 50 from Kurdistan, 30 from Mosul, and 20 from Kirkuk). This is a summary of the project along with the definition of the power of each of the four authorities. According to the project, Kirkuk will be a Turkmen autonomous zone in the north region. Moreover, in terms of geographic partition of autonomous zones, the project relies on another map that the Turkmen Front uses to prove that Kirkuk and other areas in northern Iraq are the legal property of the Turkmen.

We conclude that the Turkmen Front’s stance towards federalism and Kirkuk isn’t just about refusal, but also competition with Kurdish factions in these areas that the Front claims as its own since they are Turkmen regions. We also notice that in order to counter the Kurds, the Front resorts to the same nationalist logic and political discourse that they use. This discourse is mainly based on the following guidelines: historical legitimacy, stolen rights, deprivation, displacement, the Arab rush, and after the fall, the Front added the Kurdish rush.

We notice as well that in its current political discourse, the Front is focusing on a United Iraq in a bid to attract Arabic factions with a central orientation in order to bolster its stance towards the Kurds; however, on the other hand, it calls for Turkmen autonomy, and this contradiction is obvious.

**Conclusion**

In the early 90’s, Turkmen parties and nationalist movements emerged and tried to uphold the Turkmen identity before other nationalities and identities, especially after the emergence of the Turkmen identity as opposed to the Kurdish identity and the ambitions of its political movements. During that period, several Turkmen nationalist parties took a reconciliatory course with the Kurdish identity and political parties, while other clashed with them. The Iraqi Turkmen Front is the most important of those parties that followed a course which contradicts the Kurds’ projects and ambitions, and the Turkish state played a pivotal role in supporting Turkmen nationalist movements and nurturing nationalist tendencies by profiting from the Turkmen card to meddle with Iraqi internal affairs and protect its strategic interests, i.e. eliminating the
PKK and preventing the establishment of a Kurdish state in Iraq.

After the 2003 events, the Turkmen identity suffered confessional dispersion due to the rise of Turkmen Islamic movements and the rise of political Islam among Shiite and Sunni Turkmen.

Islamic parties first emerged among the Turkmen Shiites as a reflection of the rise of Shiite Islam in Iraq in general, and Islamic parties among Turkmen Sunnis emerged as a confessional reaction to the emergence of Turkmen Shiite parties. Therefore, the situation of the Turkmen is quite similar to that of the Arabs in terms of the crumbling of the Iraqi identity into confessional components (Shiites- Sunnis) and Iraq’s division into several ethnic identities Arab, Kurdish, and Turkmen) as well as the use of the Iraqi culture’s characteristics by factions against each other.

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Are Arab parties facing a predicament? Are they paying the price of repression and limited pluralism? Have they become obsolete to the benefit of other political groups and mobilization modes such as communities, tribes, “asabiyyat” or to the advantage of non governmental organizations, associations and social movements? While some predicted “the end of parties” in the region as a result of authoritarian political systems, doesn’t the recent transition from the one party rule towards a fragile plural party system in many countries put again, party organizations in the spotlight?

Most of the time, contemporary Arab parties have little mobilizing power. Yet some are crawling out of underground activities and trying their hands at the exercise of power after years of opposition. Others, and mainly on the Islamist arena, assert themselves as first hand mobilization structures, able in certain cases to compete with regimes in power.

This book addresses those research questions. Emphasizing new and unpublished data, the book’s diverse contributions tackle holistically party life in six countries that have adopted very different political pathways: Yemen, Bahrain, Lebanon, Morocco, Algeria and Iraq. All the studies approach the decline or the revival of the parties from a long term historical perspective mainly with regard to political institutions in those six countries. The studies focus on the rules of party games, on the junction between “the right to politics” and “political rights”. They reveal the fine-tuning between ideological frameworks and political strategies. They raise questions about the renewal of elites, forms of militant activism, the array of parties’ political activities particularly social ones. They examine the issue of identity construction and political solidarities in the framework of the nation state, or in contradiction with it. As a final point, the book inquires about how party life in those six countries accounts for political transformations: possible democratization of regimes, forms of domination that are played out within those regimes, the emergence or the breakdown of leaderships and finally the rationale behind mobilization and collective action.