

Edited by: Khalil Kalfat  
Translated by: Ubab Murad

# Mapping of the Arab Left

Tunisia - Egypt - Yemen - Sudan - Morocco - Algeria

  
**ROSA  
LUXEMBURG  
STIFTUNG**

North Africa Office

2014



# Mapping<sup>of the</sup> Arab Left

Editing of the Arabic edition: **Khalil Kalfat**

Translation: **Ubab Murad**

English Copyediting: **Rachel Aspden**

December 2014

The views represented in this book are the sole responsibility of their authors  
and do not necessarily reflect the position  
of the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung.

The original Arabic title of the Work:

**خارطة اليسار العربي:**

تونس- مصر - اليمن- السودان - المغرب - الجزائر



**ROSA  
LUXEMBURG  
STIFTUNG**

North Africa Office



# Table of contents

Introduction by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung	<a href="#">4</a>
On the Arab Left and Arab Revolutions	<a href="#">6</a>
The Map of the Tunisian Left	<a href="#">16</a>
Leftist movements in Egypt	<a href="#">44</a>
The Contemporary Yemeni Left Scene	<a href="#">70</a>
The Left in Sudan: resources and contemporary challenges	<a href="#">106</a>
The Moroccan Left: the reality of the crisis and the throes of change	<a href="#">134</a>
Leftist Movement in Algeria: A Legend to Glorify Hope	<a href="#">162</a>

# Introduction by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung

---

## Why Mapping the Political Left?

The Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS) is concerned with a number of topics relevant to progressive political life in and outside of parliament. As an organization affiliated with the German Left Party, we function as a think-tank for the wider spectrum of German groups, organizations, and movements that struggle for social justice and direct democracy.

Although the contexts of relevant developments within the worldwide political Left may vary, the effects are similar: efforts are not unified and, thus, are weakened. Moreover, although Leftist politics may address important social issues, they are not necessarily attractive to relevant constituencies. The questions therefore are: what are the appropriate ways to organize for political parties? How can parties advance social movements and vice versa? How can the social justice we are fighting for be achieved in a globalized world? Who could be partners in this struggle? In general, there seem to be more questions than answers.

In Germany, as in many other European countries, we are facing rising disillusionment with (traditional) party and parliamentary politics. The number of party members, let alone active ones, is on the decline. People are finding other ways to organize, often through powerful and socially broad political initiatives. These initiatives, on the other hand, are mostly short-lived, which, again, stresses the need for strong, socially rooted, sustainable political organizations.

In a range of Arab countries we have been witnessing the same developments. The discrepancies between various Leftist ideologies and practices are evident. Many parties and movements are marginalized, some lack internal democracy and

are, thus, neither attractive for younger activists nor promising pillars in the fight for a democratic society. And in the search for practical ways to achieve social justice, the obstacles seem overwhelming: foreign debt and its repercussions, the draining or exploitation of local labor and resources by foreign investments, or free trade agreements, of which only the stronger economy benefits in the long term.

This study adds to previous RLS efforts to understand and analyze the composition of the global Left. A list of those publications (with links for download) is included at the end of the book. “From Revolution to Coalition – Radical Left Parties in Europe” analyses the situation of Leftist parties in Europe (English language) and an Arabic version of it is forthcoming through our office. A study about Leftist parties in the Arab East (Arabic and English) under the title “Mapping of the Arab Left: Contemporary Leftist Politics in the Arab East” was published in early 2014. In front of you is the English translation of the Arabic study that was published by our office in October 2014.

We would like this material to be used as a basis for a process of sharing analyses and learning from each other’s practices and experiences. We hope for it to be a small contribution to improving the understanding of political processes in different contexts and to the advancement of networks between progressive parties and circles across borders and continents. The aim is to refill progressive values and political practices with life on the basis of social justice and equality.

**Peter Schäfer**

Head of the RLS North Africa office

December 2014

# On the Arab Left and Arab Revolutions

---

## Khalil Kalfat

*Khalil Kalfat is an Egyptian writer and translator who wrote a number of articles and books on politics in the 1970s. In the 1980s and 1990s he worked in the field of preparing dictionaries and translation from English and French. He has published numerous political, cultural and linguistic articles and studies. His linguistic writings include Towards a New Arabic Grammar, and his translated works include The Old Regime and the French Revolution, by Alexis de Tocqueville. His writings about the January revolution are collected in five books that will be published successively.*

The Arab Left acquired the features that distinguish it from the Left in northern and western industrial countries, from the social, economic and political conditions under which it grew. Political developments in our region and in the world, over more than a century, created the distinctive features of the Arab Left.

The Left arose in the political and economic framework of colonial dependency in Arab countries, most of which were colonies or semi-colonies. All were controlled by British and French imperialism, with some exceptions such as Italy in Libya. It was imperative for direct and indirect colonial dependency to impose certain issues. The socio-economic structure which was dependent on the global capitalist economy gave rise to the two dimensions of the national issue: liberalization from economic dependency and the creation of a modern capitalist society, a path blocked by the iron colonial cage; and political independence through the expulsion of military occupation and the removal of the colonial administration.

It was in this context that dependent Arab capitalist regimes emerged. Under their leadership, nationalist and independent movements

and parties appeared as well as national/pan-Arab movements and parties of small petty-bourgeois classes as well as other classes that seemed to have contradictory interests not only with regards to imperialism but also to dependent national capitalism. Moreover, in the context of the issue of national independence military coups took place, which seemed anti-feudalism and anti-dependent capitalism. When the time of independence came, in the wake of the second world war in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, these movements, parties and coups gradually became ruling capitalist classes, such as capitalist states, private capitalism or a partnership between the two. The Arab countries were doomed to remain within the framework of economic dependency by virtue of their economic structures despite the slogans of independence, because of the direct colonial obstacle, and the mentality of the dependency school, in which these new capitalist regimes, formed from the ruins of previous colonial capitalist regimes, were cultured. Independence and even socialist slogans were raised and misled the people.

Logic and the lessons of history show that these dependent national/pan-Arab capitalist regimes will not be able to achieve any of their ambitious slogans. These countries ended up retreating from independence and socialism, by virtue of their capitalist nature. This was accompanied with the spread of exploitation, corruption in the state, society and among the population, and deterioration in social, economic and political conditions. All this has led to the emergence of the worst forms of military and police dictatorships and increased poverty despite alleged socialist gains. The confiscation of political life has been achieved by the prohibition of left-wing and liberal political parties or through taming them. Thus, a false pluralism emerged, which was isolated from the masses, intellectually impoverished, politically opportunistic and completely dependent on the authoritarian ruling classes. All this took place under slogans of peaceful democracy or social democracy. The syndromes of poverty, ignorance and disease created an environment fertile for cultural deterioration and the rise in religious reactionary thought and its fundamentalist, jihadist and terrorist popular movements, with their increase in numbers feeding on the economic, intellectual, financial and spiritual misery of the people.

## **Some of the distinctive characteristics of the Arab Left and its struggles can be summarized as follows:**

The history of the Arab countries in the modern era can be summarized by their subjugation to British and French imperialism, the emergence of dependent national capitalist regimes, the absence of economic development by virtue of dependence. This is combined by the ineffectiveness of their revolutions, as popular independence or protest revolutions based on the social, economic and political conditions of the masses, rather than social and political revolutions capable of freeing these countries from dependency and initiating economic or cultural modernization. All this has led to the formation of the so-called third world with its dependent, rentier capitalist regimes and remnants of pre-capitalist societies heading towards a historical decline. This path not only leads to marginalization, but to something more dangerous: a historical decline that affects the survival of these peoples.

For example, the old and new dependency conditions in Egypt put the 1952 revolution and the January 2011 revolution in a harsh situation incapable of creating radical developments on the road to industrialization, modernization, and independence as well as towards ending dependency. These conditions were duplicated in other Arab countries.

The emergence of the Arab Left and its development was to a large extent linked to the creation of the Soviet Union, the so-called socialist camp, national, independence and social liberation movement in colonies in the framework of liberation from colonial occupation and administration, as well as the wider framework of armed social independence and popular movements, especially in China under the banner of Marxism. The Communist and Leftist framework has had a logical influence reflected in Arab and international dependency, with some important exceptions in one or the other centers of communism, especially Soviet communism, Maoist Chinese Communism, and European communism, at different periods. The collapse of the international Communist and Leftist path has had a devastating impact on the Arab Left, similar to the impact it had on the Left worldwide. This happened when the nature of the capitalist systems produced by "socialist" and armed liberation revolutions everywhere became clear, as well as all national failures in the Arab countries, brought about by the failure of the Arab Communist movement under attacks by anti-Communist dependent capitalist dictatorship regimes under western intellectual and political influence.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, the “socialist” camp and the national liberation movement led to the collapse of Communist and Leftist movements like dominoes all over the world. The impact was catastrophic for revisionist Soviet-oriented Communist parties, which began to be isolated from the masses in an environment dominated by one-party regimes, unity of opinion, state-dominated trade and professional unions, the control of political life by administrative and policing methods, the fight against culture and the co-opting of intellectuals and Leftists. With time and a fertile social, political and cultural environment, came the dramatic rise of fundamentalist Islamic terrorist groups that made use of the political and cultural results of disease, poverty and ignorance that left broad sectors of the masses prepared to embrace the reactionary ideology of political Islam in the absence of the Left, weakened by severe security pressures and unfavorable social and cultural developments.

Among the other features of the Arab Left is the reality that national independence battles, led by nationalist capitalist regimes, have brought with them the issue of pan-Arab unity, which has become a direct goal of fascist nationalist Arab regimes and their remnants. They have worked on reviving autonomous stages of nationalist capitalism, defended them and their policies, which have led to failures, defeats, setbacks, increased yielding to colonial capitalism, finding justifications for dictator/military/police states, created under the old justification of so-called “social democracy,” and even defended the adventures of pan-Arab regimes, which have destroyed the Arab nation and brought interventions, colonial occupations and Zionism.

The Left became ideologically, numerically and popularly weak Communist parties and intellectually and politically revisionist, with a few exceptions. This means the Left was reduced to “remnants” of the old Soviet-style Arab communism, along with the “remnants” of the dependent national capitalist ideologies such as the Nasiriya, the Baath with its Syrian and Iraqi wings, and the Arab Nationalist Movement. Naturally, the goal of the Arab nationalist Left is independence via the Nasiriya and Baathist paths, with some scattered criticisms. Unlike the Nasiriya, which became a street-based movement unlike the Nasiriya of totalitarian dependent capitalist rule, after the departure of Abdul Nasser and his regime, the Baathist nationalist regimes continued to represent the aspiration of Saddam Hussein’s Baath until his execution and in Syria, the Baath of Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar is still present. The Nasiriya and the Baath have tried to expand their influence

and create extensions to their rule. This prevents many of these parties and movements from being classified as Leftist.

The political consequences of the weak support and mass mobilization as well as the ideological weakness of the Communist Arab Left were serious in terms of its vision of the present and the future, its neglect of ending its period of decline, and its lack of awareness of the dimensions of the disaster experienced by our peoples and our countries. Thus, it has been unable to make use of the uprisings to achieve a strong and deep-rooted Left that serves the peoples' interests, despite the significant role played by the Communist Left and democratic youth organisations before, during and after the uprisings.

When the Arab revolutions started at the end of 2010 in Tunisia and the beginning of 2011 in the rest of the revolution countries, the lack of a mature revolutionary vision among the Arab Left made it unable to understand that these revolutions were in danger of sliding backwards, by virtue of their spontaneous nature, the intellectual weakness of the Left as well as its weak popular support, and the strength of the counter-revolution represented by the ruling regimes and fundamentalist political Islam groups. Thus, a great opportunity to achieve democratization from the bottom was lost because of the illusion that these revolutions, with their working-class support, will be able to seize power from the state. With the diffusion of the revolutions' expectations, a state of frustration dominated large segments of the Left, and this state was often coupled with the proclamation of childish Leftist stances.

The fate of the current Arab revolutions, regardless of the different prevailing conditions in each country, is linked to the nature of these revolutions. However, there is an absence of a deep understanding of this nature, and a lack of clarity about the concept of revolution and the laws of its evolution. This is because of ambiguities surrounding the concept of revolution in Marxist theory, which provided an introduction to understanding revolution without fully articulating it. Instead, it provided vague and confused texts by Marx and other Marxist thinkers - despite the achievements of Marxism in the actual practice of the revolutionary process, in the development of modern world history and the evolution of humanities, arts, sciences and thought.

Certainly, we cannot say that our lack of understanding of the nature of these revolutions was behind their slide into decline. The "objective nature of the revolution" determined everything, not our understanding of its nature. However, the absence of a clear and well-articulated

theory of the nature of revolution in general and thus, the nature of our current revolutions, has had a deep impact on our abilities to benefit from these revolutions.

It is precisely for this reason that it is essential to carefully re-examine the concept of revolution and its outcomes, without ideological rigidity or doctrinal intolerance. No one denies that the Arab revolutions have baffled all thinkers. Some saw in these revolutions social or political revolutions and some even questioned whether these are revolutions, uprisings, protests, revolts, recklessness or rebellions. On the threshold of this theoretical chaos, we need to shed any preconceived opinions, and to be aware that we cannot handle this central issue of revolutions with success at such speed.

The revolution is simply change, or rather radical change, which transforms a certain society in a certain country from an existing socio-economic pattern to another socio-economic pattern. This is the social revolution or the social-political revolution. In a period of a declining existing pattern or social system, the rise of a new pattern or social system starts. Thus, socio-political revolution is not a violent storm blowing suddenly from a cloudless sky, because it is a gradual change that takes place in the economy, industry, agriculture, market, science, thought and literature and so on in an interdependent and well-articulated manner. Its result in modern and contemporary history is a capitalist system of production in all branches of the economy, new social classes such as the capitalist class and the proletariat class, and new relations between these classes. It is these relations we describe using the term "politics."

These gradual and cumulative socio-economic and political processes should be called a revolution because they lead to a full revolution in the society. The socio-economic result of this process is the new capitalist society in modern history. The revolution is the entirety of this cumulative process, which cannot be reduced to its result as represented in a new capitalist society. Each step in this process is an integral part of the revolution. Thus, the revolution is the path, not its results. We recall here Hegel's famous theory that "natural quantitative change leads to qualitative change."

Here we recall a famous quote written by Marx in *Das Kapital* on the process of transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode of production, when he said: "Violence is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one." So what is meant by violence? We often understand it as the revolution of popular classes. But could it

be possible that Marx had meant something else - the completion of the historical process, as hinted at by Hegel's theory?

However, there is another famous quote from Marx's writings implying that violence here means "political" revolution, ie, the revolution of the popular classes on the one side, and the transformation of the state authority from the ruling class in the old pattern of production to the class which will become a ruling one in the new pattern of production. In this quote, Marx stressed that "Every revolution breaks up the old society and to that extent it is social. Every revolution overthrows the old authority and to that extent it is political."

Marx describes the French revolution of 1789 as a social revolution. If we accept this, then the French revolution combined social revolution and political revolution. This means that Marx describes the cumulative process and its result by the term revolution. Here, it seems that social revolution (at the moment of the completion of the transformation of the society) is associated with political revolution (the moment of the transfer of power from the feudal class to the capitalist class).

Here basic concepts become interrelated. If we assume that Marx's social revolution is not represented in the cumulative process but rather in its social result, and that political revolution is represented by the transfer of power, we would accept that what is meant by social revolution is the brief historic moment, no longer than a few years, in which the society and the economy transform and the state authority is transferred. What is meant by this is that the 1789 event is the popular revolution in France in that year and part of its developments in the following years. Here, the concepts of social revolution, political revolution and popular revolution become interrelated and the question becomes: to what extent do these concepts correspond to the developments on the ground? Do these facts on the ground occur separately or all together?

If we closely look at modern revolutions, we find that these developments on the ground are separate and do not come at the same moment. There are many capitalist revolutions (ie social revolutions), which have happened without popular revolutions similar to the French pattern, and there are many popular revolutions which were not linked to the transformation of the society to capitalism, or to the transfer of power from a class which belongs to an old pattern of production to a new class which belong to a new pattern of production (ie the so-called political revolution).

It is evident that these "revolutions" did not occur together in the historical moment of the 1789 event as it appeared to Marx. In reality,

their coming together and their separation were happening in a completely different way. The accumulative process of the development of capitalism, gathers, in a gradual accumulative way, between the social and political aspects of the capitalist revolution. Politics are relations between social classes. These classes emerge with the accumulative economic development of capitalism and the transfer of state authority also happens step by step, from the feudal ruling class to the capitalist class. The transfer of power in the French revolution was not a transfer from a feudal class, despite the presence of remnants of it and remnants of the king's power, and despite the fact that the state authority had gradually been transferred to the rising capitalist class, which acquired power at the historic moment of the popular class. This is a historic lesson of the French revolution: popular revolutions do not transfer the authority of the state to the revolution, but rather to its leadership, if this leadership is a capitalist class in the context of a capitalist revolution.

What, then, is the story of the transfer of the state power in France from one class to another in the context of a pure popular revolution? The story is simple and one part of it could be very surprising. It is simple because the power had not been transferred in the context of the revolution, because it had been already transferred through the long and accumulative socio-political revolution from feudalism to capitalism. The transfer of power from the king to the bourgeoisie was only a partial procedure and was not a result of a revolutionary necessity because the king could cope with the capitalist system as he coped with Napoleon Bonaparte, the emperor, the Bourbons and the Orleans.

The aspect that could surprise us, and which we should carefully think about, is that the French revolution was not a revolution against feudalism, but rather a revolution within the social classes created by the historical process of the socio-political revolution, which had ended feudalism a long time previously. It was a popular revolution or protest of the popular and working classes and the poor against the capitalist class, which had exploited them for a long time. As in all popular revolutions, the popular classes experienced the illusions of liberty, equality and fraternity and a revolution with heightened expectations. To their disappointment, the capitalist system was entrenching itself, dominating power and the economy. Thus France became a state of tyranny, exploitation and corruption, even establishing a colonial empire that started with the occupation of Algeria. However, the French people made gains not from the revolution but rather from their struggle before, during and after the revolution for a popular democracy from the bottom

up. Those who claim now that France is a democratic country should be aware that it is a dual country in the sense that the efficiency of the capitalist class, ie the military, exploitative, authoritarian dictatorship from the top, has been achieved as well as the efficiency of the working and popular classes, the popular democracy from the bottom. The same thing happened in all advanced capitalist countries.

When we progress in our examination, we will find that the capitalist revolution, in particular, was what Marx had spoken about, as primitive capitalist accumulation. It is in this accumulation that the accumulative capitalist process is reflected.

Our bewilderment at the revolution was because of the absence of a clear theoretical concept of the nature of our current revolutions. This stemmed from the absence of a clearly articulated concept of the revolution by Marx, and because the best Marxist thinkers in the world prefer an ideological stalemate to freely thinking, despite their major achievements in other areas, because of the nightmare of regression.

September 2014



# The Map of the Tunisian Left

---

## Mouldi Guessoumi

*Mouldi Guessoumi is a social sciences professor at the University of Tunisia, with a PhD in social sciences from the same university. He teaches the sociology of development, social movements and organizations, having conducted research in these areas for over 10 years. He has contributed to many local and international conferences and has published over 30 scientific studies.*

### First: Social and political realities in Tunisia before the revolution

The general context of this topic is the context of transition following the “Liberty and Dignity Revolution”, as it is perceived by Tunisian political and intellectual elites as well as the general public. To understand this context, it is necessary to explore the three sub-contexts that form it.

**1** The legislative context, which has been characterized by the absence of a legal foundation for the nature of the state and the political system. We are living in a constitutional vacuum, pending action by the constituent assembly, which has not yet achieved any of its original goals. Meanwhile, it has gone beyond its original remit and become in effect a parliament performing a legislative function that should only exist within the framework of a law governing all aspects of relations between the state and society – in other words, a constitution. The most important aspect of the legislative context is the drafting of a new constitution. This is a topic of conflict between the different elements of the Tunisian political spectrum and their representatives in the constituent assembly, civil society and the political opposition. The republican system accepted by all parties as the current Tunisian political system – and which is closely linked to the collective mindset

of the Tunisian people - has no legal foundation because of the lack of a constitution. The law that organizes political life and specifies the tasks of the head of the state and the head of the government stresses the importance of the republican system, but it cannot secure it because political systems are organized by constitutions.

**2** The social transformation context, which has been characterized by upheaval that we can follow common usage in calling a "revolution" - if we do not consider the results that should emerge from a revolutionary dynamic. This upheaval did not go beyond addressing the issue of unemployment, a lack that has been reflected in the dismantling of the old order without replacing it with a new order. The revolution did not create a dynamic capable of overcoming the old structures, despite their weakness, and it did not manage to create structures in harmony with the requirement of revolutionary reality.

**3** The political transformation context, through which we are moving from a tyrannical system to a system whose features have not yet become clear. It is important to note that democratic transformation does not necessarily mean a transformation that culminates in the achievement of democracy. It is probable that this transitional phase may lead to the re-emergence of an authoritarian system. Perhaps it is one of the tasks of the political, intellectual and social Left to struggle to ensure a genuine transition to democracy.

These three sub-contexts are inseparable from an environment characterized by unemployment among university graduates, challenges to social integration resulting from lack of employment opportunities, a prosperity gap between coastal regions and the interior, and administrative and political corruption. These issues, endemic under the previous regime, have been compounded by the liberalization of the economy without consideration for vulnerable groups, private sector dominance, the transfer of the adjustment role of the state to an unrepresentative elite and state support for businessmen and investors at the expense of the working classes. Given these factors, it is generally agreed that there is an adjustment crisis characterized by the start of the structural disintegration of the existing regime, its growing inefficiency, its inability to find an alternative model, especially when we observe its weakness with regard to integration and establishing conditions for equal opportunities. These facts underline the importance of the role of the Left in formulating a transformation pattern during a transitional period featuring:

**1** Economic weakness reflected in slow growth associated with high inflation rates, high unemployment, deeper financial difficulties, increased debts and decline in private local and foreign investment.

**2** A political crisis reflected in a fragmented political scene that may pose a risk to the outcome of the forthcoming elections. We can see this fragmentation in disputes between the ruling coalition parties - the Islamic Ennahda movement, the Congress for the Republic and the Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties (Takatol); the internal divides within each of these parties, especially the disintegration of the Congress party; the divides within the opposition parties and the difficulty of bringing them together. The danger is that the inability of political forces to form alliances could disrupt the political process.

The political and economic challenges in Tunisia are not easy to address because the developmental pattern took two paths. The first was growth without development - what could be called the development of underdevelopment. It was characterized by the monopolization of national wealth - development benefited a privileged minority, while rural areas became more impoverished, the middle class became a working class, deprivation in underprivileged urban areas increased and levels of illiteracy rose. The second was development without growth - development dependent on conditions imposed by the international financial organizations, which keep states in the global south in the trap of dependency and underdevelopment. True development requires an emphasis on the basic principles of equality, freedom, social justice and economic effectiveness – thereby guaranteeing personal freedoms, which are derived from public freedoms. This development flows from a so-called sound society functioning according to basic rules specifying the functions of social institutions, in accordance with the requirements of development in its political, economic and social aspects.

Many of us have clear memories of the rapid growth, progress charter and social dialogue of the 1970s. We remember the presidential and parliamentary elections of 1994 that took place under the slogan of “Secure Country”, which recalled the 1970s, and the slogan of “Tunisia: a quality life,” one of the regime’s tools to consolidate control through managing its image abroad and at home. But these slogans hid the reality of a society struggling with growing inequality, authoritarian rule, unemployment, neglected youth, a regional divide between the interior and coastal areas, corruption, nepotism and greed stemming from an economic policy focused only on quick profit.

Politics is always present in Tunisia, given the continued role of the state in the society and economy despite economic liberalization, which should entail a more democratic political setting. However, economic liberalization did not lead to disengagement from social policy, hiding as it did behind a public policy that called for sacrificing the gains of the public sector in order to establish the private sector.

This is Tunisia, where the role of the private sector in development is a goal and not a liberal tool. The possibility of adopting a Tunisian pattern relying on stability and growth does not represent the revival of a developmental pattern that fulfils the needed conditions. All these facts led to the eruption of popular anger that has created this transitional period, which may result in the re-establishment of the authoritarian system or a move towards democracy. But even in the second scenario, we should remember that democracy is not necessarily a guarantee of social justice. Ensuring the peaceful circulation of power through free and fair elections would fulfil the conditions of political democracy, but this democracy may subject social rights to the law of supply and demand. Thus, social democracy is the main concern of the Tunisian Left.

## Second: A conceptual framework for the Left

### **The Leftism of the Tunisian Left: determinants and tracks**

The word “Left” has many meanings, but the term is most often used to describe the Marxist Left and its various trends. It is important to distinguish between the Left, which provides space for a wide range of parties and political tendencies, and the Marxist stream, which represents one of the components of the Left.

Here we should distinguish between two historical aspects of the Tunisian Left: the intellectual aspect and the political and organizational aspect. The first was more influential in modern Tunisian history, especially at the beginning of the 20th century. Most of the intellectual movements, including the Zaytouna circles, were influenced by Leftist thought. Many of the first communists were from the al-Zaytouna circles and had backgrounds in the traditional professions. The national and trade movements adopted many Leftist theses and aims, from the first years of independence onwards, but especially during the 1960s. Leftist thought had a great impact on Habib Bourguiba, who named his

ruling party the “Constitutional Socialist Party” and organized it along the lines of communist parties in the Soviet Union and China.

The Tunisian Left has two main trends. The first elides the Left and communism and considers the Marxist ideological basis of parties and freedom fighters to be the only determinant of their Leftism. The second rejects any link with communists, considering their ideology to be based on the totalitarianism of the Soviet system that established Stalinism, criticized by Trotskyism which considered it a betrayal of the principles of communism. Linking the Left with communism or separating them from each other presents us with two possible spaces. First, a Left space which is wide enough to absorb other political trends from just liberalism to social democracy – which is today composed of the biggest number of political factions from those close to the Right to the extreme Left, including the pan-Arab social Left, such as the Arab nationalists, the social Left and the democratic Left as well as the non-political intellectual Left of intellectual and artists. Second, a narrow Left that can only accommodate orthodox political trends unable to keep up with the pace of political change.

### **The Left in the context of the redrawing of the Tunisian political map**

The list of parties legalized after the revolution reveals a number of emerging Leftist political parties. In addition to the old parties with Leftist and socialist orientation, such as the Ettajdid Movement (Renewal Movement), Movement of Socialist Democrats, Party of People’s Unity and Progressive Democratic Party, new parties emerged with Leftist political heritages. The most prominent among them are:

- Socialist Left Party (PSG), Mohamed Kilani
- Patriotic and Democratic Labor Party (PTPD), Abderrazak Hammami
- Party of Progressive Struggle (PLP), Mohamed Lassoued
- Party of the Modern Left (PGM), Fayçal Zemni
- Popular Party for Liberty and Progress (PPLP), Jelloul Azzouna
- Movement of Patriots and Democrats (MPD), Chokri Belaid, Ziad Lakhdar

- Unionist Popular Front, Amor Mejri
- Future Party for Development and Democracy, Samih S'himi
- Tunisian Communist Workers Party, Hamma Hammami
- Tunisian Ba'ath Movement, Omar Othman Belhadj
- Arab Democratic Vanguard Party, Kheireddine Souabni
- Green Tunisia, Abdelkader Zitouni,
- Popular Struggle Party, Hisham Hosni

One can also include the Congress for the Republic (CPR), led by Moncef Merzouki as well as the Democratic Forum for Labor and Democracy (Takatol), led by Mustapha Ben Jaafar as part of the Left in its broad sense.

After the January 2011 revolution, the Tunisian Left returned with a long history burdened with prosecutions, failures, frustration, fragmentation and defeats and a new mosaic of political entities emerged. Leftists returned from exile and from the underground to form political parties that jostled for position in a political reality characterized by ambiguity and ideological diversity. Their organizations brought with them many different sources of legitimacy, including the legitimacy of prisons, exile and suppression, as well as the legitimacy of historic presence, religious authority and long struggle against Bourguiba's regime with its political narcissism and the murder of its political opponents, and the arrogance of Ben Ali's regime in suppressing political opposition, public and individual freedoms and its coup against the principles it had announced in its statement when it toppled Bourguiba's regime.

The presence of the Left, under the former regime, was limited to the human rights and trade unions fields, which could be justified by the state of political regression. Although there were political parties at the time, public opinion agrees that they were decorative, nothing but a half-hearted attempt to display pluralism on Ben Ali's part. It seems that the crisis of the Tunisian Left, which is very similar to that of the Arab Left, began with the fall of its ideological and intellectual authority with the fall of the Soviet model in 1991, the predominance of new capitalism, which preached globalization, and the fall of the Berlin Wall, which symbolized the end of Soviet ideology.

The Tunisian Left, after the revolution, has been unable to wisely reconsider its heritage, opting instead to search for a new source of legitimacy. It attempted to make use of the revolution's atmosphere to restore its ideology and to come closer to the Tunisian street in the light of the return of political Islam as represented by a number of formations headed by the Ennahda Movement, which started to permeate society, take up wide spaces of the political scene, control the events of the conflict and direct the content of the political discourse to serve its interests. At the same time, the Tunisian Left remained isolated from socio-cultural realities, an outsider to the majority of Tunisian society including the working classes, which are supposed to form the popular base of the Left, as well as from the social context which would allow it to reach all levels of society. The working classes were supposed to be the main focus of the activism adopted by the Left. But instead, the Ennahda Movement was able to win them over with its new Islamic discourse and the "Democratic Islam" project, which aims at the Islamization of modernization. Thus, political Islam was the only trend to benefit from the former natural constituency of the Left, a fact reflected in the elections of the constituent assembly held on 23 October 2011.

While the Ennahda Movement was able to win at least 89 seats (1,498,905 votes) out of 217 seats of the Constituent Assembly's seats, other parties in the heart of the Left map<sup>1</sup> combined couldn't win more than 14 seats (262,714 votes). In the forefront was the democratic coalition, which won five seats (113,094 votes), followed by the Tunisian Workers Communist Party, which won three seats (60,620 votes). The remaining six seats are the best reflection of the political and partisan fragmentation of the Left. These were distributed among six parties, each winning one seat through which each hoped to defend its social, economic and political programme through the elements it intended

---

1. From the map of the left, we excluded three parties which have ranked directly behind the Ennahda Movement, although these parties are either part of the Left according to the terms used to describe them. The Congress for the Republic (which won 352,825 votes and 29 seats) was discovered soon after the elections to be controlled by a majority of persons affiliated with the Ennahda Movement. The Takatol (which won 285,530 votes and 20 seats) competed in the elections on a social democratic platform and as a representative of the social democratic centrist Left, but today is a member of the ruling right-wing coalition. The Progressive Democratic Party (which won 160,692 votes and 16 seats) has transformed into the Liberal Republican Party and completely abandoned its Leftist origins after its March 2012 conference.

to include in the constitution. The Tunisian Left reflects all the trends produced by the global Left over more than two centuries, since the participation of the Left in the French Revolution and its call for social justice and an egalitarian republic. However, in the Tunisian Left, there is a strange state of co-existence of models that should only exist successively<sup>2</sup>.

The Tunisian Left may need to practice self-criticism, following the fall of the authoritarian state, in order to give clear and convincing answers on how to overcome political chaos and assist in the building of state institutions on a social democratic basis. This process requires a long time because the people should be able to understand the parties' electoral platforms, their structures, organizations and policies. The parties should not lag behind the reality of the current situation, and should provide practical solutions to the problems of democracy and development as well as preventing the return of the repressive

---

2. In the existing Tunisian Left, we find those who are:

**Anarchists:** Anarchism as defined by Proudhon as a state of social cohesion resulting from the complete abolition of all government apparatuses. It was the goal of the movement started by Bakunin in 1860.

**Bolsheviks** or the majority faction as they emerged in the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in 1903 under the leadership of Lenin. This party led the October revolution and established the absolute authority of the party, which replaced the dictatorship of the proletariat.

**Councils:** as adopted by the Soviets of the Russian revolutionary movement in 1905 and 1917 before coming under the control of the Communist Party.

**Leftists:** The Left opposition according to the formula which emerged in 1839, before specifying the aims of the Left and its maximum solutions it can offer, as reproduced in the period between 1965 and 1968 in order to find an ideology for the Communist Party.

**Maoists:** Political trend with reference to Mao Tse-tung, but it did not emerge according to the formula of the cradle of the Maoist experience. It either came according to the Arab orientalist formula or in accordance with the French formula.

**Spartacists:** A communist movement which emerged in Germany during the period from 1914 to 1919, headed by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, who were defending the idea of democracy within the party and who went beyond the idea of partisan dictatorship.

**Trotskyists:** who adopt Leon Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution, associated with the Fourth International, which he founded in 1938 with the aim of gathering all anti-Stalinist movements. The League of the Workers' Left is the only political faction which follows the ideology of the Fourth International. The statement issued by this trend is considered one that expresses the best understanding of the revolutionary requirements when Tunisians were surprised to find themselves in the heart of the revolution without a leadership. It was then that the statement of the Trotskyists was issued calling for the continuation of the revolution until it produces a leadership.

apparatus in other forms that would restrict freedoms in the name of law, security and stability. The Left must provide explanations for the social and economic transformations witnessed by Tunisian society, and distance itself from dwelling on abstract revolutionary concepts that do not resonate with the current generation - but without abandoning its history and literature.

### Third: A historic backgrounds of the Left

#### **On the Map of the Tunisian Left: factors behind its emergence and its turning points**

The Tunisian Left emerged in the 1920s. These years witnessed the creation of a generation of Leftists influenced by the triumph of the Russian Revolution and the Third International. The emergence of communist cells in Tunisia dates back to the year 1921 after the success of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917. It was then that the first conference of these cells was held in Dahiyat Halq al-Wadi during which they announced its affiliation with the French Section of the Communist International (SFIC). This period saw the emergence of one stream of thought - the communist Left - while Leftism is a broad area of political thought that includes trends from the social, democratic, moderate centrist left to the communist revolutionary left. This broad space can also include the activists of the Social Forum of the anti-globalization Left, the revolutionary radical Left, and the democratic Left, which defends the idea of parliamentary opposition. In the Tunisian and Arab case, the Left includes pan-Arab trends as well as advocates of Tunisian national identity.

If we consider only this early history of the Tunisian Left, we might fall into the mistake of limiting ourselves to observing one trend among many other trends. This early history, despite its importance, is dissimilar to the current reality of the Tunisian Left, which has been affected by successive shocks and crises relating to the pan-Arab issue: the 1967 setback, the nature of the independent state, the national issue, the nature of the political regime, the issue of democracy, the issue of freedoms, the civil nature of the society and the state, social justice as well as the approach to modernity. These factors, contributing to the formulation of the Tunisian Left, have created its relatively complicated map. While the character of the Tunisian Left today is an extension of its early identity, this character is now broader and more comprehensive. In addition, it is now living under many new conditions and limitations,

while the early Left was linked to the work of the Third International and reacting to the struggle of the working classes - a context radically different to the realities of the colonies.

For this reason, we prefer to start with the creation of the Left that ensures the continuation of its features and characteristics in today's Left, no matter how broad it is and no matter how complicated its map. We will then handle the communist Left, which expressed the narrow and elitist form of the Tunisian Left. From here, the 1960s stage could be considered the period during which the current shape of the Tunisian Left emerged.

## The Pan-Arab and Social Left

The birth of the Tunisian Left organizations was linked to the Arab and international context of the early 1960s. In Europe in general and in France in particular, Maoist and Trotskyist movements were created that considered the classic communist parties as revisionists of Marxist thought. These organizations were associated with the national liberation movements in the colonized countries, which has made some researchers into Leftist organizations consider that Leftist movements came to the Arab world from outside its geographic and historic context and did not have true roots in the social and cultural background of the people.

Some internal factors indirectly impacted on the creation of Leftist organizations in Tunisia. Most important was the attempted coup by a group of military and civilians, many of them Yusifis, that aimed to overthrow the Bourguiba regime in December 1962. This coup gave the regime the pretext to cancel political pluralism and to ban the Tunisian Communist Party, the only opposition party, confiscate its newspaper, impose censorship on freedoms and trade union organizations as well as consolidating the ruling party's dominance.

The crisis between the leaders of the ruling socialist party and the conflicts between Bourguiba and his comrades in the struggle for freedom and national liberation also contributed to the emergence of the Leftist movement.

The first organization to emerge at that time gathered the Maoists, Trotskyists, Baathists, revolutionary Nasserists and Marxists under the "Rally for Socialist Work and Studies in Tunisia" name, and later under the

Afaq<sup>3</sup> name. Among the founders of this organization were members of the General Union for Tunisian Students (UGET).

The aim behind this organization was not the creation of a political party to seize power, but an attempt to achieve social justice under a centralized authority based on the rule of one party, one opinion and the unlimited powers of the “leader of the nation”.

The Rally involved itself in conflict with the Bourguiba regime. In the beginning, this conflict was peaceful and limited to demands for the respect of public freedoms, the abandonment of the monopoly of power and the unification of all Tunisian Leftist forces to confront Bourguiba. The organization expanded and attracted representatives of the Tunisian General Labour Union as well as other streams of the General Union for Tunisian Students (UGET). It started its struggle by publishing Afaq magazine, against what it called “the highest political monopoly of power by the Destourian Socialist Party.”

The organization participated in the movement led by the Students’ Union after the 1967 defeat by Israel and in condemnation of Tunisia’s foreign policy. This was its first real test after bringing its headquarters from Paris to Tunisia, the change in its structure to become similar to underground parties and the establishment of party branches in some of the regions.

The organization announced its position rejecting global imperialism, the dominance of capitalism and the growing power of the Zionist movement and it started to demand Arab unity, a shared aspiration of the Arab people given their common language, religion and history, as the best road towards building socialism. This confirmed their insistence on the Arab identity of Tunisia and its people. However, the Bourguiba regime did not allow the organization to continue to elaborate and explain its positions, launching an arrest campaign against its prominent leaders and prosecuting them before the state security court in August 1968 in what was known as the “Afaq Trials”. Harsh sentences of up to 20 years’

---

3. The creation of this organization from parties with different ideologies, not limited to Leftist thought, provided a space for these streams to meet, discuss, disagree and to confront each other at certain times. Among the prominent personalities in this organization are: Noor ed-Din Ben Khadr, an economic researcher, Mohammed al-Sharifi, who became the president of the Tunisian Association for Human Rights and then headed the Ministry of Education and Science, Ahmed al-Samawi, Ibrahim Rizqallah, Ahmed Ben Othman, Mohammed Aziz Krishan, lawyer Taj ad-Din Ben Rahhal, Munther al-Qarqouri, Jilbar Naqqash, a former member of the Communist Party, Hafnawi Amayriye, a former member of the Arab Socialist Baath Party and lawyer Ahmed Najib Chebi.

imprisonment with hard labour were issued against these leaders<sup>4</sup> and this contributed to the destruction of the organization.

The prison experience was an opportunity for revision, discussion and identification of mistakes committed by Afaq and for nurturing new ideas for ways to move forward beyond the classic framework of communist and Leftist organizations and parties. All this led to the birth of the Tunisian Marxist Left, when they were released from prison by a presidential amnesty in 1970.

The Leftists came out of the Afaq experience, which was considered a radical new direction in the Tunisian Leftist movement, with a new concept of political activism and a new interpretation of the issues facing Tunisian society. This led to the creation of the Tunisian Workers' Organization, which draws heavily on the Maoist and Trotskyist heritage.

The Tunisian Workers' Organization tried, as much as possible, to avoid the organizational and procedural mistakes of Afaq, but it fell prey to a radical revolutionary discourse. It considered itself the "expression of the Arab revolution in Tunisia" and it started to express a new democratic stream among Tunisian students and trade unions. It contributed directly to the Tunisian students' uprising under what was known as the February 1972 Movement, and it introduced the slogan of resisting the repressive behavior of the ruling party, which was adopted by Leftist students in the universities.

Despite its contribution to the framing of the students' struggle, the Tunisian Workers' Organization of the 1970s displayed the seeds of later divisions between the Maoists, Guevarians, the Baathists, the pan-Arab nationalists and the Nasserites.

The divisions among the Left can mainly be attributed to their different stances regarding the political system and the ruling party, which had also seen a divide between the Bourguiba wing and the Ahmed Mestiri wing after the convening of the Constitutional Socialist Party's eighth conference in 1971. In addition, there were differences of opinions among the Leftists over the issue of whether Tunisia is part of the Arab nation or not, over the Palestinian cause and the Arab-Zionist conflict, and over the differences between the two major socialist forces, China and the Soviet Union.

---

4. Among these sentenced leaders were Noor ed-Din Benn Khadr, Jilbar Naqqash, Mohammed Ballona, Mohammed Abdul-Aziz Krishan and Tahir Ben Othman.

From a Tunisian political reality characterized by the growing power of Bourguiba, his monopolization of power, and the repression of freedoms and political parties<sup>5</sup>, emerged new Leftist movements that adopted the Marxist ideology: the Marxist-Leninist Rally, the Marxist-Leninist Organization, known as the al-Shu'la, the Popular Democratic Movement, the Tunisian Revolutionary People's Party, the Truth Group and other movements that formed the mosaic of the Left. Their emergence further deepened the fragmentation of the Tunisian Leftist movement. Today, only the Tunisian Communist Workers' Party, which inherited part of the ideas and principles of the Tunisian Workers' Organization, is present. It built a new intellectual and political discourse on the ruins of these parties under the leadership of Hama Hammami and Mohammed Kilani, who later left to establish the Leftist Socialist Party.

In 1980, the freedom fighters of the Left formed a new organization under the "Independent Marxists" name and "tried" to abandon ideological rigidity. There were discussions of the possibility of public political activism and the gathering of the fragmented Marxist trends within a broad democratic national activism movement based on democratic socialism. These discussions gave birth to the Progressive Socialist Rally (the Progressive Democratic Party), which was acknowledged by the authority in 1983 and became the representative of the Tunisian Leftist opposition. Ahmed Najib Chebi was elected secretary-general of the party.

Despite its Leftist ideology, the Socialist Progressive Rally was able to change the discourse of the Left. In a press conference held on 13 September 1983, Ahmed Najib Chebi announced the constitutive statement of the party, which stressed "the importance of liberating human beings from all forms of exploitation and persecution". On the issue of socialism, the statement stressed that the party "comes in the

---

5. The crisis of the Tunisian economy in 1975, which came with the first recovery after the constitutional socialism experience and the victory of the rigid bureaucratic line inside the Bourguiba regime under the leadership of al-Hadi Nejib, the prime minister and the party director Mohammed al-Sayyah and Abdallah Farhat, damaged the Leftist movement from the inside. At the same time, the emergence of the Islamic stream was an important factor in deepening the crisis of the Leftist and Marxist streams. Bourguiba gave the security apparatus full powers to arrest and assassinate the leaders of the movement and its student members during the years 1974 and 1975, and to detain them on charges of insulting the head of the state, membership of unlicensed organizations, dissemination of wrong news and inciting disobedience and rebellion. This attack motivated other Leftist organizations' cadres to blend into the Tunisian General Labour Union and student circles to continue their underground struggle.

context of the radical criticism of capitalism and efforts to historically overcome it, towards the creation of a classless society". The statement also confirmed that the party "is part of international socialist workers' thought".

The party demanded a general amnesty and the cancellation of extraordinary courts and through its newspapers al-Mawqef and al-Rae it enriched the media landscape and opened the door to discussion of the political issues of the country. It also created what was known as "opinion journalism", which was suppressed by Ben Ali. It supported the 7 November 1987 statement until the end of the trials of the leaders of the Islamic movement and the cadres of the Ennahda Movement in 1992<sup>6</sup>.

## The Communist Left in Tunisia

The communist movement in Tunisia has a long history. It paved the way for the creation of Tunisian Leftist movements and heralded the emergence of the first political opposition to Bourguiba's regime. The emergence of the Left dates back, as we mentioned earlier, to the pre-colonization phase, starting with the struggle of the leaders of the trade movement such as Mohammed Ali al-Hami, Mukhtar Ayari, Farhat Hashad, Belkacem Knawy and others.

The General Confederation of the Tunisian Workers, created by Mohammed Ali al-Hami in January 1924, was supported by the communist General Confederation of Workers at that time, but it faced opposition from the socialists and the colonial authorities, which prosecuted Mohammed Ali in 1925.

---

6. From that date, Ben Ali broke all the promises he made in the November statement and started to weaken the national opposition and to deprive it from using government-owned media to participate in public life. In the 1990s, the Rally, after the liquidation of the Islamic movement, sought to introduce itself as a political alternative to the opposition and an opposite authority able to gain the sympathy of a wide sector of the Tunisian elites under conditions of limited popular support of opposition parties, which found themselves, because of their closeness to the authority, unable to become strong negotiators with Ben Ali's regime. The Rally continued to be opposed by Ben Ali's regime and so was unable to win a single seat in parliament. Although it changed its name, dropping "socialism", and renaming itself the Progressive Democratic Party, it was unsuccessful in opening a real dialogue with the regime for the creation of a democratic electoral system and for ensuring freedoms, especially freedom of expression and the independence of the judiciary.

It is evident that the Tunisian Communist Organization supported the Constitutional Free Party, which was created by Abdul-Aziz al-Thaalibi, and engaged with it in demanding a Tunisian constitution, an elected parliament with clear separation of powers, and a guarantee of public freedoms. However, the Tunisian communists abandoned the Constitutional Free Party and began to insist on their main demand of political independence. They tried to adapt to the general national line, although they were members of the International French Communism.

At the start of 1938, the Tunisian Split Communist Organization left the International French Communism and announced the founding of the Communist Party in the Tunisian Nation. Ali Jarrad was elected first secretary-general of the party and attempted to give himself a Tunisian character by preparing a Tunisian work programme in which he introduced class and social issues, despite some mistakes and imperfections.

The Communist Party took the side of the Tunisian General Labour Union in the 1940s when the word "Nation" was dropped and the name became the Tunisian Communist Party. As relations between the two became stronger, they undertook many joint actions. This angered Bourguiba, who decided to remove Suleiman Ben Suleiman from the bureau of the new constitutional party because of his support for the Communist Party.

In the 1950s, the Tunisian Communist Party supported the independent Tunisian government, the declaration of the republic and the personal status law. It also supported the nationalization of major economic sectors and agriculture reform, but it started a new conflict with the Bourguiba government when it accused it of the absence of political pluralism and the marginalization of popular classes and it became almost the only opposition party to the Bourguiba regime after independence. Its opposition to Bourguiba did not prevent it from participating in the elections of the first parliament after independence and in 1959 it participated in the legislative elections under the slogan of "Democracy and Progress".

At the end of 1962, after a failed coup against the Bourguiba regime, the Tunisian Communist Party was banned and its newspapers were closed. Bourguiba took further steps by censoring the Tunisian General Labour Union and the Tunisian General Students' Union, which were

then the most prominent components of civil society in Tunisia<sup>7</sup>.

The Tunisian Communist Party resumed its public<sup>8</sup> activism on 19 July 1981, and started to publish its newspaper *al-Tareeq al-Jadeed* (The New Path) after three months. It did not hide its sympathy with leaders of the Islamic movement who were prosecuted during 1981, but it considered the movement to be an intellectual political stream that used religion to serve its political interests. Islam is a religion for all people, but people are classless yet class conflict still exists. There is the capitalist and the worker and there are reactionary and progressive people. There are reactionary Islamic states as well as Islamic states that are hostile to colonization.

With Ben Ali's accession to power in November 1987, the Tunisian Communist Party, in common with other political forces, expressed its satisfaction with the November statement. Together with other political currents, it signed the National Charter in 1988 and participated in the April 1989 elections. Through fraud, Ben Ali won with 92.27% of the votes and the ruling party won all the parliamentary seats. However, on 15 June 1990, the Tunisian Communist Party boycotted the municipal elections to protest the fraud in the 1989 elections and the Rally once again won 98% of the municipal council seats. It was then that Mohammed Harmal announced the start of his conflict with Ben Ali's regime, observing that "the regime did not respond to the basic demands submitted by the opposition to break the political deadlock".

---

7. On Bourguiba's orders a number of Communist Party leaders were arrested, such as Mohammed Harmal, Abdul Hamid Bin Mustafa and Hassan Saadawi and a number of its cadres were prosecuted.

8. The conflict between Bourguiba and the Communist Party intensified with increased criticism of the Bourguiba regime, its campaign against trade union activism during the 1960s, and Bourguiba's attempts to contain the Tunisian General Labour Union. When Mohammed Harmal became the secretary-general, replacing Mohammed Nafae, the Communist Party sought to preserve its ideological standing despite the political ban and held its eighth conference in 1981, during which it called on the regime to find swift solutions to the problems of the Tunisian General Labour Union, to respect the workers, youth and students' will and to cancel all unconstitutional decisions and laws in order to guarantee freedom of expression and association for all political parties without any restrictions. In November 1981, the Communist Party again entered into conflict with the authority when it participated in the elections and criticized what it described as «heinous changes of the results and excessive breaches in broad daylight.»

In the mid 1990s, the Communist camp collapsed before the political and military victory of capitalism and the shrinking presence of Communist parties in East European countries. The Tunisian Communist party realised it needed to change its image, changing the party's name to al-Tajdeed Movement (Renewal) in 1994 in order to rebuild the progressive movement for the new historic phase, according to Mohammed Harmal, the former secretary-general of the party.

### **The Left facing the phenomenon of fragmentation**

Some political observers believe that left-wing parties today must not fall into the same trap of internal conflict and must stop taking the path of fragmentation and division. They believe that they should learn the lessons of the past, when most of the Left took sides in the internal battle over the new political situation.

Some observers criticize the Tunisian Left because it historically limited its activities to grassroots politics while ignoring the cultural and critical aspects. It is not easy to tell if this negligence is a result of the conditions of the phase, as Leftists claim, or a result of a strategic wish to prioritise social and political conflict (though European Leftist movements invested heavily in cultural areas such as theater, cinema, novels and other artistic forms). The current state of Tunisian culture proves that the Tunisian Left takes credit for the revival of cinema and theater, despite the fact that the cultural movement also has roots in European patterns, raising again the complexity of the identity that is exploited by the religious right represented by political Islam.

The plight of the Tunisian Left did not end with the fall of Ben Ali's regime, but started with the Tunisian revolution when many Leftist parties began to emerge. This phase witnessed the emergence of: the Tunisian worker Party, the Shu'la Party, the Tunisian Communist Workers' Party, the Socialist Democrats Movement, the National Action Party, the Modern Left Party, the Leftist Socialist Party, the Untied Democrats National Party, the Popular Stream, the National Struggle Party, the Democratic Arab Vanguard Party and so on. The birth of so many new parties may lead to a state of fragmentation that could be fatal to the Left.

Tunisia's modern history has proved that the state of fragmentation of the Left from the 1990s to the post-revolutionary era was not an indication of ideological diversity and richness but rather of conflicts,

the impatience of activists (we intentionally did not use the term “freedom fighters”), and the focus on Marxist, Leninist, Trotskyist and Maoist controversies that may not serve Tunisians in building a modern Tunisia.

But some say that there were other factors that contributed to this fragmentation. They insist that the different intellectual and ideological backgrounds of the Leftists have led to these divides, as well as their desire to belong to more than one intellectual trend within the same school of thought.

Proponents of this view say that the plight of the Left dates back to the days of Ben Ali, who succeeded to a large extent in the breaking up the Left, stealing its dreams of participation and decision-making, deceiving it, hobbling its freedom fighters, co-opting its popular support, banning it from promoted its ideas in the media and from suggesting alternative policies. The only solution available to the Left was to hide in the shadows of the trade unions, which has made it a victim of polarization and political calculations. The General Union of Tunisian Workers, during the last years of Ben Ali’s rule, tended to avoid conflicts with the regime on the pretext of “social negotiations”, “social peace” and the replacement of conflict with dialogue in order to achieve the greatest possible gains for the working class. Thus, the Left fell in the trap of dealing with Ben Ali’s policies.

## **Partisan work strategies of the Tunisian Left and “left-wing” Communism infantile disorder<sup>9</sup>:**

The Tunisian Left failed to come up with an active strategy for women’s participation and to empower them to reach leadership positions, despite the active role played by Tunisian women in each of its historical struggles. With the exception of a few exceptional cases where women reached leadership positions, in the Democratic Progressive Party, for example, Tunisian women did not have a prominent place in the leadership ranks. Even the experiment carried

---

9. Since 1920, Lenin addressed the issue of identifying the mistakes of the Left. He tried in his book entitled «Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder» that left-wing communism is the infantile disorder of communism. He wrote the book in April/May and published it in June, one month before the Second Congress of the Communist International in an attempt to motivate Communist parties to find radical solutions to overcome the overvaluation of Leftism.

out by the democratic modernist trend in choosing women to head electoral lists, at an average of 16 lists headed by women out of 27 electoral lists, was lame. It lacked a mobilization strategy in a male-dominated society where women suffer from their inferior status in various areas of life, particularly the sensitive political sphere. The experiment did not continue and turned out to be just an electoral gesture. This failure is linked to the characteristics of the Leftist parties, most of which do not have active and effective women's wings. Even when such organizations exist, they usually do not have political programs, as is the case with the women's organization of the Labour Party or the women's organization of the Party of Unified Democratic Patriots.

The youth strategy of the left-wing parties is confined to youth and student wings that operate within the students' organization, the General Union of Tunisian Students, which has been liberated by the Left since 1972 from the dominance of the Constitutional Party. The Leftist parties' lack of a youth strategy has burdened the students' organization, which became subject to political manoeuvring between the components of the Left, which each wanted to impose its own hegemony on it. The students' organization has been for four decades a training ground for cadres and activists who later on became political leaders, but it is now in a state of weakness. Today, the Tunisian Left must abandon its narcissism and acknowledge the new political realities, taking into account the age gap between the leaders who founded the Leftist Tunisian thought and the youth of the revolution. It should abandon its attempts to control them, which some may pursue through claiming legitimacy from their historical struggles.

### **The Tunisian Left and the religious issue**

Although the Left historically arose as a reaction to the dominance of the church in political decision-making in the Middle Ages, and although it adopted secularism as the model relation between religion and the state, it has encountered widespread and fierce criticism in Tunisian society, where religion plays a central role. The Tunisian Left started to lose popular support with the emergence of the Islamic movement and the growing influence among the working classes of organizations originating from the Muslim Brotherhood, which presented themselves as alternatives to the defeated and fragmented Left. This has led some leftist Arab thinkers, such as Tayeb Tizini, to acknowledge that the Arab

Left needs to abandon its mutual accusations and become confident of its ability to produce a unifying ideology. It needs to recognize others around it and to coexist with them.

Statutes issued by the conferences are derived from the general programs of any political party. In this context, we have collected statutes discussed in four conferences of the most important components of the Tunisian Left: the Social Democratic Path Party, the Workers' Party, Party of Unified Democratic Patriots and the Leftist Labor Association. They deal with the following issues: farmers, culture, regional development, employment, childhood, debt, environmental issues, political issues, educational policy, youth, immigration, Arab and international politics, scientific research, health, and trade unions and associative work.

We have chosen statutes that represent intersection points between the three political parties. We did not find any differences except in one statute, which presented a genuine interpretative judgment in the context of the timid intellectual revisions made by the Left when necessary. This statute, released by the founding conference of the Party of Unified Democratic Patriots, represented an important step towards harmony with society through clarifying the religious issue and considering Islam as the main pillar of Tunisian identity. However, the religious issue remains one of the most important problems faced by the Left, although Leftist thought has influenced all phases of Tunisian political and intellectual heritage, including the social reform movement, from Tahar Haddad until today. We should not forget that the Left was the only opposition to Bourguiba's regime until the emergence of religious movements, which the regime supported in order to weaken the Left in the 1970s.

On the level of political organization, political infantile disorder dominated the Tunisian Left and it fell victim to ideological conflicts that became, in many cases, power struggles. Part of the reason for the fall of the Bourguiba regime was the struggles of the Left, but its political infantile disorder did not allow it to prepare an adequate alternative and it found itself on the sidelines on the morning of 7 November 1987. There is no doubt that the disappointment of the Left at the time was accompanied by a disappointment on the global level because of the collapse of Communist regimes, leaving many of its leaders frustrated, isolated or tempted by opportunism. They hurried to engage with the 17 November regime, but many others opted to continue their struggle against the new regime

through different means, such as human rights, humanitarian associations and trade unions. Most elements of the Tunisian Left fell into conflict among themselves and continued to hold on to the idea of collective ownership of the means of production and to attacking state capitalism. Its crises became more intense with the fall of Communism and the emergence of new patterns based on the harmonization of socialist thought and capitalism, the gradual abandonment of the principles of Communism and the division of the Soviet Union into independent states.

### The Alliances of the Left

Over the last decade, the Tunisian Left has seen many fluctuations in its alliances and relations with other political parties and movements. We can identify several alliances made by the Tunisian Left with other left-wing components:

- Some of the forces entered into an alliance with the 7 November 1987 regime. Some criticism of the Tunisian left was based on its acceptance of the political change that occurred with Ben Ali's accession to power and its "scrambling" for power by welcoming the promises of the 7 November statement. We should exclude from these forces the Democrats Nationalist Stream with its various components, the Tunisian Workers' Communist Party and many Leftist leaders who were descendants of the Shula experience, the Tunisian Workers' Party and Afaq. Some of the leaders of the Left became determined to win seats before the trap planned by Ben Ali for his opponents became clear. Those who criticized the Left for this reason hold it responsible for the consequences of Ben Ali's dominance and for its engagement in what was then known as "national reconciliation" and of convincing others of its feasibility. At a time when some Tunisian Leftists became engaged in the authoritarian system, many Leftist leaders continued to completely boycott the regime and tried to save face, such as the Communist Workers' Party, the National Democrats, and the remnants of the Afaq Movement - though this brought them prosecution, imprisonment and deprivation of the right to work and forcibly distancing them from the national political scene.
- Before the revolution, the Left entered into an alliance with the Islamists in the 19 October Movement. This alliance went against the Left's nature, especially when the Tunisian Communist Workers' Party, which resisted the Bourguiba and November tyrannies and

the obscurantism of the Islamists, became part of it. This indicates that the Left sometimes shows political naïveté in its alliances. It could commit such mistakes under the pretext of agreeing on the toppling of Ben Ali's regime, but this might open the door to more dangerous results, as seen in the Iranian experience. The Iranian Communist Party entered into an alliance with the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq or MEK, the religious movement and the ayatollahs and mullahs to overthrow the Shah of Iran. The Iranian Left played the decisive role in ending the rule of a tyrant, but soon the religious movement machine turned against the Left in more aggressive forms than the tyranny of the Shah machine.

- A Left inside the Kasaba ruling and a Left in its yard protesting: this was the reality of the Left after the departure of Ben Ali from the Carthage Palace to Saudi Arabia. It found itself divided between alliance with the remnants of the regime and the completion of the revolution. The Left that was part of Ben Ali's pluralism chose to ally itself with the remnants of his regime and entered the first and second governments of Mohamed Ghannouchi. The Renewal Movement was represented in the government with the portfolio of the Higher Education Ministry and the Democratic Progressive Party finished its last days of belonging to the Left with the portfolio of regional development, which was held by its leader Ahmed Najib Chebbi. However, the Left that opposed Ben Ali chose to complete the revolution. The Democratic Progressive Party gave up all of its struggle history in return for a temporary ministry; the Renewal is continuing the role it played under Ben Ali as it was present in each successive parliament; the revolutionary Left wanted to complete the revolution that it had aimed for since the mining basin uprising. The presence of the revolutionary Left, especially in the Kasaba 2 sit-in, hiding behind its youth, who were aware of the sensitivity of the people towards parties and their acknowledgement of parties' inability to mobilize people, made its members leave the initiative in the hands of the new youth elite and content themselves with reacting, keeping pace with events or even running behind these elites.

- A Leftist-Leftist coalition in the framework of the Popular Front was announced on 17 October 2012 as a political front composed of 11 political parties and a group of individuals, unaffiliated with any party, who are descendants of Leftist political parties. The components of the Popular Front are drawn together by their similar history of struggle since the 1970s and the common points in their political programmes, despite the multiplicity of their intellectual ideologies, combining elements of

the pan-Arab Left, the social Left, the Communist Left and the social democratic Left. However, this front suffers from a weak structure and the absence of an organizational vision. It also lacks a sophisticated leadership, especially after the assassination of its two leaders, Chokri Belaid and Mohammed Brahmi, though it could represent the political coalition which is the closest to the opposition to the tyrant Bourguiba regime and to Ben Ali's regime, as well as having been active during the uprising of the mining basin and the revolution.

- An alliance in the framework of the Salvation Front which gathered the forces of the Left, including the components of the Popular Front as well as other Leftist parties and liberal and democratic forces with the aim of toppling the ruling coalition government led by the Ennahda Movement. But this alliance cannot continue beyond the temporary reasons for its formation. Beyond that it is based on a sharp contradictions in authorities, references, programs and aspirations as well as a considerable disparity in organizational capacities.

## Fourth: The status of the Left, its influence and challenges facing it

Despite the problems mentioned above, which impact the Tunisian Left on the organizational level as well as on the level of intellectual authority and political practices, it is still one of the most important components of the Tunisian political scene despite the fact that it is not represented in the ruling authority and is the least represented trend in the constituent assembly. Its importance lies in its ability to shift the balance of power from inside the constituent assembly to the street. It directed much opposition to the ruling coalition through invalidating, or postponing, many of the programs that the Islamist majority of the constituent assembly has sought to pass. In this context, we give the example of the Ennahda Movement's attempt to include the mandatory application of the sharia in the constitution.

However, despite the importance of the role of the Left in the political scene, it suffers from the absence of an effective communication strategy. Moreover, it does not rely on scientific methods and effective approaches in its communication with the masses. Perhaps this is the reason that has led to the paradoxical result that we can describe

as the schizophrenic nature of the Tunisian Left, because the Left no longer represents the sectors of society that are the main element of its struggle program.

Where are the working classes, farmers, laborers, marginalized and unemployed in the heart of the left-wing parties? Where are they in the ranks of the leadership? Are we looking at petit-bourgeoisie parties or parties that are supposed to defend the interests of the working class and their allies?

The most exciting aspect of this issue is the fact that these social classes, which were supposed to be the primary assets of the Left in all of its political battles, have become the main assets of the conservative (we prefer not to use the term "reactionary" to respond to the conditions of neutrality which we have committed ourselves to since the start of this work, especially because this term, in its political usage, has become mainly an ideological insult), liberal right. We are not attempting to defend our ideological authority or political commitment. The Left has become estranged from the Islamists in everything related to culture, and is unable to adjust itself to their thinking. At the same time, the Right has used Islamic discourse to convince Islamists that it is their real political representative.

Here we face the issue of isolation from reality and the need to normalize relations with society, because Tunisian society is inseparable from its cultural and civilizational surroundings. It is difficult - if not impossible - for people to accept a political stream that does not clearly identify with the components that form the basis of its identity.

Among the clear examples of this case of schizophrenia of the Tunisian Left is the thinking of those who fear the Left. Many discussions with very poor people showed that they fear the idea of nationalization, which is frequently discussed at the grassroots level and there is a common conception that it is the program that the Left is seeking to implement. This fear is not the result of losing their property, because they own nothing other than the chains that bind them. It is a fear, which has become deep-rooted in the popular consciousness, of the idea of nationalization in the context of the atheist communist experiment. In the analogy of the two cases of schizophrenia, the Left bears much of the responsibility because it is its duty to reach out to those classes who are exist in geographical and intellectual isolation and do not communicate with the world except through the idea of God. The Left which has not been able to release the intellectual constraints, further strengthened

by the geographical constraints, around those who it exists to serve, is considered a Left suffering from a schizophrenia that affects applies its conceptual framework as well as its organizational reality.

The reality of the Tunisian Left today shows the necessity of intellectual revisions. But the examples that we may cite show that these revisions will remain unfeasible and ineffective if the organizational structures and the forms of political leadership within the parties do not change.

- From the Leftist Socialist Party to the Socialist Party, which abandons its Leftism and join the Union for Tunisia led by the liberal Nidaa Tounes.
- From the Tunisian Communist Workers' Party to the Labour Party, which leads the new formula of the Left Alliance, the Popular Front, with liberal right-wing parties on the basis of the question of modernity and the civil nature of the state.

Revolutionary Marxists became the League of the Workers' Left without the presence of workers in the ranks of its leaders and freedom fighters.

### **The Communist Party continues its revision process and today's priority is the social democratic path.**

The real problem is the confusion between illusory ideological divides, personal conflicts and organizational division – all affected by the fragmentation which has revealed the breadth of the Left after 14 January 2011. This is already problematic considering that the Left is controlling the activities of the revolutionary movement, but is failing to lead the political process in its electoral form. In fact, the various elements of the Left did not understand the need for harmonization between revolutionary achievements and electoral achievements. Moreover, they could not harmonize the elements of revolutionary work and the conditions of political participation under the framework of democracy.

If we list the difficulties and challenges facing the Tunisian Left, we find that they are represented by the absence of organizational vision, intellectual revisions, the difficulty of adapting to the social reality, the absence of normalization of relations with society, the absence of a strategic vision and clear strategy to communicate with the masses, the inability to overcome an authoritarian leadership spirit, in addition to

the weakness of the training capacity of the party among young people and women in particular.

If the Left overcame these dilemmas it would have been able to overcome the necessary pressure that led it into an alliance with the Right and would have been able to form an active Leftist front. Although the Popular Front, which announced its establishment on 17 October 2012, is an important frame of reference for the activists of the Left, the reality proves that this front has suffered from the same problems experienced by each of its Leftist components. From its founding, the Popular Front carried within it the seeds of obstacles to the important work it is doing on the mobility and field levels. This is because as much as this front represents the most important issue in confronting counter-revolutionary forces, it is still reproducing the same problems suffered by each party. In the end, the Popular Front, while it is a model for gathering the positive capacities of Leftist forces, is also a model for gathering their problems.

It is clear that the elements of the political Left have reacted to the partisan explosion that occurred after the so-called “revolution” without having a vision for the results of political participation based on careful and precise study of Tunisian society. The emergence of new left-wing parties was a means to achieve gains in light of the continuation of the Right bourgeoisie represented by the state bourgeoisie backed by the financial oligarchy. This Left did not understand the lesson given by Lenin through his experience in building a strong mass party, the Bolshevik Party, which he formed within the Social Democratic Workers’ Party in 1903 when he understood that small political entities will remain unable to accomplish the historical tasks if they do not transform themselves into larger popular action forces. The October Revolution was the product of a clearly disciplined party which knew how to win, along with its cause, a big part of the urban proletariat and to control councils and departments. It seems that the Tunisian Left has been unable to understand this lesson too.

The Tunisian Left today stands at a defining moment, faced with many pressing questions about the nature of the new political phase and the search for a new role in a political scene characterized by ambiguity and the “big money” paid to some political parties. What can the Left, with its meager financial means, do to confront these parties? Can it still rely on its historic legitimacy or should it search for alternatives that would enable it to enter the theater of political conflict with capacities greater than those that put it on the margins of the constituent assembly, in

order not to find itself again on the margins of the upcoming political phase. In general, the Tunisian Left was not less fortunate than the Left in most of the big revolutions of modern history. The Left demanded social equality and declared war on the rich before being excluded in April 1794. Moreover, it was an active contributor to the 1848 revolution in France, but it ended with a political setback that took it back to the era of Bonaparte and Empire.



# Leftist movements in Egypt

---

## Habiba Mohsen

*Habiba Mohsen is a PhD student and teaching assistant at the Faculty of Social and Political Science at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. She previously worked as programme director at the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation, Alexandria, Egypt, and as a political researcher at the Arab Forum for Alternatives, Cairo, Egypt. She received her master's degree in political science from Saint Joseph University in Beirut, Lebanon and has published many articles on social movements and political parties in Egypt, in addition to literature on public policy and local government.*

## Ahmad Abdul Hamid Hussain

*Ahmad Abdul Hamid Hussain Ahmad Abdul Hamid Hussain is responsible for programmes and research at Fiker Center for Studies, where he is a researcher specialized in political and social movements. He worked as a researcher for several research and media organizations such as the Diversity Studies Center and the Islam Online site, and as a freelance researcher with the Arab Reform Initiative in Paris. He has published several articles about social movements, the most recent is a research on the Egyptian Current Party published in a book by the Arab Reform Initiative in Paris.*

In this study, the two researchers try to draw a map of the most prominent Leftist movements in Egypt, especially following the January 2011 revolution. This task was somewhat difficult, not only because of the fluidity of the political context and the specificities of the post-revolutionary transitional period, and not only because of the multiplicity of initiatives and organizations created by the

Egyptian Left at this stage in a relatively short period of time, but also because of the difficulty of determining the scope of movements and organizations to be included in this study. For example, can one consider the new youth movements, characterized by cross-ideologies, which tend to adopt an agenda close to the Left, but do not explicitly declare themselves as adherents to the Marxist heritage, as part of the Left? Should parties and movements that belong to the pan-Arab trend be included? What about other political forces that belong to more conservative backgrounds?

In this context, the researchers have chosen to focus on three types of left-wing organizations. The first is the traditional Leftist parties in their classic form, which are characterized by a long history of organizational and movement work. With time, they became less capable of mobilization and recruitment and their membership has significantly decreased for subjective and objective reasons, which will be further discussed in this paper. This has led to the emergence of more radical and less bureaucratic Leftist organizations that are convinced of the need to focus on the political socialization of their members in the Marxist traditions. After this, movements that do not belong to the Left in its ideological form, meaning that they do not follow the Marxist heritage (but in reality belong to the Left in its programmatic meaning, or in other words, adopt a political programme supportive of economic and social rights and political freedoms) have emerged.

The Left in Egypt has a long history, which started in the aftermath of the 1919 revolution. It attempted to draw closer to the Egyptian street movement at different periods in time, whether to counter occupation, tyranny and corruption, in support of social justice and freedom, or to advocate for other issues. The Egyptian Left started to be formed at a relatively early period of modern Egyptian history, and was characterized by its rapid response to social and political conflict, either through national independence issues, or issues associated with economic and social rights. As noted above, the Egyptian Left, since its early inception, was associated with the national struggle and the labor movements. The first Communist party was founded in Egypt in 1921 and played a strong role in the labor movement through continued strikes and sit-ins. Despite security restrictions, the Left started to rise again in the 1930s and 1940s, impacted by the

aforementioned factors<sup>1</sup>.

Because of severe repression, as well as because some Leftist leaders allied themselves with the Nasser's regime, the Left started to decline again during the 1950s and 1960s, but it returned in the early 1970s, driven by the growing importance of the national cause after the setback of 1967 and the student movements in universities, most of whose leaders belonged to the Left.

With the beginning of the Sadat era, and after nearly a year of his battle with what he called "power centers" to establish his legitimacy, Sadat played a major role in strengthening the Islamists and supported them to confront the growing influence of the Left, particularly in universities<sup>2</sup>.

With the return of the multi-party system to Egypt in the mid-1970s, the Left officially returned to the Egyptian political arena and it continued to grow until the late 1980s, but this period was followed by another decline because of the regime's increasing security restrictions on the public domain. This came as a result of the regime's fierce battle with the Islamists, during which some of the leaders of the Left took the side of the regime. One can certainly add to the above reasons the collapse of the Soviet Union, which made the Left lose part of its support in the Egyptian and Arab streets alike. As a result, a number of the Leftist leaders abandoned the political sphere for civil society, specifically to develop the human rights part of it. This decline continued until the beginning of the new millennium, which was characterized by a tense regional situation, with the outbreak of the second Palestinian uprising in 2000 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003.

In those 10 years, 2000-2010, known as the "the decade of anger", came democratic change, networking with other political forces, and engagement with the grassroots through campaigns such as the Popular Campaign for the Support the Palestinian People, the campaign against the Iraq war, Kifaya and the National Association for Change, which helped the Leftist parties to overcome rigidity and dogmatism in relative terms. But in spite of that, the Left was

---

1. New Notes on the History of the Egyptian Left in the 1920s, Mohammed al-Baali, «The Working Class after World War I», the Center for Socialist Studies, from the Revolutionary Socialists website.

2. Experiences from the Egyptian student movement 1968-1972, Ahmad Hassan, 11 March 2012, Socialist Website.

less successful in engaging with the street and in building effective popular support.

It is certain that the Egyptian revolutionary Left experienced 25 January 2011 while it was still suffering from the same problems that had dogged its history, despite the attempts of some currents to get rid of these problems during the decade preceding the revolution. Thus, despite the participation of the various forces of the Left in the revolutionary events and fronts, which were formed during and after the revolution, it was not present as an organized force seeking to attract the masses or to lead them. This is very surprising, especially because the demands raised during the revolution, expressed as “bread, freedom and social justice”, are obviously the demands given top priority in most of the leftist forces’ agendas.

The revolution sparked a series of important questions among activists and intellectuals belonging to this camp, all of which revolve around the re-establishment of the revolutionary Left in the revolutionary context, such as those asked by the activist Akram Ismail. Like many other members of the Leftist stream, Ismail believes the Left is the only current capable of engaging with the political, economic and social questions of the revolution. This engagement requires the production of a new Left capable of formulating an integrated political programme which translates this deep revolutionary situation into clear and implementable political alternatives, not just trivial cosmetic reforms. Thus, the role assigned to the Leftist stream in that period was to act as the radical voice within the democratic camp, and the main attracting element of the economically, socially, religiously and sexually poor and marginalized classes. In order to achieve this, according to Ismail, the Left should establish a project with two pillars: one within the political sphere and the other within the social movement, without waiting to reach power.

But the re-establishment of the Left as a project to answer these questions is an extremely difficult task. The Left is imprisoned by its own burdens that hinder its work as an actor on the ground. Although the January revolution has given it a historic opportunity to rediscover and rebuild itself, the Left is still wrestling with the legacy of decline and isolation that dominated it in previous decades. It is time for the Left to rediscover itself by associating itself with the social movement and by interacting with reality through accepting its current “limited” presence and exploring its potential role in an ongoing process of struggle to

engage with reality<sup>3</sup>.

Through the monitoring and tracking which the researchers have tried to do in this paper, we have noticed that most left-wing parties and movements were always trying to “lead” the movement of the masses, and those formed after the revolution were trying to formulate their internal discourse in a way that gave a revolutionary flavor to the new party or organization, considering it the party or the organization which really expresses the revolution.

In the following section of this paper, we will discuss several key issues related to the Egyptian Left during and after the revolution, both in terms of the conceptual framework and its organizational forms and finally the major challenges and problems it is facing.

### **The Conceptual Framework of the Left**

The researchers have tried to monitor a large number of left-wing movements from all backgrounds and affiliations: traditional political parties and new youth movements with a Leftist discourse. However, due to the limited space available in this study, the researchers have opted to consider left-wing movements addressed by this study as those who either clearly adopt Marxist ideology or thought or those who have social justice as a central idea or political programmes which they seek to achieve through communicating with the workers or marginalized classes of the society, while they believe in the integration of the idea of social justice with the idea of democracy in its more radical context through a process which is not only limited to a representative democracy mechanism but through integrated participatory mechanisms. These mechanisms aim at empowering citizens to participate in a more effective way in the decision-making process, the dismantling of the dominance of the state and capital over the societal and political sphere and providing space for the ordinary citizens on the level of control over authorities, holding them accountable, and contributing to decision-making.

Thus, the study includes a variety of movements and organizations, ranging from traditional left-wing parties such as the National Progressive Unionist Party (Tagammu’), the Egyptian Communist

---

3. The Left and the questions of the revolution, a critical view, (Part I): Akram Ismail and Iham Aidarus, Mada Masr website.

Party and others, together with parties and organizations that have worked in the underground for a period of time, and which are a mixture of the first and third types of movements. As for the third current, it is composed of organizations and political forces formed after the revolution, most of which do not have solid ideologies. Their loose structure, the central place which the idea of social justice occupies in their thought and their desire to integrate participatory democracy mechanisms in the decision-making process were the basic criteria for choosing them.

Therefore, the study has excluded groups and parties with nationalist ideologies, though some of them play an important role in the Egyptian arena. Though these nationalist movements care about the issue of social justice and the redistribution of wealth, the cause of democracy, in its radical context, does not occupy a significant party of their programmes or their political discourse. Instead, their discourse has stressed the central role of the state. These groups essentially belong to nationalist thought in its Nasserite formula and not to Marxist ideology. The main difference here is the state ownership of means of production and the aim behind that. While nationalist thought adopts the achievement of social justice through the state control of means of production and its engagement in the redistribution of wealth, most Leftist streams believe in the importance of empowering citizens to organize themselves in different forms of production patterns, such as co-operatives, or to defend their rights such as independent trade unions. Contrary to that, the two researchers have chosen to put together some of the parties, which do not seem at first glance as if they belong to the Left because of the centrality of the causes of social justice and participatory democracy - in other words, democracy that enables citizens to contribute actively to supervision, accountability, and decision-making with their elected representatives. In their programmes and discourse, they were integrated within the Left forces which this study is trying to examine.

Through the researchers' review of the most important Leftist forces in the Egyptian political scene, we see that it is important to note that the Egyptian Left, like many other Leftist forces in the Arab world, is torn between two complexities. The first relates to its stance regarding secularism versus political Islam; the second relates to its stance regarding issues of democracy versus economic and social rights. In other words, the complexity of secularism and political Islam lies in the fact that the Left is preoccupied with the secular/

Islamic polarization in a way which puts this issue at the forefront of its alliances and its political discourse. This issue sometimes makes the Left ally itself with secular Rightist forces, and sometimes with the existing political regime, in order to avoid alliance with political Islam forces. In most cases, the forces that focus too much on this duality tend to ally themselves with the regime and to reconcile with it, for fear of Islamization. They prefer to keep conditions as they are, and thus downplay the importance of achieving social or political change. Often, these forces are considered among the first type of the Leftist organizations, the traditional partisan elites. In contrast, there is another team, which has not had a problem in allying itself with some conservative forces or even explicitly Islamic ones – such as the Muslim Brotherhood - in a tactical manner and on certain agreed-upon issues such as the Palestinian cause, confronting the authoritarian regime, defending political prisoners, and so on; these are often forces which belong to the second or third type of Leftist organizations. They are usually the most revolutionary or the loose movements which do not have a strong ideological background.

One of the other important problems facing the Left in the post-revolution era is disagreement over the priority of political conflict or of social and economic demands. One of the important observations that can be made on the political performance of the Left in the post-revolutionary era is that the core alliances made with some of the traditional left-wing groups since the revolution were centered around political conflict, and neglected raising an agenda supportive of social and economic demands. By conflict, we mean the political struggle over the transitional phase arrangements, such as the writing of new constitutions or competing in the elections in the transitional phase. Perhaps one of the few attempts to link the political conflict and social and economic demands is the coalition formed by the Socialist Popular Alliance Party in Egypt with other two new parties: Egypt Freedom and the Egypt Current and the new Revolution Youth Coalition in order to achieve the demands of the revolution, central among which is social justice. This is the coalition which competed in the 2011 elections under the Continuous Revolution Coalition name.

We can add a third complexity, more associated with the next section of this paper, and this relates to the organizational structures of the Left. The emergence of conflicts between two mindsets driving partisan work inside the Egyptian Left was clear. This conflict within the Egyptian Left stream did not suddenly emerge and it

was not the product of a certain political condition, but rather the result of a conflict that has crystalized over a long period of time, perhaps since the end of the 1990s, between two currents. The first is associated with the classic school of partisan work, and most of its members belong to the classic Leftist parties such as the Tagammu' and the Egyptian Communist Party. This school of thought has been characterized by its severe centralization, its hierarchical organization and its adherence to political education in the Marxist tradition.

This political stream's conception of the revolution and change was limited to the expansion of the political sphere in a way which allows the increase in the share of the party within the procedural democracy system, and limits the concept of change to a range of economic and social gains to be extracted from the state. At the same time, there was another stream, most of whose members are young people or from Leftist organizations outside the state's umbrella. This stream developed a new perspective of partisan work with its organizational and political dimensions and had a more open vision of the role of the party or organization, a vision through which it was trying to build an organizational entity based on decentralization and giving a bigger role to people's organizations, support organizations and social initiatives in the field work with freedom. Moreover, this stream had a better conception of the revolution because it believes that real revolution means the deepening of the political and social struggle within the society, the struggle to build a democracy of a bigger participatory nature, the building of socialism based on gains for marginalized classes and not insignificant gains to be taken from the state only on the political level. This is what we will try to clarify in more details in the following paragraph.

## **Changes in the Leftist movements:**

### **Organizational structures, development and turning points**

As already explained in the previous section, any observer can see the difference between the traditional left-wing elites and the new Leftist generations in Egypt at the level of the three complexities mentioned above. This difference between the two mentalities governing the Leftist organizational and movement work in Egypt can be seen through several manifestations, notably the organizational dimension and its different frameworks.

The different forms of organizational structures of the Egyptian Left can be understood based on the level of the organization's centralization in the form of a straight line. At its starting point are the old Leftist organizations, then come the revolutionary Leftist organizations and it ends with the new movements and youth groups, with discourses and programmes influenced by the Left. These forms are not separated from each other, but there are areas of overlap between them. We can speak about three basic patterns of organizational structures on this line which have clear examples in Egyptian reality, namely: the old traditional Left, by which we mean the organizations and parties which existed and worked in the pre-revolution era. This school of thought believes in a rigid party structure with total control over the party's activities. It believes the party should dominate supporting structures such as mass social movements and community initiatives which intersect with the party, and deal with them as merely a mass unit affiliated with the party.

Perhaps one of the most important examples of the first kind of left-wing organizations is the Tagammu' Party, which is one of the oldest Egyptian Leftist parties and the only licensed Leftist party in the country. It was established with the beginning of political openness in the mid-1970s. The party was founded with the re-establishment of political parties in Egypt in 1976 by a decision taken by President Sadat allowing the establishment of three platforms within the same party, the Socialist Union, and the National Progressive Unionist Organization (Tagammu'), which was the platform representing the Left at that time. However, with Sadat's declaration of the transformation of platforms into separate political parties, it became the National Progressive Unionist Party<sup>4</sup>. Since its creation, it enjoyed strong popularity. At its founding, members joining the party represented three main categories: the Marxists, the Nasserites and the pan-Arabs, in addition to large groups of labour, professional and farmers' leaders. However, the role the party played from its creation to the end of the 1980s was completely different than the role it played over the last two decades. Its membership started to decline for a number of reasons, such as the successive blows it received from President Sadat's regime in 1977 after demonstrations against the Camp David Accords, which did not only impact on the party but also led to restrictions on the overall public domain. The party membership has continued to decrease since the

---

4. Dr Ali Ad-Din Hilal, *The Development of the Political System in Egypt*, Cairo, Center for Political Research and Studies, Cairo University.

1980s. During that period, the party lost a big number of its active members because many of its pan-Arab and Nasserite members walked out after the creation of more than one pan-Arab and Nasserite party, or as a result of the change in the party's path and its reconciliation with the ruling regime. In addition, the party has witnessed several splits and it removed many of its prominent members<sup>5</sup> as a result of its continued policy of reconciling with the ruling regime and its attempts to create a space for the party with the absence and retreat of most opposition parties. For example, in this context, Dr Rifaat al-Saeed, the president of the party, was appointed a member of the Shura Council by the president<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, since the late 1980s, the party ceased to be a Leftist party which addresses a broad audience of the working classes<sup>7</sup> and continued to decline gradually during the new millennium, despite its participation in most of the parliamentary elections since the return of democratic experience in the mid-1970s.

It was also noticed that socialist activities have significantly decreased under the Tagammu' leadership. Its leaders did not deepen its Leftist approach in thought and practice, and did not develop the basis of its political unity and its ideological framework as a formula which gathers the Marxist, Arab nationalist and the enlightened religious streams within one Leftist nucleus to confront the ruling Rightists and reactionary political Islam<sup>8</sup>. It was certain that, similar to almost all old Leftist parties, it was characterized by a "repressive" atmosphere in general and an internal organization with severe centralization and hierarchy. This has led some of the activists – most of them youth – to rebel against this atmosphere and to join other initiatives. For them, it became clear, in the period from 2004 to 2005, that the Tagammu' was nothing but

5. After the removal of Abuaezz Hariri from the Tagammu'... Parties use their guillotines to remove persons with different opinions, the Arab Network for Human Rights Information, 27 October 2008 .

<http://www.anhri.net/egypt/afc/2009/pr1027.shtml>

6. Abdel Hafiz Saad and Dr Rifaat al-Saeed: Confessed «Absum bil Ashara Anna Hizbana Yatakalam Katheeran Aw Intilaqih lil Jamahir Aqal min Kalamih» (I admit that our party speaks more or its engagement with the masses is less than the words its says, al-Yawm al-Sabea, (The Seventh Day), 4 June 2009, <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=105281&SecID=161&IssueID=61>

7. Ayman Abdel Muti, «the Egyptian revolution and the role of the left: Success and failure factors», The left and the Arab revolutions, Cairo, AFA, Dar Rafed Publishing and Distribution House, 2012.

8. The revolution and the absent Left in Egypt, Imad Masaad Muhammad al-Sabea, op. cit.

another side of the National Party, or a democratic decoration for the Mubarak's authoritarian regime. This was obvious given the control of the current party leadership over key party functions, excluding other views from the decision-making circles of the party, and given their strong relations with the former regime and its security apparatus, in addition to the shameful stances of the party regarding some national and pan-Arab issues, such as preventing the youth of the party from demonstrating on the eve of the fall of Baghdad in March 2003. When the youth of the party opposed this decision and came out to protest, they were surprised to find out that the party leadership was complicit with the security forces that entered into violent confrontations with them. In addition, the party has the tendency to theorize and to be busy with its internal affairs instead of engaging with the society's realities.

Before the Egyptian revolution, the party also participated in the largest opposition coalition after the National Association for Change - a coalition of major main opposition parties, which in addition to the Tagammu' was composed of the Democratic Front, the al-Wafd Party and the Nasserist Party - but it remained, to a large extent, closed to others and incapable of keeping up with the street's protest movements until the 2011 Egyptian revolution.

The Egyptian Communist Party is an important example of the first type of party. Despite being one of the oldest left-wing parties in Egypt and the Arab region in general, it has undergone several waves of ups and downs either because of the security blockade or the attempts by the Nasserite regime to contain it during the 1950s and 1960s. This period ended with a decision to dissolve the party in the mid-1960s, and to work from the underground, but it was re-established again in 1975. The party's presence is very weak among protest movements and to a lesser degree in the professional movements and this is probably because of its strategy of full and strict commitment to secrecy in its work under the pretext of "the absence of freedoms in Egypt". The 25 January 2011 revolution was perhaps a turning point in the history of the party. During the Labor Day celebrations on 1 May 2011, which were held in Tahrir Square, the party abandoned its underground policy and started to work in the open<sup>9</sup>, relying on a centralized organizational structure, but without a secretary-general post and with a collective

---

9. Al-Hiwar al-Mutamaden site: the Communist Party page: <http://www.ahewar.org/m.asp?i=268>

leadership through its secretariat<sup>10</sup>.

One other example of importance is the Revolutionary Socialists Organization. This current was established in the early 1990s, amid deep feelings of frustration in Leftist circles. It emerged as a coherent organization having a new Marxist vision with a Trotskyist nature. It started to actively participate in strikes and sit-ins from its inception, as well as in regional activities in support of the Palestinian and Iraqi peoples since 2000. The group wanted to become the nucleus of a revolutionary Marxist party active on the ground and since its creation, it played a very important role in the social movement against the Mubarak regime until the outbreak of the Egyptian revolution in 2011. It is important to note that this movement, at that time, was trying to work on a regional level and to co-ordinate with a number of other movements and political forces against the Mubarak regime, including the Muslim Brotherhood<sup>11</sup>.

However, the Revolutionary Socialists Movement was not able to avoid defections because of internal organizational conflicts. In early 2010, a group known as the Socialist Renewal group split and created an independent current. But by 2011, the Revolutionary Socialists group was present in the early days of the 25 January revolution, and in all subsequent revolutionary events. It had always stressed its rejection of the role of the military establishment and it raised the banner of comprehensive social revolution. This was the reason why it became the target of attacks by media outlets affiliated first with the former regime and later with the Muslim Brotherhood, and it was accused of seeking to overthrow the state or create chaos. Finally, after the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood on 30 June 2013, and the group's attack on the return of the security state and the military regime, the group was showered with accusations by those affiliated with the old regime, among them fellow Leftists, that those who belong to the group are allied with the Muslim Brotherhood<sup>12</sup>.

The second type of Leftist movement is a mixture in terms of

---

10. Abdul Ghaffar Shukr, Imad Siam, Mostafa Magdi al-Jammal, *Political Parties and the Crisis of Pluralism in Egypt*, the Arab and African Research Center, first edition, 2010, Jazirat al-Ward, Cairo.

11. The Revolutionary Socialists, the Socialist Gate: <http://revsoc.me/revolutionary-socialists>

12. One of the articles of significance in this context is an article written by Rifaat al-Saeed, the head of the Tagammu' Party in the al-Ahali Newspaper under the title: «They are not socialists, and they are not revolutionaries», <http://www.masress.com/alahaly/34661>

organizational structure as well as in terms of the decision-making method inside them ranging between centralized and decentralized methods and their more flexible focus on political socialization. Some political formations tried in the beginning to benefit from their intermediate position on this organizational line to establish one big party to gather the factions of the Egyptian Left. Among the most important examples of this kind of organization is the People's Alliance Party. The outbreak of the Egyptian revolution was a major turning point for the left-wing currents, both on the intellectual level as well as at the level of practice, but especially at the level of organization. To quickly cope with the course of the Egyptian revolution, an initiative emerged for the creation of a broad left-wing party<sup>13</sup> on grounds completely different than the ones that existed before the revolution.

With the political momentum, numerous forces and currents close to the left responded by initiating the creation of the Socialist People's Alliance, but soon segregation started on political and programmatic bases rather than dogmatic and ideological bases. A number of groups walked out because they saw that the party "is more Leftist" than the needs imposed by the current realities. Most of them participated in the creation of the Egyptian Social Democratic Party and the Egyptian Socialist Party, in addition to other groups who refused to join in and opted to keep their own organizations such as the Revolutionary Socialists. But in the end, the new party contained a big group of those who resigned from the Tagammu' Party after their failure to undermine the leadership of the party, the Socialist Renewal current dissidents of the Revolutionary Socialist Current, some of the Democratic Left members, and a big number of independents or those who were members of old parties such as the United Labor Party, the Socialist Peoples' Party, and the Egyptian Socialists. However, the party did not succeed in attracting youth groups which were formed directly before the revolution such as April 6 Youth Movement and the Youth for Justice and Freedom, or groups that played roles in the revolutionary events over the last two years of the revolution, such as the Revolutionary People's Committees and the Ultras groups. Thus, the Left remained divided between several formations, including the historical and the most

---

13. This initiative was not born of the moment, but it has had many harbingers in attempts to create the March 20 for Change group, the Left Alliance and later on the Union of the Left, and limited attempts to unite Leftist organizations into a single organization, and then to form youth groups, committees, alliances and coalitions.

recent youth movements<sup>14</sup>.

The People's Alliance Party, since its inception, was keen on engaging with the street and on the radicalization of the mass movement demanding political and civil rights as well as economic and social rights in a political context characterized by a revolutionary momentum from the outbreak of the revolution until now. This has made the party shoulder many burdens, especially as it was still in its establishment process. But the pace of events and the escalation of social protests made the party involve itself in these battles to be closer to the movement of the street. It also played an important role in framing the revolutionary movement against the military council, and then against the Muslim Brotherhood when the latter reached power. Despite that, it cannot be claimed that the party was leading or framing the street movement and this also applies to the other Leftist organizations. However, the party, in the first phase of its creation, was able to establish a wide network of relationships with other revolutionary forces because most of the party cadres and activists were interested in co-ordination and regional work with other revolutionary forces. For example, this became evident in the parliamentary elections in 2011, where the party initiated the creation of the Revolution Continues Alliance with other parties and youth political forces, such as the Egypt Freedom Party and the Egyptian Current. The idea of social justice, and bypassing the Islamic/civil polarization was the main ideas dominating the alliance<sup>15</sup>. In the wake of Mohamed Morsi's rise to power, the party played a major role in the formation of the Salvation Front, a coalition that led the opposition to the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood in collaboration with several parties and other civil forces such as the Popular Current, the Constitution Party, the Free Egyptians Party, and others. Moreover, the popular base of the party played a big role in engaging with the Tamarod campaign calling for the overthrow of President Mohamed Morsi.

But in fact, the Socialist People's Alliance Party experienced a shock that has had a significant impact on its organizational structure. Despite the long and exhausting battle within the party by many younger members and those who belong to more radical streams such as the

---

14. Ayman Abdel Muti, «the Egyptian revolution and the role of the left: Success and failure factors», op.cit.

15. Despite the difficult context of the elections, it succeeded in attracting more new members of the party and it also in contributing to the development and construction of party bases in different local areas. Moreover, it was also able to win seven parliamentary seats.

Socialist Renewal for the adoption of decentralization in the party, and for the adoption of an organizational form closer to a network, it ended up in the approval of a hierarchal party organizational structure, ie, a hierarchal structure where the member's responsibilities and powers increase when he reaches posts in organizational structure of the party. This hierarchal structure was criticized by party members on the grounds that it tends to bureaucratize the political practice within the party, and imposes a patriarchal form within the organization. It was also criticized because it deals with lower organizational levels, especially those distant from the center, in an exclusionist spirit.

In response to the party's inability, as an entity and an organizational structure, to contain the differences of its members, especially on the issue of the application of the "platforms" system, around 300 active members from different party levels submitted their resignations. The issue cannot be interpreted by the phenomenon of partisan divisions. The stated reason for the collective resignations made during the month of November 2013 is the reconciliation path with the authority taken by the party after 30 June, where the party has tended to favor the ruling regime, which has made it relinquish its path as a revolutionary party under the pretext of the war on terror and the preservation of the national state. Thus we can say that the People's Alliance Party has turned away from being categorized among the second type of Leftist organizations (Leftist revolutionary organizations), to become closer to the first type: the traditional Left organizations.

At the other end of the line that describes the organizational framework of the Leftist groups is a third type of movement, the cross-ideological youth movements characterized by relative fluidity. This has enabled them to quickly respond to the demands of the revolutionary moment as well as to bypass political parties, which have rigid institutional structures, and which are controlled by older generations. Here we are focusing on movements that adopt a "programmatic" agenda closer to the Left, in the sense that they call for radical change and for issues related to social justice, but they do not adhere to Marxist heritage on the level of intellectual and political discourse, or on the level of political socialization of their members. Moreover, they may not be concerned with the practice of electoral politics in the traditional sense

Since the start of the new millennium, a number of protest movements have appeared on the Egyptian political scene. They were more flexible

and loose in their organizational structures in order to be better able to move, engage with the street and work through it. They had liberated themselves from firm ideological restrictions and from the organizational stagnation and rigidity which dominated most political parties and other institutions for a long period of time. These movements started to emerge in Egypt with the Popular Committee for the Support of the Palestinian people in 2000, which took a loose organizational structure reflected in cross-party or political streams.

Perhaps the most prominent example of this kind of movement is the Youth for Justice and Freedom, which emerged in early 2010, after the defection of a number of April 6 Movement members because of internal problems. These members created their own movement under the Egypt is More Important name, then changed the name to become Youth for Justice and Freedom.

The main feature of the Youth Movement for Justice and Freedom is its loose organizational structure and its ability to network in a non-hierarchical and decentralized way. This structure is characterized by flexibility and the ability to evolve according to the needs of the movement. This form of organizational structure was the most appropriate and acceptable for the young members. Moreover, the movement, despite the demands of a Leftist nature that it has made, which focus on social justice, radical democracy and human rights, is composed of members from different schools of thought. This intellectual diversity was a real addition to all youth movements and did not hinder their work. In addition, the relationship between the center and the peripheries, in the case of the movement, was not problematic at all. Each group in each province organized itself with simple co-ordination with the center in the capital city and it could ask for support whenever it needed it.

Despite the relative diversity in the organizational structures of the Egyptian Left, especially in the post-revolution era, it is still important to speak about the current capabilities of the Left and its possibilities, and the challenges it is faced within the very delicate current phase experienced by Egypt in the wake of the revolution.

## **The Left in Egypt after the revolution: capacities and current challenges**

In the course of its first three years, the Egyptian revolution made significant changes to the map of the Left in Egypt. It pulled the

rug from under the feet of some traditional organizations in favor of other more flexible and revolutionary organizations, more closely engaged with the street. However, at the end of the third year and the beginning of the fourth year of the Egyptian revolution, the map has again started to radically change. Some of the most flexible and closely related to the street organizations have disappeared with the decline in the revolutionary momentum that followed the overthrow of Mohamed Morsi. This is interpreted by social movements theory as “mobilization cycles”. Most movements pass through waves of rise and fall in their collective actions, which are closely related to each other and by reactions generating responses on these actions<sup>16</sup>.

The literature of social movements, particularly the “mobilization cycle” theory suggested by Sidney Tarrow (1998)<sup>17</sup>, tells us that these waves differ in their ups and downs depending on the nature of the organization. For example, we find that the waves of decline in collective acts have become much quicker among the traditional organizations of the Left, while more flexible organizations were undergoing various courses of mobilization. Based on this theory, we note that Leftist Egyptian organizations of all kinds are currently passing through a wave of decline or isolation in collective actions. Tarrow’s theory tells us that the wave of isolation is translated in the behaviors of groups - and here he is talking about the manifestations of the group’s isolation and not the reasons that have led to this isolation on the collective level - into one or more of these possibilities: the creation of new organizations; imparting a routine nature on the collective act, at least partial response to demands or withdrawal<sup>18</sup>.

Here, we note that the division of Leftist parties and movements into three categories – as we have already noted in the previous section of this research paper – is not absolute or static but it is rather closer to dynamic. Realistically, it is not accurate to speak about a permanent organizational structure of a political party or movement because transformation may occur coinciding with the mobilization cycle, which could impact the organizational structure of the entity under study. When this happens, a decentralized organization, characterized by flexible organizational structure and

---

16. Isabelle Sommier, *Cycle de mobilisation*, in Olivier Fillieule, Lilian Mathieu, Cécile Péchu (Edi.), *Dictionnaire des mouvements sociaux*, Presses de Sciences Po, 2009.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

decision-making approaches might witness a change that makes it shift from the second type of organization, ie, a revolutionary Left organization, to the first type, ie, the classic Left organization, if its internal bylaws become bureaucratized and if it moves towards more centralization. It is also possible – although this rarely happens – that one of the rigid organizational structures characterized by extreme centralization – after a radical reform process – changes into another with a more open, flexible and decentralized structure. Thus, there is interchangeability in the categorization of Leftist movements between the different types of organizations based on their internal organization and their movement on the ground, and this completes the argument of the mobilization cycle theory.

By returning to Tarrow's theory, it is clear that the isolation phase of the Egyptian Leftist movement has been reflected in the routinization of collective acts, in other words, the bureaucratization of work within the existing political parties or movements in a way that affects their effectiveness on the ground and their relation to the street as well as the different organizational structures. For example, regarding the Tagammu' Party, one can say that it has been passing through the decline phase in its collective action for some time; since the period when the pace of change dramatically accelerated in Egypt, the Tagammu' Party has been in a weak position. It was unable to keep up with demands for change except in a very limited and cosmetic manner. The party has changed into a routinized, closed and bureaucratic entity. With its inability to achieve one of the major tasks of political parties, the mobilization of new members; the large number of its young members who walked out; and the presence of many members from the relatively old generations among its ranks, for different reasons and aims, the party became isolated. Alternative and more radical revolutionary Leftist organizations, with a greater capacity to be effective on the ground, have emerged. There were even those among the Leftists who were advocating the importance of establishing a broad party for the Left, the same banner advocated by the Tagammu' for a number of years before its political and organizational "decline" phase.

Several Leftist decentralized groups, or those which belong to the third type of organizations, have also seen a significant withdrawal from public work, including, for example, the Youth Movement for Justice and Freedom. Despite the role of the movement in mobilization in the pre-revolution phase as well as during the revolution, by the end of

2011, the movement had witnessed a kind of isolation indicative of the end of its mobilization cycle. The peak mobilization of the group was when the Revolution Youth Coalition was created and it was then that the movement had fully merged in the tactical work of the revolutionary movement.

With the presence of the Revolution Youth Coalition as an entity representing an alliance between revolutionary and political groups, including the Youth for Justice and Freedom Movement, the coalition replaced the movement through its executive office and stole the limelight from it. Thus Youth for Justice and Freedom faded away to a large extent as a result of the coalition until the dismantling of the latter and the official announcement of its dissolution. The decline of the movement through the Revolution Youth Coalition dissuaded it from working in the street and from developing its internal organizational structure. Moreover, the presence of the movement within the Revolution Youth Coalition has had a major impact on its “containment by the media” for a number of reasons, mainly because of its negative impact on its internal structure and because it was reduced to the two individuals who represent it in the Executive Office of the Revolution Youth Coalition. This led to a major rift within the Youth Movement for Justice and Freedom, its disintegration and the freezing of its activities for a long period of time<sup>19</sup>.

In the current phase, we can see this withdrawal clearly through its limited presence in co-ordination, alliances and fronts in which it participates. A number of its activists participate in campaigns such as Freedom for the Brave, to defend detainees after the overthrow of Mohamed Morsi’s rule, or the Road of the Revolution Front, which we will analyze in the following paragraphs. This is not only because of the collapse of the organizational structure of the movement, or because the mobilization cycle of the movement has reached its end as the literature of social movements indicates, but also because of the nature of the political system which has emerged after the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood, characterized by stasis, suppression and the narrowing of the public space available to organizations and movements, both formal ones, such as political parties and informal movements or groups.

---

19. The researcher became close to the movement’s group during the months of March, April and June 2011 to participate in the organization of a new group in a broader framework than that of the movement.

The isolation phase that the Egyptian Left is currently passing through is reflected in the creation of new organizations. This is one of the features of decline phases in mobilization cycles as described in Tarrow's theory. With the walk-out of large numbers of activists from existing organizations, many have opted to establish new ones hoping to continue their public work. Among the most important initiatives is the Revolutionist Front – the Road of the Revolution Front, which was created in the aftermath of the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood, the return of the military establishment and the weakness of revolutionary forces and political groups. The founders of the Front felt that there is a real political crisis in the Egyptian arena, compounded by the dispersal of the Rabaa al-Adawiya and al-Nahda sit-ins and the severe polarization that followed these events, which were succeeded by the near-complete closure, from the Front's point of view, of the political field. Therefore, a number of political activists started to create a stream beyond the duality of the state stream, which adopts the idea of authoritarian hegemony and state control of the political and public spheres, and at the same time rejects the Muslim Brotherhood, which adopts an authoritarianism of its own. This group is trying – as it sees itself – to create a new stream dismissive of both national and religious fascism.

For these reasons, the Revolutionaries Front – the Road of the Revolution Front was founded in a press conference held on 24 September 2013 by a diverse group of independent activists, revolutionaries and members of various revolutionary movements and political parties. It attracted many independent Left elites, public figures not affiliated with parties and public figures affiliated with Leftist and non-Leftist organizations including the Revolutionary Socialist Organization, Youth for Justice and Freedom Movement, April 6 Movement, the Egyptian Current Party, Strong Egypt Party and the Democratic Front.

Since its inception, the front declared its adoption of a political program which includes a number of basic goals seen by the front as driving forces in the course of completing the revolution. These goals are: the creation of a civilian democratic republic - non-military and non-religious - based on free political competition between all forces and on fair and direct election of the representatives of the masses in all positions and ranks<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, the programme supports "all political, trade union, civil and

---

20. Draft political programme of the Road of the Revolution Front, the Facebook page of the front, 24 September 2013, <http://goo.gl/qlm9le>

personal liberties and freedoms, freedom of the media and publishing, freedom of establishing political parties, trade unions, associations, federations and organizations, freedom of demonstrations, strikes and sit-ins rights as well as the right to all forms of peaceful protest, the application of standards to ensure that the military establishment stay away from influencing the political sphere, extending the authority of the elected parliament to control all of its activities and organizing control over its budget [...], the restructuring and cleaning up the police apparatus and transforming it into a regular civilian body, ending the recruitment of compulsory recruits in the Central Security Forces, the cancellation of the political security apparatuses, subjecting general security to the local authorities, ensuring the independence of the judiciary, restructuring and cleaning it up through clear and transparent criteria<sup>21</sup>.

Although the Front, as of this writing, is only a few months old, it has been active in the movement on the ground and in engagement with the issues that are vital to the revolutionary path, first and foremost the defense of the right to organize and in defending the rights of detainees. With the passing of a law which restricts the right to demonstration, the campaign entitled No for Military Trials organized a demonstration in front of the Shura Council to challenge the law, but it was dispersed violently by police<sup>22</sup> and dozens of well-known activists were arrested. This was followed by a mass arrest campaign targeting a number of well-known activists, such as Alaa Abdel Fattah, an activist and a blogger, Ahmad Maher, the founder of the April 6 Movement, and activists Ahmad Doma and Muhammad Adel, as well as a number of well-known activists in Alexandria such as the female activist Mahienour al-Masri. The Front has tried to respond to this arrest campaign by participating in the launch of the Freedom for the Brave campaign, which organized a number of activities such as demonstrations and protest and it also provided legal support to the detainees.

Despite the fading away of the voice of the front, to a large extent, in light of the closed political scene, it is still trying to create a space for working on a revolutionary alternative beyond the duality of the Islamic and military camps, and also to preserve the fundamental gains that have emerged from the January revolution.

---

21. Ibid.

22. Alaa Ahmad, with the presence of the demonstration law, tens of people gather in front of the Shura Council to oppose military trials, Masrawi, 23 November 2013, <http://goo.gl/E54jae>

The Front is considered a bloc form based on more the joining of a number of movements and individuals without a clear Marxist ideology; however, the fact that it advocates a number of basic demands of Leftist nature, such as social justice, reforming the police and judiciary apparatuses, opposing military trials of civilians, as well as other demands, puts it closer to the third type of organizational structure of the Left, which this paper is also keen to study.

In addition to the front, the classic partisan form, which is closer to the second type of Leftist organizations, has also emerged in the context of the isolation phase. This is reflected, for example, in the experience of the Bread and Freedom Party. This party was the latest Leftist initiative as of this writing and is predominantly composed of youth. As was the case in a number of Leftist initiatives before and after the revolution, the party aims to assemble what it calls the “Left of the Revolution” in one organizational structure based on a partisan programme that opposes exploitation, dependency and a state with a sectarian or military basis. It calls for the establishment of a society of justice and democracy that works for the completion of the revolution and achieving its goals in the building of a participatory democracy, real social justice and a modern civil state that respects rights and freedoms.

The major components of the founders of the are the group that resigned from the Socialist Popular Alliance Party, because of its objection to its internal organization and political effectiveness, as well as some independent activists who were not members of the party but were participating in its activities.

The party tries to play an active role in the political arena despite its recent inception. Among the most important events in which the party takes part are campaigns such as the “Only Alive by Name” campaign, which aims to defend the people of poor and marginalized areas in Cairo and other provinces, especially when confronting problems such as local authorities’ attempts to seize power and to prevent opponents from giving different opinions. Moreover, the party actively participates in the Freedom for the Brave campaign together with a number of other movements and groups. It is active in many trade union fronts and demands-based movements through its members such as the Engineering Syndicate’s Independence Current, and the Doctors without Rights movement. In addition, the party’s popular base members are active within their units in struggles of popular nature and daily battles of local nature such as the activity held by the Luxor unit in solidarity with sugar cane

farmers to raise the supply price by sugar factories in Upper Egypt. Moreover, party members in Giza joined forces with the people of the Azbat Allam to stop their displacement and forced evacuation of their homes. Some young people of the party are actively involved in the creation of co-operatives and the dissemination of awareness on the idea of co-operatives at a broad level.

Although these activities may seem complex at first glance, the party in reality faces many obstacles to becoming established, mainly a lack of funding as well as state security restrictions on the political sphere in Egypt and the distorted image of the 25 January revolution and young activists given in the media. On the other hand, one can notice that there is a state of withdrawal among party members because of the conditions of decline generally witnessed by the Egyptian revolution, which is pushing them towards withdrawal from the public sphere altogether, and making them focus on the private sphere or wait on the sidelines of the public domain<sup>23</sup>.

Another movement, which is considered closer to the second type of Leftist organizations, has also appeared under the Socialist Alternative name. This movement is only a few months old and was created in September 2013 by an active group of workers and young people, most of them defectors from the Revolutionary Socialists. The main reason for the founding of the movement, as mentioned in its founding statement which is posted on its official Facebook page, is that after almost three years after the outbreak of the Egyptian revolution, its demands of social justice and human dignity and the joining of the members of the group of a number of organizations and other Leftist movements, in an attempt to achieve these objectives, the Egyptian revolution has suffered a number of defeats by the "counter-revolution", because of the absence of a real revolutionary alternative to be adopted by the masses<sup>24</sup>.

Since its inception, the movement participated in most protests held to commemorate the events of Mohamed Mahmoud and the Council of Ministers and it also participated in the protest on the demonstration

---

23. An interview conducted by Ahmad Abdel-Hamid Hussein, the researcher, with Ahmad Suleiman, an activist and a member of the Bread and Freedom Party, Cairo, April 2014.

24. Founding statement of the of Socialist Alternative Movement on its Facebook page, [https://www.facebook.com/SocAlt.eg/posts/170550826480077?stream\\_ref=10](https://www.facebook.com/SocAlt.eg/posts/170550826480077?stream_ref=10)

law in front of the Shura Council. This resulted in the arrest of several members of the movement as well as others who participated in these events<sup>25</sup>. The movement is mainly present in Cairo and some of the Upper Egyptian and Delta provinces and it also has a presence among the students at the universities of Cairo, Ain Shams, Helwan and Banha.

The movement adopts a centralized partisan structure similar to the Revolutionary Socialists Movement, especially as the core founders of the group were mainly members of the Revolutionary Socialist Current. The movement clearly classifies itself as a Marxist-Leninist group, but it benefits from all the Leftist heritage and experiences, although it rejects Stalinism, and reflects this in its stances. Until now, the movement strives to provide its in-depth political and social vision based on accurate analysis of the situation, and thus it prefers not to rush in releasing it<sup>26</sup>. But that does not stop it from commenting on current political events and from taking specific stances regarding them<sup>27</sup>.

The Socialist Renewal Current, which was one of the most active Leftist groups in the Egyptian arena, stood in between the establishment of new organizations and the near-complete withdrawal from the Egyptian political scene. The experience of the Renewal Current group of joining the Popular Alliance and then walking out of it during the volatile events surrounding the Egyptian revolution had a dramatic impact on members of the current. On the one hand, the presidential election of 2012 created a significant crisis within Leftist circles because of the differences over the candidate to be supported: Khaled Ali, Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, Hamdeen Sabahi or Abul Ezz al-Hariri.

On the other hand, with the walk out of a large group from the Alliance Party frustrated by the failure of its experience, along with the general state of deadlock that has prevailed in the public arena in Egypt after 30 June, a small new group was born from the former members of the Renewal Current and it gave itself the Khamasin

---

25. An interview conducted by Ahmed Abdel-Hamid Hussein, the researcher, with Muhammad Nawar, a member of the movement via Skype on 25 March 2014.

26. An interview conducted by Ahmed Abdel-Hamid Hussein, the researcher, with Muhammad Nawar, a member of the movement via Skype on 25 March 2014.

27. Ibid.

name in an attempt to complete the socialist renewal line. However, its small numbers, the prevailing state of frustration, and the presence of other projects that have started to emerge, such as the Bread and Freedom Party and the Road of the Revolution Front made it unable to continue, and its members have dispersed within larger projects, leaving large number of this group's supporters to withdraw from public work.



# The Contemporary Yemeni Left Scene

---

Bushra Al-Maqtari

*Bushra Al-Maqtari is a Yemeni novelist, writer and researcher. She was awarded the Françoise Giroud Award for Defense of Freedom and Liberties in Paris, 2013 and also the Leaders for Democracy Prize presented by the Project on Middle East Democracy, 2013.*

## Section I: Social Structure of Yemen

### Social and economic overview

Yemen has a long history of division, which has persisted since the 1839 British occupation of Aden, then ruled by the Sultan of Lahj. The independence of Aden in 1967 led to the establishment of a progressive pan-national regime in the South including the previous British colony Aden, and the surrounding areas formerly called the Aden Protectorate. The regime in Aden had been completely different from the Mutawakkilate Imamate Kingdom regime established following the evacuation of the Ottomans from Yemen in 1918, and remained isolated from the rest of the world. After the 1962 movement led by Abdullah Al-Sallal and the establishment of the republic, it was no longer as isolated as before. It even began developing, despite retaining essential inherited features such as the dominance of tribalism and the religious establishment and resisting every attempt in the direction of establishing a civil state. In parallel, the evolution of Aden within the framework of British dependency permitted the emergence of trade unions and the evolution of their strike struggles, which combined the national and social political struggle with economic, trade unionist and strike struggles. Yemen was united by agreement in 1990, and then by a civil war which the North won in 1994.

Yemen is a large country with an area of about 528 square kilometers, and thus ranks 50th in the world in terms of area. Its population is currently about 25 million. The Yemeni tribes are a key feature, but stubbornly resist civil state and modernity. Some studies suggest that the tribes constitute about 85% of the population, and according to some statistics the number of tribes in Yemen is about 200, while others suggest that the number exceeds 400. Tribes in northern Yemen are much stronger than they are in the South. Yemen is the first Arab country in terms of the influence of tribal leaders and of tribal infiltration into the key positions of the state.

## Economic indicators at a glance

The labor force comprises 7.1 million people, mostly employed in agriculture and pasture, services, construction and industry, while the trade sector employs less than a quarter of the labor force. The proportion of the population below the poverty line was 45.2% in 2003, and the unemployment rate is estimated at 35%, while the youth unemployment rate (15 to 24-year-olds) is estimated at 33.7%.

The composition of the GDP in 2013 by end consumption was estimated as follows: 80.3% for household consumption; 12.5% for government consumption; 18.4% for investment in fixed capital, -4% for stock consumption; 17.8% for exports of goods and services, and -24.9% for imports of goods and services. The sector composition was as follows: agriculture 7.7%, industry 39.9%, and services 61.4%.

The oil-producing sector represents about 25% of GDP and 63% of government revenues. According to FAO, agriculture represented 18-27% of GDP, but this began to change as a result of the migration of rural labor and structural changes within the sector. The main agricultural commodities produced by Yemen are grains, vegetables, fruits, pulses, *Catha edulis* (qat), coffee, cotton, dairy products, fish, livestock, and poultry.

According to the CIA, the GDP of Yemen in 2013 amounted to \$61.63 billion, and the per capita was \$2.5 billion. Real growth rate estimates were at 3.8%. The estimated national savings rate was at 4.2% of GDP.

In 2013, Yemen's budget revenues amounted to \$7,760 billion, and its estimated expenditures amounted to \$12.31 billion. In the same year, the estimated revenues of taxes and other income as a percentage of GDP amounted to 17.7%, and the budget deficit was - 10.3%. Public

debt was 47.1%, and the inflation rate was 11.8%. At the end of 2013, total external debt was estimated at \$7,806 billion.

The industry includes crude oil, petroleum refining, cotton textiles production, leather goods, food processing, crafts, aluminum products, cement, repair of commercial ships, and natural gas production. The rate of industrial production is 4.8%. The current account deficit is \$3,312 billion, and exports amounted to \$6.6694 billion. The commodity exports are crude oil, coffee, dried and salted fish, and liquefied natural gas. Imports amounted to \$10.97 billion, as commodity imports were composed of food and live animals, machinery and tools, and chemical products.

In the countryside, the agriculture includes 1,191,981 agricultural holdings of a total area of 1,609,484 hectares. The arable area is 1,452,438 hectares, while the crop area is 1,306,776 hectares. Oat (though consumed locally because its trading is prohibited) represents a real threat to the agricultural area as its production and cultivated areas have doubled over the last three decades, rising from 7,000 hectares in 1970 to 127,000 hectares in 2005, equivalent to 25% of the irrigated agricultural land. In contrast, coffee cultivation has significantly declined in recent years, as its area decreased from 33,545 hectares in 2002 to 32,260 hectares in 2006. The cultivation of cotton crop areas fell from 27,887 hectares in 2002 to 17,000 in 2006. Such decline has also extended to fruits.

### Class structure

Yemen is a low-income country, as a result of its weak economic and social development. The traditional society with its tribal nature is still a heavy burden on the economy and the state.

The class structure is associated with the economic facts referred to above. The chiefs of hundreds of tribes with their next of kin, comprising about 85% of Yemen's population, constitute an essential component of the propertied-ruling class in Yemen, together with high-ranking officials in the state administration, army, police and others. Many of the tribal leaders and statesmen own private ventures.

On the other side, there are the peasants and agricultural workers in the countryside, and the poor and destitute working and popular classes. There are of course a variety of trends, including political trends representing the interests of the propertied class or seeking to

represent the interests of the working class and the poor. These classes were the backbone of the 2011 revolution, which was triggered by the Yemeni youth, as other countries' revolutions were led by their own young people.

The high rates of inflation, unemployment, youth unemployment and unemployment of women show the extent of deterioration of the economic and social conditions in Yemen, which is beset from inside and outside by "Somalia-ization" factors, as many have warned.

## Historical background of Yemen

We cannot have a general view of modern Yemen without addressing the two political geographies with the historical processes that affected their entire existences. Yemen did not develop within one political and social context - rather it was divided into two parts: South and North.

South Yemen underwent British colonialism and the impact of colonization produced its social and economic systems and helped form parties, trade unions and associations<sup>1</sup>. These all contributed to the struggle against colonialism until the independence of the South, the ascendance of the Left to power and the proclamation of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen<sup>2</sup>. The Left was able to impose its vision on the ground through the constitution, which reflected Leftist thought through legislation supporting workers, peasants and women and promoting social justice<sup>3</sup>. Despite the achievements it realized in the South, the regime was a totalitarian one based on a single party, the Socialist Party, and on a closed political scene characterized by wars

---

1. For more details, see: Al-Mehbashi, pp. 17 ,86 ,93.

2. Aden had witnessed before independence the emergence of leftist and pan-national organizations affiliated to the Arab Nationalist Movement and Marxist thought. South Yemen witnessed a semi-civil war between the Liberation front supported by Jamal Abdul-Nasser and the Leftist Pan-National Front. The Front took over power and experienced a dialogue over identity resulting in the establishment of the Socialist Party and joining the Communist Community. See: Al-Sarraf, p.67.

3. The Constitution of South Yemen represented the essence of Leftist thought by emphasizing the freedom of creed and reflected that thought in its legislations. The articles 1 and 23 emphasized that the State protects the interests of workers, peasants and intellectuals. As pertaining to women, the articles 26 ,27 ,35 and 36 stated on the full equality between women and men in all areas of political, economic and social life.

with North Yemen and by partisan and international conflicts<sup>4</sup>.

On the other hand, North Yemen was subject to the authority of the Imamate<sup>5</sup>, against which the people of the North waged a continued struggle until the triumph of the revolution and the declaration of the Yemen Arab Republic<sup>6</sup>. In practice, there were no sophisticated aspects in the social dimension such as legislation pertaining to women or the activity of trade unions and associations<sup>7</sup>. Generally speaking, the whole society did not achieve the transition from an imamate to a republican regime, until the era of the president Ibrahim al-Hamdi, who tried to discipline the tribes but was finally killed. His death put an end to attempts to establish a civil state, so the patterns of tribal and clan ties remained prevalent in the North<sup>8</sup>, which experienced continued power struggles until Ali Abdullah Saleh took power and established the General People's Congress Party as the ruling party, while banning the activity of other parties<sup>9</sup>.

On the basis of this simplified presentation, one can observe the difference in the nature of the two regimes and in their legislation, which contributed

---

4. We cannot evaluate the Left rule experiment in the South, since it did not stabilize because of conflicts with North Yemen, and between the Socialist and Capitalist camps, as well as the conflict within the Socialist Party that exploded in 1986 and was the worst blow to the Left in Yemen and the rest of the Arab world.

5. The Imamate authority imposed a political isolation on Yemen and the Imam was able to strengthen his power by gaining the sympathy of tribes or by taking their children as hostages in order to guarantee that they would not rebel against him. For more information, see Edgar O'Balance, *Yemen: The Revolution and the War until 1970*, Abdul-Khaliq Muhammad Lashin, Madbouli Bookshop, Cairo, 2nd edition, pp. 6-5.

6. The revolution evolved in 1962 and abolished Imamate rule. The Imamists refused to acknowledge the republic and were supported financially and militarily by KSA, so the war continued till 1970. See: O'Balance, *Revolution and War*.

7. The temporary constitution of the Arab Republic of Yemen, article 17, stated that Yemenis are equal before the law. However, the constitution did not deal with women's empowerment nor community development, and most of its articles were in favor of tribal forces.

8. Many historians agree that the rule of President Ibrahim al-Hamdi (1978-1974) was the best period in North Yemen where the authority of tribes was curbed and the state institutions were built. With his assassination, tribal forces re-dominated the political life of North Yemen.

9. Ali Abdullah Saleh came to power in 1978. He established alliances with tribes, the military and clergy, and established the General People's Congress Party, based on tribal, religious and military leaders.

to the social and economic structure of these countries: a totalitarian quasi-capitalist regime in the North and a leftist totalitarian one in the South. The structure of the Left is a product of these circumstances; it is an absolute ruler in the South and an oppressed opposition in the North.

The unification of the two regimes occurred in 1990<sup>10</sup>, followed by the drafting of the constitution<sup>11</sup>, which emphasized political and party pluralism. The regime at this stage was based on a coalition government of the two ruling parties (Yemeni Socialist Party in the South and the People's Congress in the North). That period witnessed political openness and a growing freedom of the press and the formation of political parties<sup>12</sup>. Soon, a crisis between the two regime sides escalated despite the holding of parliamentary elections<sup>13</sup>, and reached its peak with Ali Abdullah Saleh declaring war on the South, followed by Salem Al-Beed announcing separation<sup>14</sup>. The ensuing war did serious damage to the balance of power, which was broken down in favor of the victorious powers represented by Saleh's regime, his party and its allied traditional forces, which amended the constitution unilaterally<sup>15</sup>. The

---

10. The integration unity between Ali Abdullah Saleh (President of the Arab Republic of Yemen and chief of the General People's Congress Party), and Ali Salim Al-Beed (President of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, secretary-general of the Yemeni Socialist Party) on 22 May 1990.

11. The referendum on the constitution was held in May 1991. The articles 1 and 7 of the Yemen constitution stated the establishment of a pluralistic political system.

12. Within this context, Hudson maintains that «on the official level, the structures needed for an integrated ruling system were formed: the constitution, the parliament, elections, and integrated bureaucratic institutions. So, the press flourished, parties and trade unions were established, and conferences convened. Hudson et al, p. 41.

13. The first parliamentary elections were held in Yemen in April 1993. The National Congress won 123 seats, the Reform Party won 62 and the Socialist Party won 56 seats. After these elections, a government coalition was formed of the three parties, but conflicts continued and thus the Congress Party made an alliance with the Reform Party and removed the Yemeni Socialist Party, which was seen by religious forces as a non-religious party.

14. The political elites tried to solve the crisis, and signed the Covenant and Agreement document. However, Ali Abdullah Saleh revoked the agreement and declared war against the South, leading Ali Salim Al-Beed to announce separation. So the war broke up in 1994. For more details, see: *The Breaking Point*.

15. The amendments in the constitution following the 1994 war represented a victory for the regime of Saleh and his party, with alliance with the religious Reform Party, as the form of presidency was changed from a presidential council to a president and his deputy.

regime, obtaining a majority in the elections, reinforced its authority over all aspects of the state, assigning its members to state positions previously held by opposition political forces, specifically the Yemeni Socialist Party. This stage witnessed a wave of political assassinations<sup>16</sup>.

Thus, the regime succeeded in hollowing out political life and hitting the left-wing parties in order to eliminate the emergence of an opposition from within their forces. Parliamentary and presidential elections were held<sup>17</sup>, but the political situation was a continuation of the post-war period and the consecration of the control of the ruling party together with a partial (though deep) control of the Religious Reform Party.

Facing the regime's repressive policy, Leftist parties sought to organize in a broader political frame forming a short-lived supreme council for co-ordination between the parties, followed by the coalition Joint Meeting coalition which constituted a political opposition front against Saleh's regime<sup>18</sup>. At the same time, another opposition coalition was launched in the South, when the Southern Movement emerged as a new political player<sup>19</sup>. However, the continued war and sectarian conflict which were moderated by the regime, including the Saada

---

16. This period witnessed a closure of a number of newspapers and political assassination of Socialist Party members by Islamists loyal to the regime.

17. Parliamentary elections were held in 1994 resulting in the People's Congress attaining 43.1% of votes, followed by the Reform Party (23.4%). The only party to boycott elections was the Socialist Party. The presidential elections were held in 1999, when the people's Congress and the Reform Party supported Ali Abdullah Saleh, whereas the Socialist Party and the Nasserist Organization boycotted the elections.

18. The political opposition consisted of the Socialist Party, the Nasserist Organization and some small parties. However, the opposition lacking organized action, was dispersed by the regime, and formed in 1999 the Supreme Co-ordination council consisting of the Socialist Party, the Nasserist Organization, the Socialist Arab Baath Party, the Haq Party and Union of People's forces. Later, on 6 February 2003, the Joint Meeting was formed of all the formerly mentioned parties, in addition to the religious Reform Party and the Septemberist Party. The Joint Meeting participated in the presidential elections of 2006 with a single nominee, Faisal ben Shamlan, who obtained 21.82% of votes.

19. The South Movement: a popular movement initiated in the Southern provinces, as a legal movement demanding the return of fired Southern soldiers to their previous positions and removal of the 1994 war effects. However, the regime suppressed the movement's demonstrations and arrested its leaders, so it turned into a political movement demanding the restoration of the South state and independence from Sanaa. For more details, see: *The Breaking Point*, p. 1.

wars<sup>20</sup>, led to the escalation of opposition and demands for reform policies. Saleh refused to respond to these demands and insisted on an extension of his rule<sup>21</sup>.

## Section II: The concept of the Left

The concept of the Left is no longer a pure essence with an agreed-upon definition according to objective determinants that are similar in all countries, due to the many historical factors, internal and external crises suffered by the Left as an ideology and then as an experiment. Therefore, the Left has been re-molded in the form of the environment in which it developed, becoming the political organization of the downtrodden classes of the poor, the marginalized, the workers and peasants as well as intellectuals. It is on this basis that we can devise a definition of left-wing parties and movements in Yemen as parties and movements with a socialist orientation that adopt social justice issues and follow a progressive ideology, especially concerning the issues of women's emancipation and the relationship between religion and the state. Thus the concept of "Left" came to represent an intellectual and political trend which seeks to radically change society to a situation of greater equality among its members<sup>22</sup>.

Many political Yemeni political parties and movements define themselves as "Left" such as the Yemeni Socialist Party, and pan-national parties such as the Nasserist Organization, the Unionist Nasserist Grouping, and national socialist, such as the Socialist Baath Party (affiliated with both the Iraqi and Syrian factions), as well as a number of trade unions,

---

20. The Saada Wars were between Saleh's regime and the Believing Youth Movement (BYM), known as the Houthis. The regime accuses the Houthis of attempts to revive the Imamate rule while the BYM accuses the regime of sectarian discrimination against it. Until now, Saada is still one of the focal points of sectarian conflict in Yemen.

21. The second amendments of the constitution in February 2001 stated the extension of the presidency term to seven years and were enacted in 2006. When the new term was about to expire, Saleh insisted on another extended term which the Joint Meeting rejected. So the situation exploded.

22. Such case is not applicable only to Yemen, as Leftism in the West refers to socialism or socialist democracy or social liberalism in Europe and the USA. Thus, the concept of Left has developed as a result of the surrounding social environment.

associations and youth movements. However, if we apply the real standards for the Left to these forces and review their discourse, terms of membership, the issues and practices they adopt in reality and their relationship with religious and political authorities, we would find real differences between them.

## Determinant criteria for the Left

The determinant criteria for the definition of the Left are represented mainly by its intellectual discourse and its adoption of the issues of social justice and equality, the emancipation of the individual from the domination of social classes and the exploitation of capital and not being swayed by religious thought, and politically by the adoption by these forces of political and social tools (laws and culture) which help liberate workers, marginalized groups and women from the dominance of values of the right-wing society, and defining the relationship with the religious authority.

However, according to our reading, there is a difference in theory and practice between socialist parties and pan-national parties, leading to a legitimate question of whether the parties with pan-national background are really leftist, or rather parties to the left of the right, taking into consideration their definition, programs and political action. In Yemen, it is extremely difficult to answer such a question about the extent to which the nationalist parties are truly Leftist, or even to what extent the current Left is Leftist, following so many changes in their intellectual discourse, programs and policies. This makes it necessary to tackle the characteristics of the Yemeni Left as follows:

- Change in the intellectual discourse of these parties in parallel to change in political reality. Analysis of the literature of the intellectual discourse of socialist Leftist and pan-nationalist parties reveals a difference in their understanding and expression of the Left. The Socialist Party was based, since its inception, on Scientific Socialism and a Marxist approach to the analysis of society and internationalism, while its intellectual discourse changed in other historical stages. The intellectual discourse of the pan-nationalist parties, even so-called socialist parties such as the Arab Socialist Baath party and the Nasserist Organization, is based on the Islamized pan-national trend, and rejects internationalist thought, deriving its reference from the Islamic religion.
- The relationship with religious authority. The Left views religion as part of the repressive authority that relies on holy religions to slander

people and distance them from understanding their realities and the requirements of their development. From this perspective, we find that the relationship of all the political parties with religion is cautious, and they have refrained from criticizing religious authority in a direct and explicit manner. With the exception of the Socialist Party, which neutralized that authority in governing the South, none of the other political socialist or pan-national parties has taken a critical position vis-a-vis religious authority. The regime in unified Yemen was keen to emphasize the Islamic identity of those parties that have accepted its authority. And while the Socialist Party has taken a different position toward religious authority, thus exposing itself to charges of apostasy, other pan-nationalist and socialist parties have distanced themselves from these intellectual battles on the pretext of not creating an excuse for the right to attack them politically<sup>23</sup>.

- Totalitarianism. The socialist and nationalist parties in Yemen were based on totalitarianism, whether in ideology or in their project for state-building. They have exercised totalitarianism in different ways, either directly as was the case of the Socialist Party during its rule in the South, or through affiliation with Arab parties whose rule was characterized by totalitarianism<sup>24</sup>.

Hence it is clear that there is a significant divergence between pan-nationalist parties and left-wing parties as to the intellectual discourse or as to dealing with issues pertaining to the Left. This leads us to consider the Socialist Party to be the clearest expression of the Left. The party, as a model for the Left in Yemen, will be the focus of the next part of our study, which will also touch on other parties such as the Nasserist Organization.

## Constituency of the Left

The sacred triangle of power in Yemen is the tribe, the army and religious authorities. Thus, the constituency of the Left includes all individuals outside this triangle (including ordinary individuals belonging to the

---

23. According to the Parties' Law, the regime stipulated that all parties have to define themselves as Muslim and the parties accepted that. The issue was controversial: some viewed the stipulation as a respect for religious feelings, while others considered it as a concession for religious forces an political opportunism.

24. Most Leftist thinkers reject the totalitarian experience of some parties, stressing that the Left cannot be depicted as totalitarian on the basis of totalitarian practice of Leftist regimes.

tribe, the army and “believers”); however, the actual electoral base is less than those belonging to parties that call themselves Leftist, as evidenced by election results<sup>25</sup>.

On the other hand, the leadership of many unions was affiliated politically or intellectually with the Left, such as unions of workers, doctors, academics, journalists, and the Union of Yemeni Writers and others. However, the blows suffered by the Leftist parties through history and the regime’s breeding of co-opting trade unions and federations led to such unions ceasing to be a constituency of the Left.

### **Bases of the Left**

The main base of the left is the party bases of the Socialist Party and the pan-nationalism and socialist pan-nationalist parties, followed by trade unions, Leftist and students movements and some civil society organizations and gatherings of intellectuals and academics, together with the rest of individuals outside the sacred triangle of power. However, the organizational weakness of these parties makes this broad base politically fragile and prone to be used by the Right, which is the case in reality.

### **Social roots of Leftist parties and movements**

Despite the different circumstances in which the Yemeni Left was formed in the North and the South, it can be said that roots of the Left in Yemen are deep and date back more than half a century, since the left-wing movement began to take shape in Yemen with Leftist movements’ emergence in the Arab world. Also, the pan-nationalist parties formed in Yemen immediately after their formation in the political and intellectual center of the Arab countries (Egypt, Iraq, Syria). Following their initiation in the North, thanks to the ruling regime there, they began acting in the South, which had experienced a political openness that contributed to the emergence of many political parties, both Leftist or branches of the pan-national parties, such as the Arab Socialist Baath Party (Iraqi and Syrian faction) and others. Remarkably, there was an escalation

---

25. This can be proved in light of the results of the recent parliamentary elections of 2003, as the parties calling themselves leftist obtained only 11 out of 301 seats, whereas the Right got 229 seats for the General People’s Congress, 45 for the Reform Party and 14 seats for the independents most of whom joined the Congress Party.

of the Left movement in the South and the emergence of the Pan-National Front, comprised of political factions that played a leading role in the liberation of the South, then assumed power and resolved its identity issue through the establishment of a Marxist-oriented Socialist Party, which ruled the South. Also the Left had a strong presence in the North (the Yemen Arab Republic), especially in the central regions, and played a role in the fight against the existing regime. The trade unions and federations are deeply rooted in political action and express the demands of workers, especially in the South. However, they were repressed following Yemeni unification, and many unions were designed to serve the regime, not the demands of the working class.

### **The active Leftist parties**

The active Leftist parties include the traditional Left, which consists of the socialist and pan-nationalist parties and the trade union parties, and the new Left; that is the forces which can be considered Leftist either because their goals adopt issues of the Left or for their direct or indirect association with traditional left-wing parties. It is historically true that all Leftist parties – despite the dispersion of their efforts - have played an important role in creating the grounds for struggle against the Saleh regime, through sit-ins, protests and civil disobedience, and strengthened their presence in cities and countryside living in extreme poverty, many years before the outbreak of the revolution. It was therefore natural that these same forces are to be the engine of popular uprisings during the Yemeni revolution in 2011, which contributed, like the other Arab Spring revolutions, in the creation of a left-wing momentum in the Yemeni street. This was due to the Yemeni Left gaining a romantic revolutionary value through being the only forces excluded and persecuted by the regime. In addition, the goals of the revolution were the goals of the Left par excellence: the Leftist parties had called for the achievement of social justice and equality, which contributed to the emergence of left-wing youth movements. Some of these movements came out of the traditional left-wing parties and others established their short-lived political experience away from these parties, which resorted at certain stage to a political compromise. Those left-wing movements, however, continued to express the thought and spirit of the Left. Prominent among these movements were The Youth for Change, Step Down, Modernity Forum and the Civil Alliance of Youth Revolution, we will tackle below as being a new Left.

## Section III: Historical Background

### Of the Yemeni Left and its current status

To facilitate the reading of the history of the Yemeni Left and its political presence, we shall divide it into three types: old, traditional and new. The old Left is named so because of its long and rich experience, and because it had been in power before turning to opposition, or it had been acting secretly then began to act in public. The traditional Left is named so because it has not undergone a qualitative transition as to its intellectual or political action; the Socialist Party is the official sign of the traditional Left, as would the Nasserist Organization as a pan-nationalist party close to the Left line. The new or renewed Left is expressed by some youth currents within the left-wing parties and Leftist movements that have emerged during the Revolution.

### First: The Traditional Left

#### **The Yemeni Socialist Party**

Its origins date back to the Pan-National Front, a political organization that resisted the British colonialism and disseminated its influence as the Front for the Liberation of South Yemen (the Liberation Front). It took power after independence, announcing the establishment of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. It represents a line of Communist ideology, following the unification of the South Yemeni groups in 1965. The Front witnessed internal conflicts to determine its ideology, ending with the founding of the Socialist Party with a Marxist orientation.

The Socialist Party was founded in 1978 as a party with a socialist doctrine, adopting the method of scientific socialism. The party has undergone ideological revisions, the most important of which were the one following the events of 1986 when it approved central democracy, and the other after the 1994 war, when it embraced democratic socialism. The latest transformation related to its view of the principles of the constitution submitted to the National Dialogue, when the party adopted the formula "Sharia is the source of all legislation" in a political decision without intellectual review.

### Political system

The Socialist Party defines itself as a social democratic party<sup>26</sup>, which exercises political and intellectual influence through democratic means, and is guided in its policy-making by scientific methods in the study and analysis of the phenomena of concrete reality, at its various economic, social, political and cultural levels, and dealing with the various currents of social and human thought that believe in freedom, democracy and social justice, human rights and peace, and the activities of the Socialist International, etc. The party confirms its support for women to participate actively in public affairs, enabling them to exercise all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

### Organizational structure

The organizational structure of the party rests upon “the foundations and principles of democracy and conscious discipline in its interior life, and accommodates the diversity and plurality of opinion and the right to initiation, diligence, intellectual creativity, without prejudice to the party’s by-rules and political program”. The organizational structure of the party at the grassroots level is formed of two main frameworks:

- The electoral organizational framework<sup>27</sup>
- The professional-residential organizational<sup>28</sup> framework

These formations are composed of smaller organizational units (base organizations - partisan groups), under the leadership and supervision of the committees of party organizations in local constituencies (the polling stations), which rank lowest in the organizational structure of the party.

---

26. The Yemeni Socialist Party is the party for unity, democracy, modernization and social justice. See: the By-Laws of the Party approved at its fifth conference in 1966.

27. The party’s organizations were formed as follows: the party organization in the province, followed directly by the party organizations in constituencies, according to the organizational formations in the province.

28. The leadership committees of the party organizational structure are the following: -1 the general meeting of party organization; -2 the ordinary or extra-ordinary conference of deputies, or the enlarged election meeting; -3 the general party’s conference on the national level, and the national party council during the period between two ordinary conferences; -4the central committee and the higher committee for financial control and inspection; -5the party organization committees in provinces, directories and constituencies; -6 financial control and inspection committees in provinces, directories and constituencies.

### Goals

Its goals are to struggle to embody and enhance the principles of democracy and of a multi-party system, and equal citizenship and to strengthen the foundations of civil society, and freedoms and human rights. The party is committed to peaceful means of struggle to achieve its objectives<sup>29</sup>.

### The Nasserist Organization

The Nasserist Movement in Yemen dates back to the early years of the Egyptian revolution of 23 July 1952. However, the movement did not emerge as a political organization until the mid-1960s when the Nasserist Organization was founded as a unified organization in Yemen (North and South) and as a branch of the pan-nationalist organization founded by Nasser under the name of the Arab Vanguard.

The path of the Nasserist movement in Yemen can be summed up in three phases: the mainstream current phase<sup>30</sup>, the political and intellectual current stage<sup>31</sup>, and the stage of the Nasserist Organization<sup>32</sup>. On 25 December 1965, the branch of the Arab Vanguard organization was formed to include all such formations as an extension of the Pan-national Organization of the unified Arab movement, and branches were formed in many regions of Yemen. However, members of the organization were oppressed in South Yemen as a result of conflicts between pan-nationalist and Marxist currents in the Arab region, including North Yemen, the most severe of which took place during 1977 and 1978. To face such repression, the organization took several names to protect its members<sup>33</sup>.

---

29. See: The By-Laws of the Yemeni Socialist Party.

30. The general current phase began with 23 July revolution, with the current focusing on national and liberation struggle in Yemen.

31. The phase of intellectual and political current, initiated by Nasserites transforming from a pan-national revolutionary liberation attitude to a political and intellectual one, specially following the July socialist resolutions, the Damascus separation from the unity state and issuance of the Nasserist Convention (May 1962). This phase witnessed the emergence of organizations calling themselves Nasserites.

32. It was initiated in the mid 1960s with the formation of the Arab Vanguard organization on 25 December 1965.

33. Including the Arab Socialist Union, the Yemeni People's Union and the 13 June Front whose formation was approved as a popular framework to restore the 13 June Movement toppled on 11 October 1977. Such restoration has been temporarily achieved by the uprising on 15 October 1978. The organization formed in 1985 another sector known as the Nasserist Unionist.

On 15 December 1989, the Nasserist Unionist People's Organization announced its public action for the first time, calling for support to the march towards unity, and initiated internal dialogues with parties during the period 1989-1991. Such efforts resulted in the formation of the Popular Unionist Nasserist Organization as a framework for all Nasserists, and a committee was formed to prepare for the eighth national conference, which was held in November 1993, the first conference held in public.

### Political system

The Nasserist Organization<sup>34</sup> defines itself as a national democratic movement, with a pan-national starting point and Nasserist thought, which derives its doctrinal and philosophical bases from Islam, and defines its objectives as being freedom, socialism and unity<sup>35</sup>.

### Goals

The goals are: achieving the objectives of the Yemeni revolution, the consolidation of democracy, building a state of law and order, realizing social justice in defense of the unity of Yemen, on the road to comprehensive Arab unity in the light of an Arab homeland free of all forms of colonial submission and all manifestations of dependency.

### Organizational structure

The Nasserist Organization is based upon a range of organizational foundations: organizational democracy, criticism and self-criticism, objectivity of organizational relationships, binding commitment, collective leadership and the unity of the organization. The organizational structure consists of two levels, an organizational level and a central level. The organizational level includes five sub-levels: the basic unit, the center, the region, the branch and the central level. The central level includes five leadership bodies: the committee of the central, the committee of the region, the leadership of the branch, the general secretariat and the central committee<sup>36</sup>.

---

34. The internal bylaws of the Nasserite Popular Unionist Party, approved by the eighth general national conference of the party held in Sanaa 23-27 November 1993, amended by the 10th general national conference held in Sanaa 23-27 February, 2005.

35. See: The By-Laws, the 10th national conference, 2005.

36. The leadership organs are defined as follows: -1 committee of the center; -2 the regional committee; -3 the branch leadership; -4 the general secretariat; -5 the central committee.

There is no mention of youth and women in the organization's rules of procedure, except in two paragraphs concerning two party entities: the Unionist Youth Organization<sup>37</sup> and the Unionist Women's Union<sup>38</sup>, whose tasks are identified without any mention of the priority of youth and women in party activity or getting them participate in political decision.

## Parliamentary and political participation of the Left parties

With the unification of Yemen, Leftist parties engaged in a political scene marked by a degree of openness. The Socialist Party participated in a coalition government with the ruling party in the North until 1993, and the leftist parties participated in the parliamentary elections held in April 1993. However, after the 1994 war, the regime suppressed left-wing parties, specifically the Socialist Party, which has become after leaving power the actual representative of the opposition. It boycotted the parliamentary elections of 1997 and the presidential election, but the boycott did not make a difference to the political reality at the time. The Leftist parties participated in the parliamentary elections of 2003, but it can be said that the chances of left-wing parties winning parliament seats remained low, with the exception of the 1993 elections.

Later on, the left-wing parties resorted to a new tactic of making political alliances with other parties, contributing to the formation of the Supreme Council for Coordination of the Opposition<sup>39</sup>. The Socialist Party adopted the formation of the Joint Meeting Coalition, which took part in local elections and, in the presidential election of 2006, supported the candidate of the coalition, becoming the official opposition until Saleh's departure, the election of a new president and the formation of a consensus government involving the left-wing parties. Many observers agree that the 1993 elections were the most democratic, when the Socialist Party got 18.5% of votes and the Nasserist Organization obtained 2.3% of votes. The Socialist Party

---

37. The Unionist Youth Organization is a youth mass organization for training the organization youth, promoting the Nasserist thought among the youth and educating them on national, pan-national and Islamic spirit,

38. The Unionist women Union acts on implementing the organization's program for women.

39. Jarrah Omar, the deputy general secretary of the Socialist Party, played a major role in the formation of the Supreme Council for Coordination of the Opposition and was assassinated by one of the Islamists.

refrained from participating in the 1997 elections and the presidential elections of 1999, whereas the Nasserist Organization participated in the parliamentary and boycotted the presidential elections. In the parliamentary elections of 2003, the Socialist Party got 3.8% of votes and the Nasserist Organization obtained 1.9% of votes.

## **The Left-wing Parties' view of reforms and internal and external issues**

The Leftist parties realized since the beginning of unification that there was a defect in the political system that enabled one side to remove other political forces. They saw the need to fix that defect through the Covenant and Agreement Document, a political agreement signed in Jordan in January 1994 to resolve the crisis between Ali Abdullah Saleh and his deputy, Ali Salem Al-Beed.

It is the most important political document in the history of Yemen, through which the Socialist Party applied pressure to reform the regime, and was adopted by the various political forces. The document focused on all core reforms, including the need to take security<sup>40</sup> and military measures to reduce one-sided control of the army and security, and to take measures relating to decentralization to achieve a balance of power and a fair distribution of wealth<sup>41</sup>, and political and administrative reforms<sup>42</sup>, and the amendment of the constitution<sup>43</sup>. Despite the comprehensiveness of the document and its potential for extracting Yemen from its crisis, the regime did not comply with the document but rather declared war on its political partners in 1994.

The war produced a dysfunctional situation, so that the regime carried out increased repressive measures against the left-wing parties. In this situation, a new reformist idea to address the turbulence of war

---

40. These measures included evacuating armed groups from cities, and integrating such groups into the Army, cessation of conscription, armament and mobilization, and arresting the suspects for assassinations etc.

41. The measures included the establishment of a local government based on a new administrative distribution of Yemen consisting of 7-4 administrative units, and reforms pertaining to the local government etc.

42. These reforms consisted in forming a presidential council of five members to be elected by the parliament and Shura council and not to engage in any partisan activity etc.

43. The current constitution is to be effective until approving the amendments for implementing the document's articles.

emerged and was adopted by a political current within the Socialist Party which called for “reforming the unity path” and mitigating the effects of war, and sought to pressure the regime to implement the document’s items. As a result of the inability of the left-wing parties to pressure the regime to implement reforms, they proceeded, through their involvement in the “Joint Meeting” later, to submit another reformist document called the “Document of National Salvation”<sup>44</sup>. It confirmed a number of reforms, the most important of which came under the “Stop the Collapse” item, together with reforms in the state, including: local government with full powers, separation of powers and independence of the judiciary, the civil and military establishments, electoral reforms, addressing the Southern issue and the issue of Saada, etc.

The regime did not respond to the reform demands contained in the document at a time when conditions were beginning to mature for a popular revolution with the continued wars of the regime in more than one Yemeni area. The Leftist parties realized the impossibility of reforming the regime and that the solution lay in the hands of the street. So, through their statements they called upon the people to reject injustice and the policy of impoverishment. The left-wing intellectuals contributed through their writings to revolutionizing the street. Then, the left-wing parties of the Joint Meeting called for protests in the framework of the “People’s Uprising” which took place a few days before of the beginning of the Youth Revolution of 2011.

### **Decision-making especially with regard to youth, women and party members outside the capital**

The decision-making process within the left-wing parties is confined to leaders who do not enable their supporters to participate in the process. Furthermore, the organizational frameworks within these parties do not give young people or women easy access to leadership positions. In this context the activist Rashid Mohammed criticizes the monopoly by the Socialist Party meta-leaderships of the political decision-making

---

44. A document issued by the bloc of the joint meeting parties with the participation of tribal parties and national figures.

process, stressing that this is done arbitrarily<sup>45</sup>. While the activist Khalid al-Hamadani believes that the General Secretariat of the Nasserist Organization is the leadership level that mostly marginalizes the youth<sup>46</sup>.

With regard to the role of women in the decision-making process within the left-wing parties, though these parties support the presence and political representation of women, the rate of women's involvement is low compared to the religious parties, thereby hindering the possibility for women to play a part in party political decision-making<sup>47</sup>.

## Strategic ways to implement Leftist policies

The Yemeni Left has to begin an intellectual review of its political and economic tools and of its relationship with the popular classes so that it can determine the strategy that would be realized through these parties' participation in the drafting of a constitution that reflects the interests of the poorest classes and expresses Leftist economic policies that protect the individual from the cruelty of neo-liberalism<sup>48</sup>.

---

45. To enrich this study, we posed the question about the role of young people in the party decision-making to a number of activists, including Rashid Mohammed - of the Socialist Party - who said that decision-making is carried out by top leaders in most bodies, basing themselves on the right delegated to them the party's conferences and organizations. But such delegation is carried out arbitrarily without studies or consultation with the party members, or even with the relevant bodies within the party on the part of these leaders controlled by moods or by the nature of the leadership relationship with the other, not the relationship that binds leadership to the membership they represent. The leadership controls everything and its performance lacks democracy. Thus, the youth has no role in party decision-making.

46. The activist Khaled Al-Hamadani of the Nasserist Organization has the same opinion, saying that «the general secretariat of the Organization is the leadership level most marginalizing the youth and other sectors, as well as the lower levels. It often monopolizes the decision-making process, marginalizing the youth and women».

47. The activist Sally Adeeb believes that «the female party members are the most fortunate in the villages or cities if they wanted to participate in any political party. However, the type of women participation and the extent to which the party leadership would respond are in doubt. Usually, female members of the party enjoy a high-ranking status in the party's programs and ideas, however, the participation of the female members in the Socialist Party's practical and intellectual programs is quite a different story; the party's ideas transform from an international course into a reactionary one.

48. The constitution committee in Yemen was formed in accordance with National Dialogue outputs, but notably the Leftist parties were not aware of the fact that the formulation of the constitution is the real battle for implementing Leftist policies.

## **Positions toward political Islam and methods of dealing with various groups**

The Yemeni Left has been in direct confrontation with the forces of political Islam since the 1990s, when they were the main ally of the Saleh regime, the stick the regime used to exclude and intimidate left-wing parties. Despite the recent political rapprochement between the Right and Left in Yemen through the Joint Meeting bloc, this experiment did not seek to create a rapprochement between the Left and political Islam. Rather, such rapprochement was confined to senior leaders while those forces continued to reproduce their discourse of excommunication, which is hostile to the Left, intellectuals and women, and to the idea of a civil state and democracy. This is what drives us to evaluate the performance of the Yemeni Left in this experiment as a performance that lacks effectiveness in dealing with these forces. It was only logical that it has often led to concessions made by the Left at the expense of its values and morals. One of the most important means of neutralizing the parties of political Islam was to make alliances with civil forces to create a political and societal balance that would reduce the radicalization of the political Islam forces, and to get the Left forces involved in discussions and debates illustrating the thought of the Left and its positions - which are not against religion, but rather against the use of religion for political purposes.

## **Alternatives in the areas of economic policies, environment and sustainability**

There is no choice but to re-evaluate and re-formulate the economic policy of the Left, according to the standards of democracy and economic competition. The Yemeni Left no longer adopts a social welfare system, but rather attempts to achieve social justice through the instruments of economic competition, and seeks economic tools to achieve “the taxation structure especially direct taxes, that is income taxes, to bridge the huge gap between the rich and the poor; viewing the state budget as an economic tool not just a tool of financial monitoring of incomes, expenditures, deficit and cash issuance; building the economy as much as possible on the basis of joint-stock companies, and reconsidering the monopolistic individual or family projects as formulated to damage the complementary relationship between the economy and society; the importance of co-operative work which should be promoted within the community; continued state intervention in the vital sectors where wealth is concentrated, with a view to founding a productive investment sector instead of a speculative or parasitic one; heading

towards legislative and legal structures so as to achieve independence of the judiciary and legislation; supporting legislation which ensures the political, social and economic rights of women as to eliminate any discrimination that is abusive to them or detracts their status or hurts their interests; paying attention to legislation which protects the family and its cohesion, children and their rights to health and education, and which protect those with special needs; working with the youth and preparing them to bear their responsibilities in all fields; paying attention of workers, agricultural producers and other productive and innovative groups, and adopting their vocational rights in harmony with other civic rights"<sup>49</sup>.

Because of the weakness of political and democratic systems, accountability mechanisms and freedom of expression, the fragility of rule of law and judicial corruption, the capitalist economic policies have led to the emergence of local capitalist sectors by proxy of global big companies taking control of natural resources and monopoly of the national capital which is supposed to be a national wealth owned by the people and distributed fairly among them. "Although economic growth is the essence of development and the driving force of its process, yet the building of political institutions and activating their role and the encouragement of democratic practices all represent one of the basic indicators of the level of development achieved by the state. Education as well represents the real starting point for development, given its role in human development and upgrading the capabilities, knowledge and skills of individuals, and empowering them"<sup>50</sup>.

In return, it is essential that the Left adopts the demands of economic policies based on human development and social justice, whereas human development is a means of social-economic policy, able to achieve development and justice. Therefore, the integration of all aspects of development and the environment as well as the achievement of sustainable development represent the best option for the Left today; upon which economic, social and cultural policies must be built<sup>51</sup>.

---

49. Dr Yassin Saeed Nu'man, the secretary-general of the Yemeni Socialist Party, a paper submitted to the Yemeni Left Conference on Social Justice, Yemen, Sanaa, 29-28 August, 2013.

50. Wamid Shakir, The Role of Civil Society in the Struggle for Social Justice, a paper submitted to the Yemeni Left Conference on Social Justice, Yemen, Sanaa, 29-28 August, 2013.

51. Ibid.

## **Alliances and Political Fronts which could Include Other Leftist Actors**

The 2011 revolution has created a historic opportunity for Leftist parties to support and strengthen the presence of the Left, especially with the emergence of new Leftist actors such as Leftist youth movements, civil society organizations, intellectuals and modern mass media activists. The Left forces could have been able to combine their efforts through making direct or indirect alliances with new Leftist actors to support, develop and disseminate left-wing ideas. However, the traditional Left did not benefit from this opportunity, being entrenched in the Joint Meeting alliance.

## **The positioning of the Leftist actors under popular uprisings in the Arab world**

The Left, as parties and individuals, played a pivotal role in the Yemeni revolution. It was left-wing youth who led the demonstrations in support of the revolutions of Tunisia and Egypt, actions which were to initiate the revolution. Though the initiative by the young leftists who led the street was not initiated by a party decision, it was served by the party in the recruitment and build-up process. That initiative also benefited in the field of media and communication and co-ordination from the modest means and expertise of individuals within the scope of their relations with parties. However, the great and pivotal role played by the Left in the revolution was due to the efforts of individuals in the first place, where some rural areas in Yemen formed new centers for Leftist thought because of deteriorating economic conditions and the activities of Leftist parties there.

## **Second: New or refurbished Left**

We use the term “refurbished Left” to define two groups: first, the youth current within the left-wing parties, which called for reform and renewal, but failed to accomplish its goals because of resistance. Second, some youth movements that emerged at the beginning of the revolution, which can be considered Left-wing movements because of their association with left-wing parties or their Leftist leadership or their discourse was Leftist, based on equality, democracy and social justice. Though many of these left-wing movements have disappeared, and some integrated into a coalition far from the Left, we will in this study deal with the Civil Alliance of the Youth Revolution as the most continued expression of the new Left.

## The Civil Coalition of Youth Revolution

### Political system

The Civil Coalition of Youth Revolution is a revolutionary movement formed in the Change Square in Sanaa during the Yemeni Revolution<sup>52</sup>. The coalition is comprised of 52 groupings, numbering more than 10,000 people. Its structure is based on individual membership, with 10-member groups, each of which has a headperson and a deputy. The headperson is the representative of the group, a member of the provincial council and a delegate to elect the General Secretariat. The structure is based on democracy, transparency, the system of 10-member groups and women's representation in the leadership organs shall be 30% at least<sup>53</sup>.

### Organizational Structure

The Coalition structure consists of: the 10-member group, the Provincial Council, the Provincial Secretariat, the General Assembly of the province, and the Supreme Council<sup>54</sup>. The Civil Coalition acts according to the "principle of decentralization in the actions of the Alliance", and "the formation of Coalition bodies and rotating leadership positions through the election."

### Goals

The creation of a civilian entity exercising an active role in influencing the revolutionary and political decision so as to achieve the two goals of overthrowing the regime and building a democratic modern civil state. The coalition struggles to "establish a civil state which consciously interact with the modern age, and based on the rule of citizenship, culture of human rights, social justice, political pluralism, freedom of opinion and expression, and the peaceful transfer of power."

---

52. The Alliance was founded in March 2011 by youth and politicians who had played a role in igniting the revolution in Sanaa; and its activity expanded to many provinces.

53. The Civil Alliance reorganizes in -10member group.

54. The ten-member group is the basic unit of the Alliance; it consists of ten members who elect their own headperson and deputy.

- The province council consists of the heads of the -10member groups in the province.

- The province secretariat is the leadership elected by the province council, and is entrusted with managing the Alliance activities.

- The general assembly consists of all the founding and affiliated members in each province.

- The supreme council is the higher leadership of the Alliance on the national level, and is elected by the province secretariat.

### **Political activity of the civil alliance**

The Civil Alliance acted as a Leftist movement during the revolution according to the circumstances brought about by the reality of the arena. It began to form a number of committees, including a revolutionary committee for organizing daily protests, a media committee for the formulation of press releases, a legal committee for monitoring abuses against protesters, and a cultural committee for holding educational lectures and seminars and printing daily publications to explain the goals of the Alliance. The Civil Alliance played an important role in organizing such committees in the Change Square in Sanaa and in forming branches in various provinces to unite with the revolutionary efforts in the squares. Thanks to its Leftist slogans emphasizing equality and social justice, the Civil Alliance was able to attract many young people, and to mobilize the public and media through organizing mass demonstrations not welcomed by political parties, especially for its principled position of the GCC initiative<sup>55</sup>.

### **The Civil Alliance perception of reforms and internal and external issues**

The Civil Alliance expressed its perception of reforms at the beginning of the revolution through a political document. The most prominent of its objectives were the demand for toppling the regime by means of peaceful and civil struggle; establishing a modern civil state based on democracy; rejection of violence and conflict, and calling for the neutrality of the armed forces and security services. The Alliance demanded a parliamentary system with a relative list in the elections, taking into account the form of the new state and emphasizing the separation of the three powers, the full independence of the judiciary, a democratically elected parliament which plays an active regulatory and legislative role, and the renunciation of violence and terrorism. It also focused on removing the causes of terror, and protecting the revolution and its gains against any attempt to divert its course or goals, or strip it of its modernist and democratic content<sup>56</sup>. By virtue of its nature as a mass movement, the Civil Alliance focused on mass action and demonstrations as a major political means to achieve a national decision in addition to expanding its alliances. However, due to changes

---

55. The Civil Alliance views the Gulf Initiative as a stumbling block for the revolution and calls for protests. <http://www.yemenat.net/news12441.html>

56. For more details, see: The Draft Document of the Civil Alliance <http://www.yemenat.net/news12523.html>

in the complex political reality of Yemen, the Civil Alliance was unable to develop a project to ensure its continuity, so some of its constituents have integrated into the Save the Revolution Front alliance which was not Leftist, though the Leftist movements within the Front were the most effective. Though the Civil Alliance had integrated within the Front, the Coalition was one of the prominent left-wing movements in the Yemeni political scene during the revolution.

The fading of Leftist movements and lack of continuity need a more detailed study. Generally speaking, we can identify a number of features that characterized Leftist movements in Yemen, including:

- Association with an event or a political stage, coupled with the absence of an accurate perception of long-term strategies. Such movements quickly get lost in a dilemma they could not resolve, because of their inability to define their priorities.
- They form with much momentum, but it quickly fades.
- The distribution of tasks within the movement according to personal whims, not according to efficiency, so the performance of some aspects of the movement, such as media or mobilization, is characteristically weak and limited.
- The enlisting of independents, the focus on issues of consensus and the dilution of ideological discourse, thus making their discourse acceptable to a wider audience.
- They are formed by individual initiatives, but the decision-making often remains in the hands of their leaders.
- Their members are able to invent activities, but lack financial funding to ensure their continuity.
- The movements address the intrusion or guidance by political forces through arbitrary alliances or by competing with political forces in areas where such forces are superior to the movements.

## Section IV: Challenges facing the Left

The revolution of 11 February 2011 is the big event in Yemen in the context of the so-called Arab Spring revolutions. Thus, understanding this event becomes of great importance. The nature of what happened

is still a matter of controversy; it could be emphasized that the concept of revolution is still lacking and thus the nature of that event is still not understood, not in Yemen alone, but in all countries of the so-called Arab Spring. The fact that this "Spring" has turned into a nightmare reveals that the leaders of the Revolution did not understand it because they had not understood revolution as a theoretical concept.

The popular masses understood the revolution from their perspective. The reasons for and objectives of their revolution were very clear: social, economic and political conditions experienced for a long time by these masses. Of course, it cannot be expected that these masses should be interested in thinking about a general framework combining their suffering and their goals and demands. Certainly, the leaders and intellectuals are the ones who are supposed to provide a clear understanding of the nature of the revolution or specific revolutions and to try to lead the process on the basis of such a deep understanding.

However, the leaders of the Arab revolutions have found themselves confronting two great challenges. Such popular revolutions, which were always surprising everywhere throughout history, are such rare events, to the extent that their great magnitude and demands can cause confusion and paralysis. The second challenge is a theoretical one par excellence. Nobody was ready on the theoretical level: the questions were on the one hand whether it was a revolution or uprising, or what? On the other hand, they were about whether it was a social revolution or political revolution, or what?

We should seek every excuse for the Marxist Left which poses such questions, causing it embarrassment and confusion. What for? Because this concept of revolution is surrounded by many ambiguities in the texts bequeathed to us by the founders of Marxism. With all the science from which it was developed, Marxism still needs to be better articulated to form a theoretical concept apt for application not only to current revolutions but also to all past and future revolutions.

If social revolution means a transition from one to another pattern of social production, it was clear that Yemen has not experienced a transition of this kind. And if the revolution was political, it would mean a transfer of power from one to another social class. The prevailing belief of most of the youth leaders of the revolution was that the revolution can and should take over state power from the capitalist ruling class. Their practices followed these perceptions, which was to walk behind the armies under the banner of the so-called building the democratic

state institutions. This turned out to be mere dreams, illusions and a revolution of baseless hopes. The destruction of such illusions was the direct cause behind a frustration that reached from Tunisia to Egypt and Yemen, and put the revolutionary youth in a state of uncontrolled rebellion against everything and lack of confidence in anything, and of decline to the level of joking and self-reproach on Facebook pages, away from any rational, revolutionary, productive thinking. There remains a category of revolutionary youth who imagine that any popular revolution is capable of turning into a social revolution or a socialist revolution in the framework of the concept of burning-stages revolution.

Days before the outbreak of the youth revolution on 11 February 2011, which soon spread into the regions of Yemen demanding to topple the regime, the Yemeni Left played an important role in igniting the revolution either through opposition (JMP) or by intellectuals, civil society organizations and leftist movements that have contributed to crystallizing the revolution through Leftist slogans emphasizing social justice as a central goal of the revolution. However, regional powers quickly intervened to impose the Gulf initiative which introduced a new political situation beginning with presidential elections that resulted in the election of consensus president Abed Rabbu Mansour<sup>57</sup>. A consensus government was formed with the participation of the opposition parties (JMP) and (GPC) and preparations began for a national dialogue. The national dialogue came to an end, but it could not solve the crises and complexities of the political reality, because the outcomes have not received a great acceptance in the street, in addition to having been rejected by many of the South forces<sup>58</sup>.

At this point, it can be said that the period following the imposition of the Gulf Initiative has downplayed the role of the Leftist forces as an

---

57. The Gulf Initiative is an agreement initiated by the Gulf countries for arranging the power transition in Yemen. It was signed between Ali Abdullah Saleh's party and the Joint Meeting in exchange of granting Saleh immunity against legal prosecution and transmitting power to his Deputy Abed Rabbu Mansur. Markedly, many of the political forces had rejected the initiative, as being a maneuver against the revolution, so it removed the head of the regime, not the whole regime, and granted immunity to Saleh. According the initiative, presidential elections were held in February 2012, with Abed Rabbu as a single nominee.

58. Conducting a dialogue among the political forces was one article of the executive mechanism of the initiative. Boycotted by the South Movement and some other political forces, the dialogue began in March 2013 and ended with certain perceptions, still disputed, especially the establishment of a federation.

opposition because of their involvement in the Joint Meeting, which became part of the consensus authority. This led to the emergence of some Leftist voices who felt that those parties have not taken historical responsibility for the expression of the spirit and aspirations of this stage<sup>59</sup>.

After the revolution, Leftist parties participated in the national dialogue and submitted a reform matrix addressing the form of state, the South and the Saada and other issues<sup>60</sup>. Perhaps it is important to address the perception of the left-wing parties as to the form of the state and the adoption of federalism. The Socialist Party advocated the two regional (North and South) federation according to a perception which the party's supporters did not share, while the assistant secretary-general of the party had individually suggested a six-region federation, thus sparking a crisis within the party. As to the Nasserist Organization, it agreed to divide Yemen into six provinces in contravention of its supporters, some of whom rejected that viewpoint as it contradicts the party's pan-national slogans. These developments led to a controversy about the defeatist attitude of left-wing parties, which does not conform to the spirit and history of the Yemeni Left<sup>61</sup>.

### **The presence of the Left in the official national political scene**

Before touching on the effectiveness of left-wing parties and movements in the Yemeni political scene, we have to ask whether their presence has reflected the representation of the Left in the Yemeni street. Has their presence represented the Left's orientations, intellectual convictions and demands, or has it turned into an ambiguous political discourse which does not represent the essential thought of the Left?

---

59. The Joint Meeting is a varied combination of Leftist and pan-nationalist parties, as well as the religious Reform Party. The meeting was able to form a kind of partnership against the Saleh Regime. Substantial contradictions have then emerged between the leftist and pan-nationalist parties maintaining that the regime was an integrated system that includes the reform's military wing, on one side, and the Reform Party which insisted that the regime is Saleh himself, on the other. Such differences were manifested in the revolution squares through conflict between different party members, and in resorting, by religious figures affiliated with the Reform Party, the expiation of party leaders and intellectuals.

60. For the views of the Leftist parties presented for the dialogue, visit the website of the comprehensive national dialogue: <http://ndc.ye/>

61. Positions of the Leftist parties in the provinces are still controversial. For more details, visit: <http://www.yemenat.net/news43896.html>

To answer such questions, we can perhaps understand the size of the presence of the Yemeni Left today, its outcomes, the challenges stemming from the historical legacy it could not shake off, and the challenges embodied in the political and social reality. The Yemeni Left had in fact a revolutionary and political presence during the revolution, as described above, but it is interesting to note that the Leftist momentum did not last long, and the void was soon filled by the traditional forces of religious parties and tribal and military forces. In the post-revolution stage, the formal political presence of Leftist parties was focused on partial participation in the Government of National Reconciliation with six ministers out of 35 ministers, a ratio not exceeding 18%, that does not reflect the real size and presence of Leftist forces in the Yemeni street. In addition, their ministries were not important, thus making these parties function within a defect formula: they were not an authority, neither an opposition. So, their political performance was confused and led to protests by many of their supporters demanding their withdrawal from the government so as to become a real opposition expressing the spirit of the street in a political reality where there is no longer a real opposition<sup>62</sup>.

The other official presence of the Leftist parties was manifested in participating in the national dialogue, with 67 members out of 565 members (only members of the Socialist Party and the Nasserist Organization). However, their presence has not influenced the political dialogue or its final outputs. Those parties had not acted to create conditions necessary for dialogue or made alliances to support Leftist civil visions within the dialogue. Indeed, their performance revealed to the Yemeni society, which suffers from impoverishment and conflicts in more than one region between the Reform Party and the Huthists, together with al-Qaeda attacks, that these parties were not able to unify their ranks. Rather, they were ineffective forces caught in the trap of self-recrimination despite their strong support in the street, and have not emerged from political theorization on traditional forces hindering the process of change, while those parties have left such forces to decide the fate of Yemen for years or decades to come.

---

62. Soon enough, there erupted demonstrations, mostly by Leftist movements and young leaderships, condemning government performance and its inability to provide security and essential needs, as well as corruption issues. Yet, the Leftist parties supported the government as against the people's will and the parliament non-confidence vote.

Meanwhile, the left-wing youth movements, a number of youth Leftist partisan groups, intellectuals and civil society organizations came to confirm their political presence through protests expressing the concerns of citizens such as the demonstrations rejecting the new economic scheme (cut in subsidies), demonstrations demanding a change in government, rejecting the quota system or supporting the army against terrorism.

Hence it can be said that the new actors of the Leftist forces, whether youth movements or youth party cadres as well as Yemeni intellectuals who did not engage in the game of political compromise, are the current representatives of an essential nucleus for an opposition which may turn in the future into an effective Leftist actor.

### **Main challenges currently facing the Left components**

There are subjective challenges facing the Left that fall within the historic structure of the left-wing parties, including youth movements, in addition to objective challenges emanating from the social and political reality of Yemen. The first kind of challenges include:

- The weakness of the organizational aspect<sup>63</sup>. What is meant here is not only atrophic communication between the leadership and supporters but rather the reflection of this situation on the left-wing identity of those parties and on their practices in the political reality, leading to a real contradiction between their slogans and their activities on the ground, enhancing disorder within those parties.
- Relationship with the younger generation. Despite the active role played by the parties' youth in the revolution and the harmony between their revolutionary positions and the demands of Yemeni people, the leadership of those parties did not express a position distinct from that of the rest of opposition parties of the Joint Meeting, thus creating a gap between the parties' youth and their leaders at historic moments of the revolution and the following transitional phase<sup>64</sup>.

---

63. Some people explain the organizational weakness of the Socialist Party in terms of the crises that have been affecting the party since the 1986 events and the 1994 war, leading to a vertical division between party organizations in the South and the higher leadership, especially given that many of the South leaders were pro-separation. The Party's failure to overcome such an obstacle necessitates a unified political discourse as to the South issue.

64. It can be said that most of the parties' dealings and decisions during and following the revolution are not acceptable to the people. The citizens (including party members) continually express their discontent of the performance of Leftist parties.

- The disunity of political parties (Leftist and pan-nationalist), represented in their inability to overcome past differences and to formulate a unified perception of the requirements of the next stage, which emerged clearly in their positions during the management of the transitional period and in the national dialogue, when their differences were in the interest of traditional forces.
- These parties lack of economic strength, which would help them to promote their progressive civil discourse in internal and external media and connect with the concerns of their constituency in villages and remote areas<sup>65</sup>.

### **As to the objective challenges, they include:**

- The nature of political alliances that have not yet developed from the pre-revolution stage. These parties are still engaged in the Joint Meeting coalition, though the Alliance has witnessed many internal differences, and its orientations are controlled by the religious Reform Party, and it had negative impact by diluting the identity of the left-wing parties<sup>66</sup>.
- The political and social reality surrounding the left-wing parties. This reality is represented by the growth of conventional forces and the change in their old tools, through the transformation of some of them to political parties (such as the Salafi Rashad Party and Al-Nahda movement)<sup>67</sup>, whereas others formed new alliances as was the case

---

65. This is due to the fact that the Left does not have the money needed to establish TV channels and media websites, whereas the religious parties have been successful in its media discourse, which was adopted by local and external channels, and have been able to impose a prototype picture of the Yemen Revolution and to introduce one-sided intellectual discourse which does not reflect the pluralism of the Yemeni society. Some explain the matter in terms of the financial capability of the religious party, its media sector, together with the role played by the Jazeera Channel office in Yemen by promoting such discourse and enhancing the Muslim Brotherhood young leadership.

66. For more details, see: Al-Maqtari, p. 77.

67. The «Yemeni grouping for Reform» party is considered the most influential party in the society, as it comprises all the Right forces (the clergy, tribal chiefs and the military). The Reform Party performance did not change with involvement with Leftist parties in the opposition Joint Meeting block; it rather kept its old political tools, using them indirectly against partners within the meeting, or directly through hatching out more extreme religious parties to be its political companion (such was the case with the Salafi Rashad Party).

with the Tribal Conference. Such developments hampered the chances for the growth of the Left forces and brought back the excommunication discourse against left-wing leaders and intellectuals<sup>68</sup>.

In my own opinion, the challenges facing youth Leftist movements differ from those facing the parties, although they intersect in the organizational side. The Leftist movements are usually blamed for lack of any organizational dimension and for the dominance of the movement's founder over the movement's actions. In addition, those Leftist movements do not establish a continued clear action for the future, especially against the stagnation of the Yemeni political scene, which is not conducive to their empowerment, but considers the traditional left-wing parties to be the exclusive expression of the Left.

## How would the Left face these challenges?

To meet these challenges, whether subjective or objective, the Yemeni Left today needs to change its old political tools and to produce new tools suitable for the nature of changing reality. It needs to change the shape of its political alliances that were confined to the Joint Meeting alliance, which has played its historic role. The Left forces have thus to expand their political alliances circle to include all the modern political forces, such as civil society organizations, Leftist movements and intellectuals, thereby forming a civil alliance that expresses its aspirations of a modern civil state, the parties' intellectual revision and self-criticism of their performance during and following the Revolution, and the study and addressing of the reasons for the contradiction between their discourse and their political practice. The left-wing parties must also change their bylaws, which no longer serve the development of their organizational construction and the renovation of their relationship with young people through political empowerment so as to gain access to political decision-making, and support for youth Leftist movements. In addition, they have to provide self-sufficient economic capital which helps them produce an informational system that presents Leftist political discourse.

---

68. The year 2012 witnessed the return of the apostasy discourse through issuing fatwas against writers and journalists, the most recent of which was the fatwa against the writer Ali Saïdi; the release of the book «The National Dialogue: Construction or Destruction,» by Sheikh Aref al-Sabri, who condemned members of the Technical Committee as infidels, and the release of a book on the civil state by Sheikh Ismail Al-Sahli, who condemned most civil and Leftist leaders as infidels.

## New approaches to access the public

It has become imperative for the Yemeni Left to seek new approaches and means to access the public. Drawing on the experience of the street during the past two years, we believe there are good opportunities to act through new approaches, such as:

- Establishment of a center for social, political and economic study and research.
- Formation of specialized civil society organizations that adopt the thought of the Left.
- The formation and support of youth and social movements.
- Founding of partisan entities to co-ordinate with civil society organizations and movements.
- Implementation of and participating in social initiatives.
- Absorbing the energies of people belonging to the Left and attracting others through cultural centers and clubs
- Establishing TV channels expressive of the Left.

## Reference and Resources

- \* The Constitution of the Yemen Republic, 1991
- \* The Constitution of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, 1970
- \* The Constitution of the Yemen Republic, 1994
- \* The Constitution of the Yemen Republic, the temporary and the permanent, 1963, 1970
- \* The By-laws of the Yemeni Socialist Party, approved at the fifth general conference (the martyr Jarall Omer Conference, July 26-31, 2006
- \* The By-laws of the Nasserist People's Unionist Party, approved at the eighth general conference, convened in Sanaa, November 23-27, 1993, and amended at the tenth conference convened in Sanaa, February 23-27, 2005
- \* Al-Sarraf, Ali, (South Yemen: from Colonization to Unity), Cyprus-London:

Al-Rayyes Publishers, ed.1, 1994

\* Al-Mehbashi, Muhammad Omer, South Yemen: Politics, Economy and Sociology, since 1937 until the Establishment of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, Beirut: Al-Taleea Publishers.

\* O'balance, Edgar, Yemen: Revolution and War up till 1970, trans. Abdul-Khaliq Muhammad Lasheen, Cairo: Madbuly Library, edition 2, 1990

\* Al-Suwuaidi, Jamal Sanad; Hudson, Michael, Drish, Paul; Charles, Dinbar; Burrowes, Robert; Katz, Mark, The Yemeni War of 1994: Causes and Consequences, Abu-Dhabi: The UAE Center for Strategic Research and Studies, edition 4, 1998.

\* A group of Researchers, The Breaking Point: The South Yemen Cause-Middle East Report no. 114, ICG, 2011

\* Promoting A More Secure And Stable Global Economy, International Monetary Fund, Annual Report, 2013

\* Al-Maqtari, Bushra, Prospects and Challenges of Renewing the Left in Yemen, Forum of Arab Alternatives for Studies. Cairo, 2013

\* Shakir, Wameed, The Role of Civil Society in the Struggle for Social Justice, a paper submitted to the Yemeni Left Conference for Social Justice, Yemen-Sanaa, August 2013

\* Nu'man, Yasin Saeed, the secretary-general of the Socialist Party, The Yemeni Left and Social Justice, a paper submitted to the Yemeni Left Conference for Social Justice, Yemen-Sanaa, August 28-29, 2013

\* The Yemen Government, Wikipedia

[http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A9\\_%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%A9](http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A9_%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%A9)

\* Yemenat news site, draft document of the Civil Alliance of Youth Revolution, revised edition 4. <http://www.yemenat.net/news12523.html>

\* Representation in the comprehensive national dialogue, the official site of the comprehensive national dialogue: <http://www.ndc.ye/ar-page.aspx?show=68>



# The Left in Sudan: resources and contemporary challenges

---

Magdi El Gizouli

*Magdi El Gizouli is an academic and writer from Sudan and a fellow of the Rift Valley Institute.*

## Sudan: a multiple marginality of a colonial rib

Ali Mazrui, the Kenyan scholar and political science professor, proposed to the participants of the Sudan in Africa conference, held in Khartoum in 1968, and organized by the Sudan Research Unit at the University of Khartoum, the thesis of the “multiple marginality of the Sudan”. It can be summed up as follows: Sudan, by virtue of its geographical location, its population and the mixture of its languages is a margin in both Arab Africa and black Africa - it is not a bridge connecting them, as it was hoped<sup>1</sup>. This multiple marginality described by Mazrui has seen the longest civil war in the continent, during which the central government in Khartoum faced fierce armed opposition in the south of Sudan in two phases. The first began in the early 1960s with the rebellion of a southern garrison in Torit city in 1955, on the eve of Sudan’s independence in 1956 from bilateral Egyptian and British rule, and ended with the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1972. The second lasted from 1983 until the 2005 signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Naivasha resort in Kenya between the government of Sudan and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and its political arm, the Popular Movement, which resulted

---

1. The Multiple Marginality of the Sudan. Mazrui, Ali. Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1968. Sudan in Africa: proceedings of the First International Conference on Sudan sponsored by the Sudan Research Unit, 7-12 February 1968.

in the separation of the southern provinces of Sudan from the north in 2011, and the creation of an independent state: the Republic of South Sudan.

The war in southern Sudan ended following the first negotiation breakthrough between the government of Sudan and the SPLA in 2002. The SPLA and the Justice and Equality Movement in the western region of Darfur, bordering Chad, initiated the war on the government in February 2003 by attacking the airport of Al Fashir, the capital of north Darfur. The war is still raging, though its co-ordinates have changed. Sudan's eastern border with Eritrea was the scene of a less severe conflict in which the Beja Congress and the Free Lions Organization challenged the central government from the mid-1990s until the signing of the eastern Sudan peace agreement in the Eritrean capital Asmara in 2006. Today, the central government is struggling with armed forces, which have gathered in a loose alliance under the Sudanese Revolutionary Front name, across a belt extending along the new border with South Sudan, from the Blue Nile in the east, to Darfur in the west, and between them in South Kurdufan, a belt commonly referred to as the "new south"<sup>2</sup>.

The common interpretation of Sudan's wars is based on religious and ethnic binaries between Muslims on the one hand and Christians and animists on the other hand, and between African Arabs and African blacks. The model for this interpretation was the war in southern Sudan, where southern black and Christian or animist Africans confronted the government dominated by Muslim Arabs from the north of Sudan. This culminated in the Islamic National Front, the political Islam party, seizing power in Khartoum in 1989 through a military coup that overthrew an elected parliamentary government<sup>3</sup> - at least, according to most media reports on the south Sudan war. In the same vein, the war in Darfur has been defined as a conflict between Arabs and black Sudanese, with the Arab-dominated government from the north and central Nile biased towards the Arabs of Darfur against the black population. It recruited them to fight the blacks, who rebelled against the central government in the genocide campaign<sup>4</sup>. In this analogy, the conflict between the Christian African south and the Muslim Arab north was solved with the

---

2. Young, John. *The Fate of Sudan: The Origins and Consequences of Flawed Peace Process*. London: Zed Books, 2012.

3. Lesch, Ann Mosely. *Sudan: Contested National Identities*. Oxford : James Currey, 1998.

4. Prunier, Gerard. *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide*. London : C Hurst & Co. Ltd, 2005

independence of South Sudan in 2011, but it has continued between the Arabs of the north and the Nile center, who dominate the state apparatus and the black Africans from the people of the new south, in addition to non-Arabs in the other peripheries of the country, the Beja in eastern Sudan and the Nubians in the far north.

Similar to its colonial predecessor, the post-colonial state in Sudan, in the old pre-2005 south and in the new post-2011 south, continued to have conflicts with large segments of the country's population. The objective difference was that colonial rule was more effective in monopolizing armed force than its national successor. With its superiority of arms it was able to guarantee an imperial peace with some outbreaks of local resistance which colonial authorities did not have great difficulty in suppressing by force. The legacy of British colonial rule in Sudan, as in other African colonies, was reflected in the great divide between cities and the countryside and between the colonial space and the "native" space – ie the indigenous people and anything related to them. While the colonial city was a space of civilization and progress, the "native" countryside was the place for "noble" reactionism for the colonial inspector. In reality, the colonial city has no foundation without the "native" countryside because it grew thanks to the primitive accumulation launched by the state apparatus in the countryside under the guard of the compulsory state force, represented by irrigated agricultural projects in central Sudan. The contradiction is embodied in the city itself and its witness is the difference between modern Khartoum, the capital of foreign colonialism, and the traditional nature of neighbouring Omdurman, the "national capital", on the western bank of the Nile<sup>5</sup>.

This equation has not changed with the achievement of political independence. On the contrary, its contradictions have become deeper with the expansion of the primitive accumulation circle, in conjunction with the integration of the local economy into the world capitalist market. On the other hand, in response to the resistance with which the people confronted the central state's appropriation of their human and natural resources, primarily the labour force and the land, there has been a greater need for coercion as a tool of power. Thus, there is no wonder why the history of national rule in Sudan is in the first instance a history of war, which ends when leaders of warring factions are called on to participate in wealth and power and starts again when the political dowry becomes subject to negotiation under national pretexts

---

5. Abdalla Ali Ibrahim, *The Sharia and Modernity (Arabic)*, Dar al-Amin, 2004.

as well as other international and regional geo-political pretexts<sup>6</sup>. Consequently, the national state never emerged from the shadow of the colonial state because both were characterized by weakness and their ambition led them to excessive violence as an attempt to prove their strength. They used tyranny as a cheap mean to impose stability<sup>7</sup>. In this analogy, the national state with a unified market project faced, and is still facing, strong resistance in Sudan<sup>8</sup>. It has summed up the history of the post-colonial state in Sudan. It is the history of this long confrontation between the government and its diverse people, between a state controlled by a political class with a limited composition and people distributed on a colonial-era map tightly pulled by “cultural”, religious, national and ethnic identities.

In Sudan of today, with its southern provinces separated in 2011, power is controlled by an autocratic alliance between the armed forces and security services, the ruling National Conference - the political vehicle of the Sudanese Islamic movement<sup>9</sup> - and the dominant Sudanese

6. Waal, Alex de. Dollarised. London Review of Books. 2010, Vol. 12 ,32.

7. Willis, Justin. The Ambitions of the State. The Sudan Handbook. London: The Rift Valley Institute, 2012.

8. Collins, Robert O. A History of Modern Sudan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008

9. The emergence of the Sudanese Islamic Movement dates back to the late 1940s as a copy of the Sudanese Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. The Sudanese movement reached independence movement in the 1960s under the leadership of Dr Hassan Abdullah al-Turabi from its Egyptian predecessor. Turabi made the first priority of the movement the achievement of «political hegemony.» The movement, under Turabi, became proficient in politics rather than education, under the mantle of the Islamic Charter Front in the 1960s and the National Islamic Front in the 1980s. The National Islamic Front (NIF) seized power through a military coup led by (then) Brigadier General Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir against the parliamentary government of Sadiq al-Mahdi on 30 June 1989. From the Islamic Movement in 1998, the National Congress ruling party emerged, but it soon saw a fierce struggle for influence between President al-Bashir in the country’s leadership and Hassan al-Turabi in the party leadership. The National Congress elected al-Bashir a president of the party and al-Turabi its secretary-general in 1999. However the conflict between the two erupted and thus, al-Bashir dissolved the parliament which was then headed by al-Turabi by the end of 1999, after which al-Turabi split in what was known as the Split (mufasalala). In mid- 2000, al-Turabi created the Popular Congress Party to oppose the National Congress Party, led by Bashir. Recently, the two parties overcame the hostility between them. Their direct motive was the 2013 coup that toppled the short-lived rule of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt which came in the wake of the January 2011 revolution against President Hosni Mubarak, and they returned to form an explicit coalition on «national dialogue» announced by President Omar al-Bashir in January 2014.

bourgeois elites, which achieved economic superiority during the 1980s, thanks to Gulf capital<sup>10</sup>, and which were further strengthened by oil revenues since the start of its commercial production in 1999 in southern Sudan. Oil, as a rentier commodity produced by Chinese, Malaysian and Indian companies, with its proceeds going directly to the state treasury, allowed this ruling alliance to be entirely free from the productive forces, cash and living, and gave it political superiority over every competitor other than those who were ready to challenge its dominance by armed conflict<sup>11</sup>.

The National Congress brought to its alliance splinter factions of the National Umma Party (NUP), led by Sadiq al-Mahdi, the imam of the Ansar sect, and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), led by Mohamed Osman al-Mirghani, leader of the Khatmiyya sect. These were the two dominant parties during the years of parliamentary rule, 1956-1958, 1965-1969 and 1986-1989<sup>12</sup>. The DUP, after the separation of South Sudan in 2011, has become the minority partner of the national congress, after being an opposition party. On the other hand, the regime is facing rebellious armed forces in the southern rural areas of Kurdufan, the Blue Nile and Darfur which have organized themselves into the Sudanese Revolutionary Front as well as a coalition of opposition political forces, including the Sudanese Communist Party, other left-wing factions and liberal parties of urban influence, under the national consensus name.

## The Sudanese Left: concepts and social forces

The Sudanese Communist Party controlled Sudan's Leftist space without competitors until the end of the socialist era in the 1980s. Thus,

---

10. Sidqi Kablo, *On the Sudanese Revolution Theory*, Draft, 1990.

11. Majdi al-Jazouli, *Oil in Sudan: A national source or a national congress*, a series of articles, al-Ayam, November 2006, January 2007.

12. The Ummah Party's base is the al-Ansar sect and the Democratic Unionist base is the al-Khatmiyya sect. The two parties were created in the 1940s, the first under the auspices of Sayyed Abdul-Rahman al-Mahdi, the imam of the Ansar at that time, and the second under the auspices of Sayyed Ali Mirghani, the leader of the al-Khatmiyya sect. Two competing elites (graduates) from among those who received modern education allied themselves with one of the two leaders to create two parties, which have dominated the national movement for independence.

its theses represented the compass of the Left and it was, to a certain degree, capable of imposing its agenda on Baathists, Nasserite and Arab nationalist forces competing with it. The Communist Party emerged in the 1940s as a radical faction of the national movement hostile to British colonization, but it distinguished itself from it and competed with it from a critical stance, given that this movement lacked a political theory to counter colonialism that was better than the Marxist theory<sup>13</sup>.

While Marxism reached Sudan through educated circles, primarily the graduates of Egyptian schools and universities<sup>14</sup>, it was turned by the skilled workers of the Sudan Railways Authority into a public and organizational power that imposed itself on the social and political scene in the country<sup>15</sup>. In addition to that, the Communist Party built bridges with agricultural and small-scale farmers in Sudan's irrigated projects, especially the large Island project and in the Nuba Mountains, southern Kurdufan<sup>16</sup>. Its influence had extended to reach to workers' formations in the Equatoria region of southern Sudan<sup>17</sup>. In these endeavours, the Communist Party used labor union activism and introduced the trade union as a democratic vehicle which allows diverse people to work together, regardless of their sectarian, ethnic, or religious affiliations. It was very successful in its efforts.

At this phase of its development, the Communist Party adopted a radical review of the country's social and economic structure and introduced a diagnosis of the political strength of the two main political forces, the NUP and the DUP, the representatives of the Sudanese bourgeoisie. The first represents the biggest owners in the agricultural sector, with semi-feudal relations, and the second represents the commercial bourgeoisie dominating the business sector. The party introduced itself to the Sudanese working class, invented means to organize it, and was able to gain its confidence in its early battles against colonialism and in its project to extend

---

13. Abdul Khaleq Mahjoub, How did I become a Communist? Al-Ayam, 10 May, 1954.

14. El-Amin, Mohamed Nuri. The Sudanese Communist Movement, the First Five Years - I. Middle Eastern Studies. 1996, Vol. 3 ,32.

15. Niblock, Tim. Class and Power in Sudan: The Dynamics of Sudanese Politics, 1898-1985. Albany: State University of New York, 1987.

16. Atta al-Bathani, the Nuba Mountains, Political Ethnicity and the Farmers' Movement, 1924- 1969, al-Khartoum, Azza Publishing House, 2009.

17. Mustafa al-Sayyed, Journeys in the Paths of Life, al-Khartoum, Azza Publishing House, 2007.

political independence to economic independence from colonial influence and social liberation from the patriarchal hegemony of sects and tribal leaders and the emancipation of women, as a class of the society, from oppression<sup>18</sup>. Thus, the party, from its early days, was aware of the ethnic issues in the country's periphery and called since the 1950s for the self-rule of the South Sudan regions<sup>19</sup>. At that time, it preached the public ownership of the means of production based on the nationalization of foreign capital and the transformation from the association with British colonial economic and trade metropol to a plurality which includes socialist countries. It opposed entry into the capitalist camp and reliance on its developmental aid within a political plan aimed at destroying the old state apparatus inherited from colonization by the National Democratic Front authority, the leader of the aspired democratic national revolution, led by the working class which includes farmers, intellectuals, soldiers and national capitalism<sup>20</sup>.

The popularity of the Communist Party reached its peak in the 1960s, when it became an important political force, thanks to the pioneering role played by trade unions and the party's mass organizations in the October 1964 revolution that overthrew President Ibrahim Abboud's military regime. In the first elections after the revolution, which were held in 1965, the party was able to win 12 parliamentary seats compared to one seat in the elections of the legislative assembly in 1953, which it fought under the mantle of the anti-colonial front. It also achieved a cultural and intellectual influence on public life and this sparked the jealousy of its political rivals. Other Leftist forces, with limited influence among the urban intellectuals, such as the Arab Nationalists, the Baathists, and the Nasserites, shared these general principles with the Communist Party. At that time, the call for the unity of the Leftist forces - the October Revolution's forces - became common in confronting sectarian forces represented by the Ummah Party and the Democratic Unionist Party. The Communist Party responded to this call with the short-lived Socialist Party

---

18. Fatima Ahmad Ibrahim, *Our Harvest During 20 Years*, al-Khartoum, The Sudanese Women Federation, 1978.

19. Jafar Karrar, *the Sudanese Communist Party and the Southern Issue, 1946 -1985*, al-Khartoum, al-Khartoum University Publishing House, 2005.

20. *Marxism and the Issues of the Sudanese Revolution*, the text of the general report adopted in the fourth conference of the Sudanese Communist Party, October 1967, the Sudanese Communist Party, al-Wasila Publishing House, 1967.

project, a way for the Communists to avoid the ban on their party and the expulsion of its deputies from the parliament in December 1965. This decision made the parliamentary majority reject the country's constitution, but the government insisted on it although the highest judicial authority in the country declared its unconstitutionality<sup>21</sup>.

The charge of atheism became the pretext of the political Islam forces - the Islamic Charter Front, led by Hassan al-Turabi - to ban the Communist Party and curb its influence. In this endeavor, both the Umma Party and Democratic Unionist Party participated with the Islamic Charter Front, motivated by the fear that this party might become a "major social force", the slogan of the party at that time, in the midst of these parties' call for an "Islamic constitution". Abdul Khaliq Mahjoub, the secretary-general of the Communist Party from 1950 until his execution in the early hours of 28 July 1971, interpreted the insistence of the political elite on the "Islamic nature" of the constitution in the wake of the October Revolution, while before it accepted liberal and non-religious constitutions similar to those of colonial countries such as the self-rule constitution of 1954 and the Draft Constitution of the Sudan in 1958, saying that "the thing that has bothered the ruling elite is the fact revealed after the October 1964 revolution of the possibility of the emergence of an independent political movement of trade unions, professionals, farmers' unions and the Communist Party, ie, the forces that have been able to directly control the state apparatus in the wake of the October Revolution, and which would be able to completely turn their back on this elite and adopt a new approach." In the same context, the call for an Islamic constitution came at the same time as the adoption of the presidential republic system. According to Abdul Khaliq, the elite wanted to replace the parliamentary republic with a presidential republic system, putting all powers in the hands of one man giving him comprehensive authority to ensure his control of the state apparatus<sup>22</sup>.

The rivalry over the status of Islam in the constitution and its role in public life with regard to the issue of calling for the adoption of Islamic law has been a fixed element of the Sudanese political

---

21. Muhammad Saeed al-Qaddal, Landmarks in the history of the Sudanese Communist Party, Beirut, al-Farabi Publishing House, 1999.

22. Abdul-Khaleq Mahjoub, Opinions and Views on the Philosophy of the Muslim Brotherhood, Azza Publishing House, 2001.

scene since then, and the ruler which measures the deviation of the Left from the Shura of the right. The fact of the matter is that the Communist Party's many efforts did not succeed in making the issue of sharia irrelevant, and it became obliged to defend its legitimacy against repeated accusation of atheism and internationalism that are against Sudanese national identity. In addition to the eagerness of the late Abdul Khaliq Mahjoub to explain the enthusiasm of the political elite over the Islamic constitution in the wake of the October 1964 Revolution, the party addressed this issue by proposing a democratic civil state as opposed to a religious state. The late Mohamed Ibrahim Nugud, the secretary-general of the Sudanese Communist Party from 1971 until his death in March 2012, used the concept of "civility" to replace the concept of "secularism" as an opposition to "religious" and "Islamic" because "secularism" has European connotations and it is difficult to indigenize it in the Sudanese political and social environment<sup>23</sup>.

In the 1980s, the issue of sharia became linked to the civil war in southern Sudan. In 1983, President Jaafar Nimeiri announced he would turn Sudan into a Muslim Arab state, where Islamic law, or sharia, would prevail, including in the southern provinces. These laws later became known as September Laws because they were issued in the month of September. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement and its army led by Colonel John Garang, in May of the same year announced an insurgency against the ruling regime in southern Sudan. The sharia laws were strongly opposed and became part of the grievances of non-Muslims and non-Arabs in the peripheral regions of Sudan, in addition to their meagre share of political power and economic wealth compared to northern Sudan. These two issues: the stance regarding the Islamic sharia and justice for Sudanese ethnic groups in the distribution of power and wealth, since that day, became the criteria for defining the Left in Sudan under existing political, economic and social realities and the armed conflict arising from them. Both Leftist and liberal forces were against sharia law and called for balanced development and an equitable division of power and wealth between the different regions of the country as pillars of a peaceful resolution to the civil war, which had expanded to areas outside the southern borders to include the northern provinces bordering it in the south of

---

23. Muhammad Ibrahim Nugud, *A Dialogue on the Civil State*, Azza Publishing House, 2003.

the Blue Nile and Nuba Mountains<sup>24</sup>.

## The Sudanese Communist Party

Like other communist parties with a Marxist-Leninist orientation, the Sudanese Communist Party has witnessed several splits since its inception, including the split of the faction led by the late Awad Abdel Razek, who maintained that the objective conditions were not ripe for the establishment of a communist party of the working class in Sudan and ended up leaving the party, which was afterwards led by the late Abdul Khaliq Mahjoub. At the peak of its influence, the party was split almost equally between those who unconditionally supported the Jaafar Nimeiri coup of 1969 and those who adopted the analysis of general secretary Mahjoub to the effect that the military coup, despite its leftist slogan, was not an alternative to “the mass action and the masses’ activity, organizing and mobilizing so as to fulfill the tasks of democratic revolution”. Mahjoub maintained that what happened in the morning of 25 May 1969 was a military coup whereby power had been transformed to the petty-bourgeois class and not an armed popular action by the forces of the national democratic revolution. Mahjoub further identified the stand of his fellow Communists by stressing that “The Communist Party rejects the coup action as an alternative for patient, diligent and daily mass struggle. Mass struggle can resolve the issue of the revolution leadership through delivering it to the working class forces and the Communists. This is the crucial matter for the future of the

---

24. These demands were repeated under different formulas in the political agreements between Leftist and liberal forces such as the Communist Party and sectoral forces such as professional unions with the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement since the 1980s including the Koka Dam agreement of March 1986 and the Asmara Declaration of the Fundamental Issues’ Conference, 1995 which was held by the National Democratic Alliance opposing the regime of Bashir in the Eritrean capital. The Alliance, at the peak of its activism in the mid 1990s, gathered the Umma Party, the Democratic Unionist Party, the Sudanese Peoples’ Liberation Army, the Union of Sudan African Parties, the Communist Party of Sudan, the Beja Congress, the Sudan Alliance Forces, as well as military and trade unions’ leaders. The Islamic sharia and the just distribution of power and wealth continued to be the two major issues even after the independence of South Sudan in 2011. They are still the political issues of the national consensus forces and the Sudanese revolutionary front opposing the regime of President Bashir as in the Democratic Alternative Charter issued in July 2012 and the al-Fajr al-Jadeed (The New Dawn) Charter issued in January 2013.

national democratic revolution in our country. Our abandonment of this road and taking the coup tactic is aborting the revolution and transferring the position of the revolution command in the present and future to other categories of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. Part of such categories take a hostile stand to the development of the revolutionary movement as the other part (of the petty bourgeoisie) is shaky and not able to lead the movement of a continued democratic revolution, but would make it suffer from extensive pains and damages. The latter part had been tested at the October revolution of 1964, causing a setback of the revolutionary action in our country”<sup>25</sup>.

By taking this stand, the Communist Party found itself in a bloody confrontation with the May regime. As predicted by Mahjoub, the petty-bourgeoisie military coup tactic ended up causing extensive pains and damages, as some Communist army officers led a counter-coup on 19 July 1971 which they described as a corrective movement. It was defeated within three days and followed by Jafar Nimeiri’s return to power. The Communist Party paid dearly for its adventurous coup as Nimeiri launched a relentless campaign to liquidate the party employing military justice completely subject to his desire for revenge. In this campaign, the regime was able to eliminate the elite Communist officers and the party’s top leadership, including its general secretary Abdul Khaliq Mahjoub and two members of the central committee, Al-Shafee’ Sheikh Ahmed and Joseph Garang, while prisons received dozens of the party cadres and supporters, except for a handful who managed to flee. The party membership that favored the merger with Nimeiri’s single party, the Socialist Union, found themselves helpless before Nimeiri turning from the shaky “petty bourgeoisie” Left to an agent of the United States of America and to an alliance with Egypt of Sadat, and found themselves mere gatekeepers of the leader.

Nimeiri did not succeed in eradicating the Communist Party, the way he had repeatedly threatened, but he was able to stall revolutionary action for a long time. The party and its mass organizations remained banned and persecuted until the fall of the Nimeiri regime in the March-April 1985 uprising. It then went back to over-reaction, to find that the political conflict in the country has settled at the NIF agenda of Islamic law first, replacing the regime among petty bourgeois professionals and students. The long years of dictatorship

---

25. Statement by the central committee of the Sudanese Communist Party, 25 May 1969. «The Communist», February 1994.

have destroyed the party's mass bases, primarily workers' and farmers' unions. The party's public action did not last long. The Islamic Front seized power in a military coup on 30 June 1989, and drove the party cadres into detention centers and prisons, then emigration, and drove its acting membership underground. The Sudanese Communists received news of the collapse of the socialist camp while they were in detention camps and secret groups. Such was the delayed settlement of accounts with 20th-century Soviet Marxism, a Marxism which the party sought to creatively apply, with varying degrees of success, to Sudan's reality, in the words of the late Abdul Khaliq Mahjoub. Due to this delay, perhaps, a group of the party's educated cadres rebelled against the party in October 1994, announcing their rejection of Marxism at a news conference in London. This resulted in a split in the party organizations, primarily student and professional ones, between those loyal to the party despite its shortfalls and others loyal to the new democratic forces, which originated from within the party without being Marxist, while calling for a social democracy based on the experience of Western Europe after the second world war. The late Al-Khatem Adlan argued for rejecting the party in a long article entitled *Time for Change* in 1991, published in the theoretical journal of the party, *The Communist*, in February 1994<sup>26</sup>, which became the manifesto of his emerging organization, the Movement of New Democratic Forces.

Al-Khatem, in his article *Time for Change*, discussed the degeneration of the Soviet socialist system, in which their ruling parties turned to a substitute to the working class, in whose name they had claimed power, until their collapse. He then declared null and void all relevance of Marxism to contemporary issues, basing his argument on the views of Alvin Toffler in his book *Powershift: knowledge, Wealth and Violence at the Edge of the 21st Century*<sup>27</sup>. Al-Khatem, citing Toffler, invalidated class struggle in the technological revolution capitalism era. With respect to the Sudanese Communist party, Al-Khatem maintained that the party did not survive the inertia and decadence that hit similar parties in the socialist bloc, and that its by-laws have become outdated, so it became imperative that democracy enters in all possible ways. He then asked whether the party projects were

---

26. Al-Khatem Adlan, «Time for Change».

27. Toffler, Alvin. *Powershift: Knowledge, Wealth and Violence at the Edge of the 21st Century*. New York: Bantam Books, 1991.

indeed achievable under emerging global conditions. In addition, Al-Khatem asserted that the enemies of the party had built, through charges of atheism, a solid wall between the party and the majority of the people; a wall that cannot be penetrated.

In his criticism, Al-Khatem pointed out prominent problems with the action of the party. The first was adherence to democratic centralism as an organizational principle, adding that the party's internal life was sterilized and it destroyed the independence of its membership in favor of compliance with absolute leadership. Second was the reluctance of the party to build a democratic national front, an alliance entrusted with the leadership of the democratic national revolution, saying that the party authorized itself to be that center. Thus, the party had distanced the intellectuals (who share its democratic objectives but disagree with it as to the stages that follow its program of socialism and then Communism) from leading positions in mass action. Third was the party's lack of influence on workers and farmers, saying that the party has failed to "awaken the working class from slumber" and remained completely isolated from the traditional sector, the production areas in the countryside. Fourthly, the party had underestimated intellectuals, viewing them as belonging to the fluctuating petty-bourgeois, saying that they did not find the status proper to their abilities nor the climate that would realize their intellectual potential, and the party central committee had excluded them from decision-making process so that most of them left the ranks of the party.

Based on such introductions, Al-Khatem Adlan concluded in his *Time for Change* article that the party should dissolve itself, and its members should engage with other democratic intellectuals, taking into account the representation of national and ethnic minorities, in a new party that "would not be a communist party because it does not adopt an integrated ideological approach to the universe and does not bode certain stage at which human society comes to a still, and does not aim to rework society according to a totalitarian theoretical scheme, nor would it be a socialist party, if socialism is public ownership of the means of production, understood as state ownership; it is a party for justice." Al-Khatem also envisaged a party based on the "forces of intellectuals and all producers and scientists in various categories, and the forces of workers and farmers associated with the production sector, in addition to the millions of inhabitants of the traditional sector of various social organizations and regional and national affiliations, ie, it is the forces of the whole people".

Al-Khatem's criticisms of the stalemate in the Communist Party had a certain resonance, especially what he arbitrarily considered as democratic centralism. However, his call to dissolve the party was a disappointment, especially since he did not suggest a plan for political action that would distinguish his call from the Communist Party's general direct goals and tactics - a peaceful solution to the conflict in South Sudan and the restoration of democracy through struggle against the regime of the Islamic movement. His quest to build a new party of the whole people with a secular and liberal orientation did not exceed the threshold of ambition. He established the Movement of the Democratic New Forces from London, but the movement was paralyzed as a result of the influx of intellectuals without a social base, primarily from the Communist Party and the Republican Brotherhood. The movement split in 2000 into two wings: one wing out of the country, led by the late Al-Khatem Adlan, which theoretically adopted an armed action plan to topple President Bashir's regime, the way the Sudan People's Liberation Movement had done, but without a fighting force. The other wing split from the original movement under the name Movement of Democratic Modern Forces, led by Haj Warraq, which adopted a civil resistance approach closer to the movement's intellectual premises and its membership's mood. The conflict between these two wings was dissolved upon the death of the late Al-Khatem Adlan in 2005, followed by the resignation of Haj Warraq from his wing's leadership. Yet the two groups could not unite: al-Khatem's wing continued acting under the leadership of Hala Abdul Halim, until it split in 2010, as a result of internal disputes, into two groups bearing the same name: a prominent group headed by Hala Abdel Halim and another led by Abdul Aziz Ballah.

The Communist Party returned to public action on the basis of the Cairo agreement signed in July 2005 by factions of the National Democratic Alliance opposition and the Sudanese government, within the framework of what resembled a supplement to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the government and the Sudan's People's Liberation Movement Army in January 2005. Under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, a transitional government was formed including the National Congress and the SPLM, with two major tasks: the achievement of the right to self-determination for the regions of South Sudan through a referendum on independence at the end of the transitional period in 2011; and the achievement of democratic transformation through reforms in the governance structure and the distribution of power and wealth, thus making unity "an attractive option" for Southern voters, in the words of the Agreement. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement

introduced small shares for Northern opposition forces, including the Communist Party, in the executive and legislature powers, so the party refused to participate in the executive power and to accept representation in the parliament by three deputies, whose mandate was ended with the end of the transitional period.

Within the political space provided by the transitional period of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the Sudanese Communist Party acted to restore its ranks following long years of secrecy, facing a number of long-standing issues including the renewal of its thought and political action plan in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. The most prominent among these issues was the building of bridges with its social base and its cadres sites. In January 2009 the party held a general conference (the fifth after more than 40 years since the Fourth General Conference in 1967). It hoped to resolve the “public debate” issues pointed out by its central committee in August 1991: lessons to be drawn from the collapse of the socialist experiment, Marxism and the future of socialist thought, the renewal of the party, its name, program and by-laws, and a critical evaluation of its action and history. In addition to the ongoing debate about Marxism, a dispute emerged over tactics and leadership, demonstrated by the conflict between its professional leadership of political action and the new party membership of professionals and students who have accumulated different experiences in public activities in universities and workplaces.

The conference brought the party together, but did not succeed in changing its realization of the new surrounding realities or resolving the contradiction between its professional leadership, whose mass action skills had been eroded by years of secret action, and its base active in professional sectors. In addition, the party could not regain its former positions within trade unions and farmers’ associations because of structural transformations of the economy, represented in the dominance of agricultural production and the transport sector through rail roads, depending on oil as a rentier commodity whose production and income are controlled by the state. Thus, the Communist Party found itself, together with other Leftist forces, trapped to some extent within the capital Khartoum and higher education institutions in other Sudanese cities. It no longer had access to the popular masses outside such frameworks except through the agency of the emerging armed forces on the outskirts of the country, particularly the People’s Movement, the partner of the National Congress in power until the secession of South Sudan in 2011.

The party's initiative disappeared without the internal conflict leading to any significant progress in its performance. Instead, it deteriorated to a conflict over individuals and leadership positions between the party veterans and the active membership, with both sides unable to provide a plan to move forward from internal discussions to blaze new trails for revolutionary action. What compounded such difficulties was the party losing a considerable proportion of its intermediate cadres continuously since the 1989 coup, through exile and migration, as other cadres moved away from partisan activity in despair or in the aftermath of internal conflicts. Thus, the party was preoccupied with internal organizational and financial difficulties rather than with evaluating its political and propaganda plan, and began calling for toppling the National Congress regime and the restoration of democracy as a strategic objective while lacking the tactical measures to achieve this goal. With such lack of preparedness, the party faced the task of maintaining the unity of Sudan, to which it has committed itself in its new program in 2009, emphasizing its support for the right of self-determination of Southern Sudan. Like other "northern" political forces, it failed to influence the voting trends of Southern voters who collectively opted for secession under the leadership of the army of the People's Movement for the Liberation of Sudan.

## The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) (North)

The Communist Party had no serious competitor on the Left other than the Sudan People's Liberation Movement. Upon its inception in 1983, the movement released a manifesto calling for a "new unified democratic and socialist" Sudan, and adopted armed struggle against the central government in Khartoum as the means of achieving this goal. In its first manifesto, the People's Movement gave an analysis of the political and social conflict in the country, to the effect that a limited political (Northern and Southern) elite it described as the "bureaucratic bourgeois elite", controls the state apparatus in Sudan at the expense of the people, primarily the non-Arab and non-Muslim nationalist groups. From this perspective, the manifesto concluded that the issue of South Sudan cannot be solved except through restructuring the Sudanese state as a whole, not through regional rule

or secession as an independent state. The movement, unlike previous Southern forces, was able to extend its armed action to national groups in the Northern regions bordering the South, primarily the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile, and to ally itself at a later stage with armed forces in the Darfur region.

Upon the fall of the Ethiopian Derg regime, the most important ally of the Soviet Union in the African Horn, in parallel with the docility of Sudan under Jaafar Nimeiri to the USA, the political considerations of the People's Movement changed as the movement had lost the support it received from socialist Addis Ababa. The People's Army was forced to a hasty and costly withdrawal from its safe camps inside Ethiopian territory to the south of Sudan. It was met by the Sudanese government army with a fierce combat campaign resulting in the division of the People's Movement into two factions: the main faction led by John Garang, who allied himself with the (Northern) Sudanese opposition forces meeting in Asmara, and a faction led by Riek Machar which signed a peace agreement with the Sudanese government in 1997 allowing the government to control the oil-rich areas in the northern part of South Sudan.

The loss of its Ethiopian shelter imposed on the People's Movement of Sudan a shift in the map of its military action, as well as an ideological shift, at first silent then openly expressed, from a "socialist" orientation and alliance with the Ethiopian Derg regime to a search for the support of the USA, the sole pole following the fall the Soviet Union. It was able to gain support from Washington with the help of the church and civil American forces. According to such jurisprudence of necessity, the movement abandoned its initial socialism in favor of an analysis that there is a contradiction between northern Sudan (Arab and Muslim) and South Sudan (African and Christian) especially as the government of the Islamic movement has declared the war against the People's Army as an Islamic jihad. The way the People's Movement had dropped the socialist orientation, weakened its call for a unified new Sudan. Thus the unity option was paralleled with the option of secession from Sudan.

The war cycle ended in southern Sudan with a comprehensive peace agreement in 2005, which gave southern Sudan the right to self-determination, then independence as a sovereign state after a six-year transitional period, during which the People's Movement shared power with the ruling National Congress, the party of the Islamic movement. The transition period allowed the People's Movement for

the Liberation of Sudan to act publicly in all regions of Sudan, under the pretext of “marginalization”; the country’s center marginalization of the peripherals, and the exploitation of the marginalized majority by the central minority. It was used to define the majority as ethnic groups other than Arabs, linguistically and culturally, while the minority was defined as the Arab Islamic ruling elite. The People’s Movement managed during this period to attract supporters of the Communist Party in urban northern Sudan, students, professionals and intellectuals, combining them with its rural base among non-Arab ethnic groups in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile regions.

The Sudan People’s Liberation Movement tested its strength in the campaign for its presidential candidate, Yasir Arman, at the end of the transitional period. The movement abandoned the campaign at the last minute out of concern for the right of self-determination for southern Sudan so that the achievement of a separate state would not be sacrificed to an uphill battle to gain power in a united Sudan. When a state was established to uproot the southern People’s Movement in South Sudan, the movement’s northern branch was thrown into disarray. Its newly formed public was dispersed between the countryside and the city: an armed faction in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile which returned to fighting following the secession of southern Sudan, and urban parts betting on the power of the movement to change the power balance in Khartoum, which then reaped political isolation. In the midst of this conflict, the ruling National Congress Party, the most chauvinistic faction to face the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement, particularly its northern branch, emerged in the form of the Just Peace Platform. The platform’s newspaper, *Al-Intibaha*, led a relentless campaign preaching the secession of South Sudan as a solution for Sudan, ensuring the safety of Arab-Islamic identity by the expulsion of people of African identity to a country that belongs to them so that there would no longer be a demographic pretext for the movement’s Northern supporters demanding a separation between Islam and the state.

The Sudan People’s Liberation Movement Army (North) today is waging a war against the central government, setting out from the movement’s strongholds in South Kurdufan and Blue Nile, with motives similar to those of the mother Movement Army waging war that led to the secession of southern Sudan in 2011 - primarily the demand for equitable distribution of wealth and power in the country. Thus, the northern People’s Movement Army allied itself with armed forces in Darfur that are still fighting the government, the way the two military

wings of the Sudan Liberation Movement and the Justice and Equality Movement allied themselves and created the Sudanese Revolutionary Front in November 2011.

Several rounds of negotiations between the government and the army of the SPLM, brokered by the African Union, were held to resolve the conflict in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, the movement's main theater of operations, without achieving any progress. The movement views the conflict in these two regions as a one aspect of the overall national crisis in Sudan, which can be resolved only through re-structuring power in Khartoum, aiming to achieve gains like those won by the mother Movement army in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, while the government insists on confining the negotiations to the two regions' local issues. Also the Sudan Liberation Movement and the Justice and Equality Movement factions, the two armed forces hostile to the regime in Darfur, both reject the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (2011), adhered to by the government as a basis for negotiations on the conflict in Darfur<sup>28</sup>. The Revolutionary Front demands the unification of the two negotiation paths (with the SPLM in Addis Ababa, mediated by the African Union and the armed Darfur movements in Doha mediated by the State of Qatar) in a single path, and the convening of a national conference of constitutional dialogue, bringing together all political forces in the country, armed and civilian, under the supervision of a transitional government to replace the President Bashir government and to organize at the end of its mandate free and fair elections.

## The Urban Protest and Resistance Movements

Early in 2010, the Gerifna Movement was formed (its name derived from garaf, "disgust"), by university students in order to topple the candidates of the National Congress in the general elections held in April of the same year as part of the transitional arrangements of

---

28. The Sudanese government and the Movement for Liberation and Justice (a grouping of factions that split from the main armed movements in the province - the two wings of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army and the Movement for Justice and Equality) signed in July 2011 the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, following negotiations hosted and sponsored by Qatar. Later, in April 2013 a new faction dissenting from the Movement for Justice and Equality joined the Agreement according to which were formed the structures of a provincial authority, and a fund for reconstruction with Qatari finances.

the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Gerifina identified itself as a “decentralized popular resistance movement” and its preamble defined it as a movement with no ideology other than rejecting the deteriorating living and humanitarian conditions under the National Congress regime and seeking to initiate political action taking into consideration the diversity of intellectual, theoretical and political orientations of its membership. Later the same year emerged the Change Now movement: a movement for political and social change aiming to overthrow the regime by means of peaceful struggle in co-ordination with all those working to achieve this goal. Similarly to Gerifna, Change Now seeks to topple the ruling regime and replacing it with a democratic one but it shied away from the demand for political power, announcing that it was a “monitoring” or “pressure” group, until “the establishment of adequate and effective democratic structures”.

Gerifna distanced itself from ideologies, whereas Change Now denied itself the label of a political party, emphasizing that it was as a social movement of individuals not affiliated politically as well as members active in their parties. Yet the two movements are considered Leftists according to the Sudanese political dictionary, as both of them oppose one-party rule in its Sudanese “Islamic” version, and aim to replace it with democratic rule and a secular state. Like other political protest movements that have arisen with the uprisings in the Arab world since late 2010, the two movements are largely dependent on social media for promotion and mobilization, rather than on a hierarchical organization and static leadership structures, allowing them to work among the urban masses of young people and university students, and among Sudanese outside the country. However, such dependency denied them the ability to develop their political and organizational tools to achieve concrete purposes that can be gradually turned from protest to the formulation of the demands of social forces interested in the revolution against the existing conditions, and in promoting the revolution, then accumulating the experience to realize it.

The emergence of Gerifna and Change Now demonstrates the inability of the existing opposition parties, including the Communist Party, to represent a broad category of people with higher education whose interests and aspirations contradict with the autocratic regime, and are united by the protest against the prolonged wars, the rampant corruption in the state apparatus, the accumulation of wealth in the hands of those in power and those loyal to them, the restricted job

opportunities, the banning of public freedoms and consequently of the stasis of the political scene because of long-lasting rulers and the dwindling opportunities for a peaceful transfer of power. Accordingly, these two movements' protest is not exclusively related to the ruling regime, but also refers to the tactics of the political elite. Their argument, if correct, would have led to the original Sudanese Communists, discovering Marxist resources on resistance to colonialism, revolting against what they viewed as a poverty in theoretical tools and a hopeless disease in the action of leaders of the political parties.

The Gerifina movement has been unable to topple any of the candidates of the National Congress in the 2010 elections, as the ruling party was prepared with its full security arsenal. The Change Now movement as well has not been able to attract the city masses to their battles protesting against the ruling regime and its activity remained confined mostly within the circle of political activists and civil society organizations, together with political action in universities. Thus the two movements find themselves facing the same issue that restricted the action of the Communist Party: the lack of communication of the Left with the people, especially in rural areas of Sudan, under the burden of the ongoing armed conflict between the central government and insurgent forces on the one hand, and the populations competing for resources through the fanaticism of ethnicities and tribes on the other.

## Challenges and future of the Sudanese Left

The late Tijani Tayeb Babak<sup>29</sup> described the pioneer generation of Sudanese Communists in his speech in 1996 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party as people who "had broken into the unknown for them and for the Sudanese society", as they "founded a party of a new type without previous experience". The novelty was, perhaps, that the link between party members was not based on religion, sect, ethnicity, tribe, language, or region, but rather on choice and common struggle, a link the party

---

29. Member of the central committee of the Sudanese Communist Party, chief editor of the Party's mouthpiece Al-Midan. He was born in 1926 and died in 2011, a founder of the Party and one of its prominent leaders.

had for decades attempted to enhance among the working class and its allies, achieving considerable success before it threatened the pillars of the political structure (as settled following independence into a state for the elite - not for common people) in the October Revolution of 1964.

Sudanese Leftists, whether committed to the Communist Party or not, have accumulated much experience since then. They experienced the military coup and armed action against the ruling forces within the army of the SPLM Sudan or in coalition with it and transitional coexistence, rather than direct confrontation, with the political elite within a broad coalition to restore democracy since the Islamic movement took power in June 1989. In all this, the concern for controlling the state apparatus, or at least restraining it, was given top priority. This priority was criticized by the late Abdul Khaliq Mahjoub, a former Communist Party secretary, stressing that the Communist Party, despite what it had achieved in October 1964 was opposed to Abboud's regime as a political dictatorship, without considering the social forces that supported it and the class composition of the ruling elite. Such a class analysis led Abdul Khaliq to dismiss the Jaafar Nimeiri coup of 25 May 1969 as a mere petty-bourgeois coup. He had been previously encouraging the Communists to stimulate the struggles of workers and farmers through the association of the union and to organize them as the forces with most interest in a radical change of the balance of political power, not separated from such masses by charges of atheism or other hostile propaganda.

The Left has also released a reading of the Sudanese situation, in the Sudanese Communist Party's language, which maintains the priority of the organization of production forces. The political transformations witnessed by the country have led one Leftist faction to rely on the army to control the state apparatus, while another faction preached armed action amid the oppressed nationalities in the countryside for the overthrow of the government many years before the emergence of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Army in 1983. This call was issued by the late Yusuf Abdul Majid and Ahmed Chami, who left the party in August 1964 to establish the Communist Party - revolutionary leadership to lead an armed revolution of peasants and herdsmen in the countryside, like their counterparts in the Chinese Revolution.

The party's coup plan resulted in the bloodbath of July 1971. The armed opposition was undertaken by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Army until South Sudan's independence in 2011, when its northern sector in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile, together with

the armed movements in Darfur allied in the Revolutionary Front of Sudan. The Communist Party's political approach has settled since the 1970s, followed by other Leftist forces, on giving top priority to the contradiction between dictatorship and democracy and then to align with all political forces, without discrimination, in a broader front to restore democracy. Within this perspective, the prerequisites of political economy and calls for class struggle have been postponed, except aspects that directly contributed to the struggle against dictatorship. The Communist Party twice achieved the alliance it wanted, in the face of the ruling Islamic movement, once through the National Democratic Alliance, and the opposition alliance until the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, and then the forces of national consensus, and the second time through a similar alliance laced with a faction of the Islamic movement led by the veteran sheikh Hassan al-Turabi but lacking the Democratic Unionist Party, following the secession of southern Sudan in 2011.

The parties, one after the other, left the National Democratic Rally, leaving the Communist Party to guard over its ruins. Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, head of the Umma Party, formed an agreement with the government in the wake of the rift between President Bashir and Hassan al-Turabi in 1999, and ended his move to the opposition. Afterwards, Mohammed Osman Mirghani, chief of the Democratic Unionist Party, signed a truce in 2003 with then Vice-President Ali Osman Mohamed Taha during the negotiations between the government and the army of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, and eventually the army ended its war with the government through a peace deal in isolation from its allies in the "Northern" opposition, thus guaranteeing the independence of South Sudan. As to the National Consensus Forces, the Democratic Unionist Party was not one of its partners from the outset; it had preferred the coalition with the ruling party, and al-Sadiq al-Mahdi's party left the group, wishing them better luck. The army of the people's movement in northern Sudan went a separate way, establishing an independent military and political alliance with armed movements in Darfur. Eventually, even Hassan al-Turabi with his People's Congress Party left the National Consensus Forces, following tortuous bargaining to restore his relationship with President al-Bashir and the ruling National Congress Party within a presidential call to a "national dialogue" through which the president and his party have succeeded in imposing a new-old polarization over Islamic Sharia.

The political parties with a religious reference frame (the Umma, the democratic Unionist and People's Congress Parties, together with the last dissident from the National Congress, the Reform Now Movement, now headed by Ghazi Salah-Eddin Atabani) all responded to the call of the president. The Communist Party rejected the call, together with the Leftist parties that have remained within the National Consensus Forces alliance; the armed forces combined with the Revolutionary Front and protest youth movements. Each camp had its own considerations: the first do not want to shake the throne more than they should for fear of ousting the whole political elite, while the others view democracy with agreed-upon outcomes, through which the ruling party and its interlocutors hope to recycle the regime, as no way for resolving armed conflicts in the country through sustainable peace.

Thus, the Leftists go back again, though discreetly, to the cause of democracy, whether formal or radical - a case the Left argued for a long period and thought had been resolved in the last century, through the slogan "People's Democracy" of the avant-garde one-party, but the Sudanese Communist Party destabilised this doctrine through its local struggle experience against Jaafar Nimeiri. The party also collided with the results of its commitment to the contradiction between democracy and dictatorship, a first overriding dilemma. The future of the Sudanese Left can be read in the book of experience; the Left achieved its biggest historical victory in October 1964, not through alliance with the political elite, but on the basis of a creative intention to organize rural and urban productive forces and to advocate for their issues as an agenda for political action. The association of action had emerged as a competitor and antidote to the associations of culture, religion, ethnicity and tribalism. This was a matter of urgency under the current conditions of Sudan, without which there could be no way to break up the chronic polarization on Islamic law, nor to reshape the political stage for the benefit of the popular forces against the ruling class, and it is unavoidable to interweave the struggles of people in marginalized rural areas and the struggles of the urban working class.

This vision of the future poses several tasks for the Left which have been absent from its daily agenda since the 1960s, primarily the renewal of its direct knowledge of the political economy of the rural areas of Sudan in the midst of successive waves of primitive accumulation which resulted in continued wars, without

the mediation of the petty-bourgeois leadership of the armed movements active in it; and the renewal of its knowledge of the conditions of the Sudanese working class following the breaking of its historical center in the Sudanese railways and the emergence of new centers of industry with private ownership that are different from those in the era of the Sudanese Left witnessing the predominance of the public sector under the colonial administration and in the aftermath of independence, together with a broad sector of labor forces in small production and services units with limited employment. Furthermore, the late Mohamed Ibrahim Nugud, the former secretary of the Communist Party of Sudan, had three main theses he considered essential to understanding the movement of Sudanese society: the economy of slavery in Sudan; the emergence and evolution of the Sudanese state; and the history of Sufism and its interrelation with other social and political structures. These three levels correspond respectively with Marx's order of social structures: the economic base, the state superstructure, and the civil society institutions connecting both. Slavery was a system of production and a mean of forced recruitment of the workforce, allowing a degree of primitive accumulation which had a decisive impact in the persecution relationship between the central Nile Sudan and slavery theaters in the south of the country and the Mountains of Nuba and Inqasna<sup>30 - 31</sup>. The Sudanese state apparatus subsisted during its historical development on the proceeds of slavery and the protection of the slavery system and its consequent implications for the relationship between the ruling classes and populations subject to slavery. In his book "Slavery Relations in Sudanese Society"<sup>32</sup> (Arabic); Nugud uncovered some aspects of that system during the rule of Mahdia and the British colonization that followed. According to Nugud, the Sufi movements as social institutions have demonstrated an overriding ability to survive and adapt to the state surroundings, and so attracted the writer's attention. Above all, Sufism has represented an effective tool for economic accumulation

---

30. Spaulding, Jay. *The Business of Slavery in the Central Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1910-1930*. African Economic History, 17, 1988.

31. Sharkey, Heather J. *Arab Identity and Ideology in Sudan: The Politics of Language, Ethnicity, and Race*. African Affairs, 2008, Vol. 107, 426.

32. Mohamed Ibrahim Nugud, *Slavery Relations in the Sudanese Society: Origins, Characteristics, and Decay* (Arabic), Bustan al-Ma'rifa Library for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 1995.

and political mobilization, as reflected in the continued influence of the two sects of Al-Ansar and Al-Khatmiyya and of their political parties: al-Umma Party and the Democratic Unionist Party.

According to the above, the Sudanese Left finds itself facing the task of re-inventing its revolutionary theory. This applies to the Communist Party as well as to the forces that desire to change the power structure and the division of wealth through armed struggle, and to left-wing factions that see themselves as lacking ideology and founded on the call for freedom, dignity, democracy and social justice, without concern for how to realize these objectives. In this regard, the above-mentioned diagnosis of Ali Mazrui is correct in maintaining that Sudan is a multiple margin in its regional environment: it passed through the wave of Arab uprisings that toppled the ruling regimes in its neighboring Egypt and Libya and threatens the geopolitical setting resulting from the colonial era in the whole region including the country map, power relations and power hierarchies of national, religious and sectarian formations - a wave that looked like the greatest echo of Sudan's own contemporary history. The power relations static for many years in the region have erupted as revolutions and civil wars on the basis of religious and sectarian identities, whereas Sudan has experienced, ever since its independence, the armed conflict between the North and South until it realized the right to self-determination as a way out of an endless war, and the armed conflict about equal citizenship is still going on in the peripheries. In this military furnace, the Sudanese people have once and again overthrown dictatorship, in 1964 and 1985, to open the way for democracy and triumphed and experienced setbacks. They also tested the promise of political Islam in opposition and in government and tamed its organizations, first of all the ruling National Congress, through daily resistance until it retreated from advocating a state-owned religion to a pragmatic "secular" Islamic law involving political rhetoric and exposed techniques to suppress the urban poor, until it was stripped of alleged sacredness.

Sudan, with its multiple marginality, is a weak link in the surrounding geopolitical system. The state has not been able to impose unconditional dominance on the people and their lives, and they are still struggling against it in peace and war. Thus, Sudan is a novel experiment in the making of homelands on a democratic progressive basis in the interest of the ordinary people. The call is continued upon the Sudanese Left to follow the advice of Lenin and starts from

the beginning, and to overcome the unknown paved by its pioneers, and snatch the political initiative in this hour of chaos; or as Mao Tse-Tung said: "There is great chaos under heaven - the situation is excellent."



# The Moroccan Left: the reality of the crisis and the throes of change

---

Imad Stitou

*Imad Stitou is a Moroccan journalist and writer. He contributes to many Moroccan newspapers and magazines, including the daily "Al-Masa'" and the weeklies "Hsepress" and "Al-An"; and has worked as a correspondent for the Lebanese "Al-Akhbar" and "Al-Quds Al-Arabi". In addition to his articles in the Arabic section of Radio Netherlands International site, he has had a number of articles published in cultural, intellectual and research journals. Politically, he participated in the struggle with the student Left at university before joining the Unified Socialist Party.*

## Introduction

Morocco has been a monarchy since the evacuation of the French protectorate<sup>1</sup>, following the signing of the abolition of protection by the coalition government led by Mbarek Bekkay and the French authorities on 2 March 1956. The Moroccan monarchy had a central position in constitutional documents from the founding constitution of 14 December 1962 to the last constitutional amendment of July 2011. The constitutional issue was central to the dialectic of convergence and divergence between components of the Moroccan political arena; it represented one of the most prominent sources of dispute at the time of laying the foundations of a modern nation state after independence. It has also been a source of tension between the royal institution and the party descended from the national movement for more than three decades<sup>2</sup>.

---

1. Muhammad Maliki, «the Constitution and the Organization of Powers», (in Arabic) publications of Al-Waseet for Democracy and Human Rights.

2. Ibid.

At the political level, the 2011 constitution endorsed the monarchy as the ruling institution in Morocco. It contained some positive developments on the level of strengthening the role of government and the prime minister. The king retained the core powers assigned to him in previous traditional constitutions - the continuation of executive monarchy and ignoring demands for transition to a parliamentary monarchy by several political forces in the street movement, represented in the 20 February Movement. The current Moroccan constitution enhances the religious status of the king, despite criticisms and objections of the constitutional provisions related to "religious legitimacy". The king, though delegating some powers to the prime minister, has continued to exercise a number of important powers such as presiding over the ministerial council, which is in charge of strategic issues, such as regulatory bylaws, bylaws on constitutional review, strategic guidelines of the state, guidelines of the finance bill, draft texts relating to the military and the drafting of the general amnesty law.

However, this new constitutional document has not been respected, as martial law has rapidly been enacted again. The authority no longer believes that the constitution of 2011 constitutes a binding frame of reference, but rather a document whose execution awaits the emergence of a new balance of forces. The current balance of forces does not support the new constitution, which arose as an exceptional response to exceptional circumstances<sup>3</sup>.

On the economic and social level, Morocco is facing a difficult situation recognized by the country's official institutions. The Economic and Social Council's report for 2012 painted a bleak picture of the Moroccan economy, which the report described as fragile, and characterised by a considerable decline in growth, a decrease in the number of jobs created, and a decline in Morocco's currency reserves. This comes at a time when the reduced agricultural crop caused by erratic rainfall contributed to the decline in living conditions of broad categories of Moroccans whose incomes are linked directly or indirectly to the agricultural sector<sup>4</sup>.

The Moroccan government has pursued a policy of austerity since October 2012 in compliance with the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), after realizing the prevention and

---

3. Dr. Muhammad al-Sassi, political science professor and Leftist politician, «Settling and Account», al-Masaa, 31 August, 2012.

4. Lahcen Achy, the Carnegie Middle East Center, «Morocco's Stalling Economy», 29 May, 2012.

liquidity line confirmed in February of the current year, thus making Moroccan economic policies subject to foreign decisions. Such policies were paid for dearly by Moroccan citizens since the early 1980s with the application of the structural adjustment program. These economic reforms, directed by the IMF, aimed at dismantling the system for subsidising foods and petroleum products (the clearing fund), replacing it with direct aid, raising the retirement age to 65 years and other measures initiated by the Islamist-led government. It began implementing some of them through standardizing prices of diesel, gasoline and industrial fuel according to fluctuations in commodity prices in global markets, leaving the consumer to shoulder the burden of any increase in prices; cancelling MD15 billion from the investment budget, and developing the financial austerity bill in 2014<sup>5</sup>.

The last constitutional amendment was an attempt to contain the spark of democratic spring in the region in early 2011, of which the February 20 Movement represented the Moroccan version, with its slogans demanding the overthrow of tyranny and corruption and calling for living in dignity with social justice. However, the youth movement did not achieve adequate popularity and consequently disintegrated fast due to several factors, including: the different political visions of a number of its components, the ambiguity of some of its slogans, lack of media and trade union support, weakness of the popular identification with some components of the movement's forces, and manoeuvres of the political regime. Also the dramatic and bad endings in several countries which witnessed sparks of uprisings contributed to of the deterioration of popular sympathy with the Moroccan Movement vis-a-vis the triumph of the discourse of maintaining security and stability.

Three years after the Moroccan popular movement which drew together many elements of the Left and Islamists, the Moroccan situation seems characterized by ambiguity halfway through the term of the new government led for the first time by the Islamist Justice and Development Party, which formed a coalition full of contradictions and lacking clarity. The party was forced to re-constitute its majority following the decision of the right-wing Independence Party to withdraw from the government on 9 July 2013, and replaced it with

---

5. Intervention by Salahuddin Lamaizi at the 1st African Conference of the International Network for Cancelling Debts of the Third World, Tunis, 21-23 March 2014.

the National Rally of Independents Party, an administrative party. This second version of government included ministers not affiliated with any party; an indicator of retreat from the idea of a political government emanating from ballots.

The government approach revealed a retreat from the margin provided by the constitution of 2011 through avoiding conflict or approaching the economic influence centers that dominate major projects in the country. It seems that the situation is returning to where it was before, and to the consolidation of state control over the political process. This was confirmed by the prime minister saying clearly that “the basic powers are in the hands of the monarchy. We preside over the cabinet and we have specific powers within the state<sup>6</sup>”.

The Moroccan political scene is generally characterized by balkanization and division, leading to a widespread aversion to party affiliation, and to loss of hope in achieving the transition to democracy. While the left-wing parties that participated in the experience called “harmonic rotation” have failed to carry out a critical review of their participation in government and to draw lessons from it, the right-wing parties are still dependent on the administration; the democratic Left parties are still unable to form an organized political force, and have thus caused the balance of power to lean towards the conservative parties and those supported by the state.

## Shifts in the concept of the Moroccan left

The collapse of the Soviet Union had a profound impact on the concept of the Left today, yet we can get back to the basic concept of the Left proposed by the French revolution as being the expression for the forces that defend the poor and their aspirations and seek to establish social justice. The Moroccan Left has undergone transformations that began even before the disintegration of the socialist communist bloc; with the failure of the Arab liberation project, producing a multi-faceted Left which was the outcome of protracted political conflict.

The parties and organizations affiliated to the Left in Morocco are

---

6. Interview of Prime Minister Abd-alilah Benkeeran, «Al-Hurrah» website, 8, August 2014.

rooted in the time of the protectorate, as all the Leftist organizations in the Moroccan arena are descendants of the Moroccan Communist Party and the Independence Party. The Moroccan Communist Party is the oldest left-wing organization in Morocco, founded in 1936 as a branch of the French Communist Party in Morocco<sup>7</sup>, while the conflict within the Independence Party between the right-wing conservative trend led by the Salafist Allal El Fassi and the progressive Leftist trend led to the birth of the National Union of Popular Forces in 1959 under the leadership of Mehdi Ben Barka.

With the defection of the Leftist wing of the Independence Party, which founded its own party, new political forces opposed to the regime began to appear in Morocco in the aftermath of the protectorate era. The Communist and Independence parties were united in their attitude towards the constituent constitution of the country in 1962. The two Leftist parties agreed on the rejection of this constitution, demanding a constituent council despite their deep differences<sup>8</sup>.

The Moroccan Communist Party, affected by the model of the Soviet Union, has adopted Marxism-Leninism as a frame of reference since its third conference in 1966. It adopted the principle of democratic centralism which does not allow the presence of conflicting trends and tendencies within its ranks, while the ranks of the National Union of Popular Forces included a mixture of various opinions and attitudes: pan-Arab nationalist, Nasserite, socialist and Marxist<sup>9</sup>.

This stage of Moroccan history can be seen as the stage of conflict between "the Left" and "the regime". Attitudes and demands by the two parties made their members subject to a number of political trials, especially members of the National Union of Popular Forces, which was betting on the establishment of a parliamentary regime under which the king retains symbolic powers, while the Moroccan Communists paid the price for subordination to Moscow policies through the arrest of a number of their high-profile leaders.

This intense political struggle between the regime and the Left would

---

7. Khalid Al-Nasiri, «The Moroccan Left: Reality and Prospects», «Nawafith» magazine, No. 4, 1999.

8. Khalid Al-Nasiri, «The Moroccan Left: Reality and Prospects», «Nawafith» magazine, No. 4, 1999.

9. Ibid.

lead to the emergence of currents more radical than the two Leftist organizations themselves, such as the “March 23” and “Forward” movements. This was an expression of the rejection of a number of both parties’ members of the leadership that began to show what members saw as cowardice and deviation from essential policy. Both of the two new movements adopted radical revolutionary demands and pursued covert action influenced by the ideas of Che Guevara and Mao Tse-Tung, seeking to overthrow the existing regime through public incitement.

In the meantime, the traditional Moroccan Left - during the period following the two constitutions of 1970 and 1972, which the two parties had refused - began a process of semi-reconciliation with the regime after many years of conflict. This remarkable change in the position of the traditional Left came about through fears over the independence of Western Sahara after Spain threatening to grant it the status of a sovereign state. The royal institution, in turn, acquiesced to the inevitability of uniting political forces around the “territorial integrity issue”. The king called the leaders of the Party of Progress and Socialism (the former Moroccan Communist Party) and the Socialist Union (formerly the National Union of Popular Forces) and assigned to them as well as other party leaders the task of defending Morocco’s case to the world.

Under such circumstances, interspersed by two failed military coups against the Hassan II regime, the traditional left-wing parties have reached a conclusion which leads to the necessity of reviewing their own convictions, especially with the mounting Marxist tide in other left-wing forces that aspired to achieving comprehensive change, which includes the class structure, through revolution.

The Socialist Union and the Progress and Socialism parties adopted the slogan “democratic process”, in an attempt to resolve uncertainty over the options of both parties, which permanently relinquished the revolutionary option despite the fact that some of their members were still opting for revolutionary action. By adopting the “democratic process” slogan, the Socialist Union became dominated in 1975 by what was known as the “democratic struggle strategy”, while the Party of Progress and Socialism would adopt a similar program titled “the national democratic program”<sup>10</sup>.

---

10. Muhammad Zareef, “Moroccan Parties: from Confrontation to Consensus”, 1934-1999, the Moroccan Review of Sociology, 2001.

However, contradictions within the Socialist Union Party began to emerge between a wing which tended to negotiate with the regime and accept the political game (the political bureau) and a radical wing clinging to the party's main line since 1979. These contradictions led to severe conflicts within the party, ending with the imprisonment of a number of party activists on 8 May 1983. The dominant wing composed of the political bureau members agreed to participate in the elections held during the same year. This wing, to continue later bearing the name the Socialist Union, was charged with seizing the party and striking a deal with the regime<sup>11</sup>.

The conflict between critics and the other wing within the Socialist Union was not confined to issues of "the democratic process" and elections; it was a struggle over the party's ideological line, identity and fundamental principles. The critical wing continued perceiving itself as the true representative of the idea of the Socialist Union, considering the other wing illegitimate, until 6 October 1991, when it renamed itself the Party of the Socialist Democratic Vanguard.

At the heart of the political and ideological debate in jails on the Marxist–Leninist movement in Morocco, a group affiliated to the March 23 Movement would emerge adopting the legal action option. In the early 1980s this group established a Leftist party named the Organization of Popular Democratic Action (which would integrate in 2002 with other left-wing components). The Organization refused to participate in any of the governments or to vote "yes" for the constitutions, but a wing within the Organization expressed a positive attitude towards the constitutional amendments in 1996, in harmony with the position of the Socialist Union Party, and the Organization experienced a split. On the other hand, a group of left-wing cadres stemming from the experience of the "Forward" organization was formed. The revolutionary spirit of this group was still retained by the Democratic Nahj Party in 1995.

Through the engagement of the Moroccan reformist Left parties in the experience known in Morocco as "harmonic rotation", these parties witnessed internal splits. The Popular Democratic Action Organisation witnessed the split of a group that later founded the Socialist Democratic Party, which later merged with the Socialist Union. The Socialist Union in turn witnessed a series of defections resulting in the formation of two parties: the "Federal National Congress" and the "Loyalty to

---

11. Ahmad ben Jallon, a document of «From the Union to the Vanguard Party: the Continuity».

Democracy" group.

In light of the above, the Moroccan Left conducted several dialogues designed to re-examine the goals and roles of the Left as well as to re-formulate its identity, as the most important criterion had been the position vis-a-vis the experience of "harmonic rotation". Thus the process of assembling the Marxist-Leninist Left led the merger of a number of independent Leftist groups (such as The Independent Democrats, the Movement for Democracy and the Left-wing Activists) with the Popular Democratic Action Organization into The Unified Socialist Leftist Party in 2002<sup>12</sup>. This merger came as a reaction to the tendency of the traditional left-wing parties to adopt liberal slogans<sup>13</sup>.

In 2005, the Loyalty for Democracy Group, emerging from the Socialist Union Party, integrated with the Unified Socialist Left to establish the Unified Socialist Party in an attempt to realize the idea of the Greater Socialist Party in order to accelerate the creation of the necessary conditions for democracy with its major political, constitutional, social and cultural dimensions<sup>14</sup>.

It can be concluded that it is necessary to distinguish between the three Leftist trends of Moroccan history: the Communist school, the Unionist school, and the Left of the 1970s.

## A Varied Moroccan Left

It can be said, then, that the Moroccan Left has three trends: 1) a historic Left that kept only the Left's name and roots as most of its options are essentially neoliberal, and whose participation during the Moroccan movement was conservative and did not go beyond the personal involvement of a number of its members; 2) a radical Left which was active in the demonstrations of February 20, which, in turn, is divided into two parts: the Left which calls for radical reform of the regime through the establishment of a parliamentary monarchy, represented by the following parties which recently formed an alliance

12. See the reference document of the Unified Socialist Leftist Party, 2002.

13. Hasan Tariq, Prof., Political Science and a Leftist politician, intervention at the panel discussion: «The Moroccan Left: The Labour of Change» organized by the Adab magazine, 2010.

14. Text of the Political Charter of the Unified Socialist Party, 2005.

called The Federal Democratic Left: the Socialist Democratic Vanguard, the Unified Socialist Party and the Federal National Congress Party; 3) There was a more radical trend, represented by the Democrat Nahj Party which refuses to limit its demands to parliamentary monarchy.

## The Unified Socialist Party

The founding of the Unified Socialist Party in 2005 represented a convergence of two political ideas, as the perceptions of a prominent polar component of the Unified Socialist Left, the Popular Democratic Action Organization, were identical with the conclusions reached by the Loyalty to Democracy group which had cut links with the Socialist Union, and the alliance between the unified Socialist Left (with its four components) and the Loyalty to Democracy group was then considered an alliance against the enemies of democracy<sup>15</sup>.

The Unified Socialist Party presents itself as an independent left-wing party which adopts the socialist option with all of liberation, democratic and human aspects, together with the democratic struggle strategy, and utilizes mass mobilization and struggle to defend its democratic project and its political program. The party declares its support for the higher interests of the nation and the rights of working women and men and all those affected by the ongoing unjust conditions.

The Unified Socialist Party (like its predecessor, United Left Socialist) has embodied the idea of unity, yet the obstacles facing such unity have been numerous and the party is still experiencing labour pains. It seemed that the party was occupied by managing the unity process more than the development of its program, as numerous points have always been behind deepening the gap between those who review their convictions about issues in accordance with changing circumstances, and those whose convictions have remained at a standstill<sup>16</sup>, as participating in the elections has been a permanent moot point between the various components of the party, the most recent being 25 November 2011, the parliamentary elections. However, the party is credited for its ability to preserve its unity by organizing the internal currents and granting them a framework within the party to express their views and positions,

---

15. Statement by Ibrahim Yasin, the French-language weekly «Le-journal», No. 109 ,2003.

16. Statement by Muhammad Bulaish, Al-Mustaqel newspaper, March 2001.

notwithstanding some occasional setbacks that might hinder this process. This experiment continues as the third national congress of the party yielded two currents, Democracy Here and Now and the Citizen Left Current”.

The Unified Socialist Party has participated in a number of elections (parliamentary elections in 2007, the collective elections in 2009), but its gains remained meagre. In its third congress, the party acknowledged the existence of the crisis, as it had believed that achieving significant electoral progress would lead to achieving political progress which would in turn spark a new dynamic. The party took the decision to boycott the early elections in November 2011 for several reasons, including that they were prepared on the same lines under the same conditions. Additionally, the party considered the elections process was becoming marginalised because four-fifths of the presumed voters do not participate in the voting, and the voting base of the Left is taking a negative attitude towards participation. The party maintained, therefore, that its participation would not be productive democratically and necessary because it was not able to achieve the goals that the Left used to achieve through elections; to turn elections into a real political battle<sup>17</sup>.

However, the last party congress deepened the gap between the currents within it. The past trends of previous conferences have disappeared in favour of fusion in the general program of “Democracy Here and Now”. However, the “Citizen-Left” current has since the first day expressed its disagreement with the general policy of the party, maintaining, on more than one occasion, as expressed by a number of its statements, that the party is in a state of vacuum as to its political plan.

The current believes that the party takes good positions on discrete issues, but they lack a unifying thread and often do not translate into reality, due to the absence of a clear political plan, as well as of mechanisms for implementation. The current notes a return to the pre-party integration stage at the expense of its unity and of the political and historical responsibility in the task of building the Left and re-establishing a comprehensive democratic project<sup>18</sup>. These differences erupted

---

17. Background «Democracy Here and Now», adopted by the Unified socialist Party at its third conference, December 2011.

18. Statement by the national coordinating committee of «the Citizen Left» current, 21-9-2013.

dramatically the day after the decision taken by the party to enter a large coalition in the shape of a federation between the Vanguard and the Federal National Congress parties. Despite the fact that several elements of the party had criticized making such a hasty decision under the prevailing conditions, they reluctantly accepted that decision, while the “citizen-left” openly rejected the proposition. Many circles within these parties maintained that it raised the level of co-ordination in anticipation of a possible participation in the upcoming electoral occasions.

The party’s written platform for the third national conference station includes a roadmap comprising several tasks: the rehabilitation of the idea of involvement in politics, the continuation of the struggle for a constitution of parliamentary monarchy, preparedness for the transition to a parliamentary monarchy, promotion of the Leftist space of action, struggling to achieve general conditions for democratic and free elections, intensifying the intellectual and cultural struggle, achieving a deep internal change within the party, and opening new spaces for youth activity<sup>19</sup>.

According to many observers, the party suffers from a sharp contradiction between the revolutionary faction and the reformist faction. If not addressed, such contradiction could lead the party to a future split. The party is also suffering from poor discipline on the part of a number of its members. While there are members who struggle and sacrifice continuously because they believe in the party, others absent themselves continuously. In addition, there is the problem of mass and trade union organizations through which the party members struggle, where the party unionists are distributed among nearly four union central committees, a situation inherited from the pre-merger stage.

## Democratic Way (Nahj) Party

Democratic Nahj Party is considered the most radical leftist party in Morocco. The party, founded in 1995 by a number of previous cadres of the Marxist-Leninist “Forward” organization, refuses to set any limit on its struggle against the existing regime - a point of disagreement between the party and the “Left Federation”, which calls for a radical change that retains symbolic powers for the monarchy. Nevertheless,

---

19. The program points of the Party as at the political document adopted at its third conference, December 2011.

the Democratic Nahj Party faces criticism from limited, more stringent Leftist currents especially within universities, which accuse the party of abandoning its Marxist line and adopting revisionist perceptions pertaining to the ideas of the “Forward” organization.

The decision to establish the Democratic Nahj Party was taken after the failed first attempts to assemble the new Left following the release of the latest group of Forward organization detainees in 1994. In its early years the party continued to invest in Organization heritage, despite abandoning a number of slogans from the Organization, such as “People’s War of Liberation” and “Revolutionary Violence”. The party also continued to refuse to engage in the political process, even tactically, in order to consolidate its status with the masses and call for its socialist agenda, on the basis that such engagement would not be of great importance in the absence of a party with a strong presence in different regions and the logistics and media capability for mass mobilization<sup>20</sup>. The Democratic Nahj Party maintains that elections can be used as a tool for emancipation from oppression and tyranny only after the building of a radical democratic force that expresses the popular classes’ front<sup>21</sup>.

At its last congress two years ago, the party introduced the slogan “a united front of popular struggle against the ruling elite for building a democratic regime”. This slogan reflects a desire by the party to cooperate with other left-wing forces to create a political and social Leftist pole. The party believes that the social mobility represented by the February 20 Movement showed that the masses need to have a political organization, and that the way to achieve this passes through the establishment of a front that leads the struggle for democracy in Morocco, and plays the role of a real opposition.

The party’s refusal to specify the nature of the political regime it wants represents a permanent point of contention with the parties that have formed the “Left Federation”. Despite the belief, current since Mustafa Barahme succeeded Abdullah Hareef as party leader, that the party’s positions may change, ambiguity and lack of clarity in the position of the party continued. The party refuses to suggest any particular form of regime, whether a monarchy or republic, and believes that the people are authorized to resolve the issue of the form of regime to rule them. Their struggle will remain focused on

---

20. Hasan Al-Saeed, «features of the Political Situation», the Democratic Nahj newspaper, No. 71-72, September 2002.

21. Documents of the party’s first conference, the section on elections.

achieving a democratic system reflecting the will of the people, and constitutional rules agreed upon and voted for by the Moroccan people. The party justifies its political practice as organizing that part of the community which refuses to engage in the current political game, and that its involvement in the existing institutions opposes its orientation towards reforming and changing them so as to become accessible to the masses<sup>22</sup>.

The Democratic Nahj Party does not believe that the rebuilding of the Left can occur without creating a militant grassroots front for freedom, democracy and decent living. So the party saw in the proposed “Democratic Left Federation” a shift to the Right that would increase the weakness and isolation of the Left on the popular level. More than that, party leaders wrote accusing the leaders of the federation parties of fear of real change and of acting in defence of the legitimacy of the existing regime. The party also rejects the premises saying that the weakness of the Moroccan Left should make building its relationship with the masses its top priority. It believes that a party’s confinement to building itself and acting among the masses without a strong and active involvement in the general struggle in society in order to build a democratic system is an error, leading either to strengthening the existing system or making the forces of political Islam alone fight the battle for change<sup>23</sup>.

The third national congress of the party (in July 2012) represented a continuation of the party’s clinging to its Marxist identity as reflected in its documents, and its continued bet on the vanguard role that must be played by the working class in order to reach the desired changes. So the recommendations of the Congress called upon left-wing activists to associate with workers intellectually, politically and organizationally. Furthermore, the party stresses the necessity of isolating the ruling elite as a necessary condition for the establishment of a democratic system. The Democratic Nahj also retained the aspiration of building a political organization of the working class, which would lead the struggle for democracy in

---

22. Interview with Mustafa Al-Barahme, the national secretary of the Democratic Nahj Party, *Al-Masaa’ daily*, 19-10-2012.

23. An article by leader at the Party Abdullah Al-Hareef, «On Criticism of Some Wrong Ideas», the Democratic Nahj Party newspaper, July 2014.

socialist transformation<sup>24</sup>.

It could be argued that the conditions under which the Nahj was founded have characterized its organizational structure, so that the transition from a secret organization whose existence requires a high level of rigor, discipline, commitment and centralization to a public organization based on the criticism of such centralization, have produced an organization characterized by the absence of rigor and a loose definition of "the member identity". Also, the enrolment of many public activists who were bound to the Marxist-Leninist movement in Morocco by sympathy in the absence of an organizational relationship, would lead to reducing the importance of organizing, so that the organization becomes a mere framework for co-ordinating (not directing) mass action. This is why a handful of party members have been engaged in political action while the vast majority of members were exhausted by mass action<sup>25</sup>.

As is the case for a number of left-wing parties, the Democratic Nahj Party is unable to produce new political elites at the same intellectual level of the current elites descended from the Marxist-Leninist experience. That is because the prevalence of loyalty and devotion to the leadership of the Organization does not encourage a spirit of independence and critical thinking among the party's youth who lack in-depth political training versus widespread relations based on enthusiasm, emotions and slogans.

## The Federal National Congress Party

The Federal National Congress Party represents an extension of the Moroccan federal movement, and a continuation of the movement's divisions. The party emerged from the sixth national congress of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (in March 2001) and the conflict on positions among different wings within the party, as the Unionists affiliated with trade-union wing of the party (the Democratic Confederation for Labour) decided to withdraw in protest at the results of the sixth congress on the organizational level, after that these results had reduced the role of the union within the party. It seemed that

---

24. Resolutions and documents of the third national conference of the Nahj Party, July 2012.

25. The Current Political Situation, a document of the Democratic Nahj Party, 2007.

the general trend is moving towards disengagement, given that the parallels between the trade union movement and the political dynamic has become a heavy burden on the uniformity of the political struggle and on its interim strategic accords<sup>26</sup>.

The results of the sixth national conference would drive the trade-unionist wing of the party, led by Noubir Al-Umawi, and a number of party MPs to form a “corrective movement” demanding the convening of an extraordinary conference as stipulated in the internal regulations of the congress and the by-laws of the party in the event of serious developments that affect the safety of the congress. The protesters organized demonstrations in Casablanca and Al-Umawi, sent a letter to Abd al-Rahman Al-Yusufi asking him to hold a new congress based on transparency and integrity and expressed the willingness of those who have withdrawn from the congress to return to their mother party, but the leadership sent no reply. Therefore, the members who withdrew from the congress declared in October of the same year the birth of a new party, which included angry trade unionists while some MPs of the corrective movement returned to the mother party. The “Loyalty for Democracy Group” (which would later join the Unified Socialist Party) had reservations as to joining the new party because of lack of guarantees for their right to join as a distinctive current within the party.

The political document of the party criticized the intellectual renewal brought about by the sixth national congress of the Socialist Union Party, citing the Socialist International, considering that the conceptual device of the Socialist International cannot be imported because of the different contexts in the areas of democracy and human rights. The party adopts the same socialist line of the ideological report of the 1975 conference of the Socialist Union Party, and upholds the strategy of “democratic struggle” as a way to realize socialism. The same document maintained that the democratic struggle strategy is common to all, while disputes are due to issues in translating this strategy. The document of the foundational congress identified the social composition of the party as follows: the youth, the working class, poor and middle peasants, poor and middle craftsmen and traders, pupils and students, women, the unemployed, pensioners

---

26. The Political Document of the sixth conference of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces, March 2001.

and the self-employed<sup>27</sup>.

The party, like other parties in the Democratic Left Federation, adopts the demand for the establishment of a parliamentary monarchy system in Morocco, as the party views this system to be more advanced than a republican presidential one because it allows for a peaceful transition without violence. The party argues that the uprisings and revolutions in a number of countries in the region have had many victims and exacted a heavy economic price, without any guarantee of a democratic transformation. Among the conditions necessary for such transformation as envisioned by the Federal National Congress are the protection of private and public rights; the holding of free and open elections and opening the way for real political competition<sup>28</sup>.

In its eighth conference (December 2012), the party clearly expressed its desired democratic system, stating that the pre-requisite for democratic change is a constitution which recognizes a democratic system that establishes a parliamentary monarchy of transition from the state society to society state, where the King reigns but does not rule, and puts an end to all forms of corruption, theft of public finance and national resources. The party also did not rule out the option of taking to the streets again to defend the rights of the people and the struggle for a democratic constitution of a parliamentary monarchy which ensures a real separation between powers, and gives the people the right to govern themselves through the ballot box in transparent and fair elections that give rise to a government accountable to the people and has all the powers in decision-making and implementation of its program, and ensures the right of the people to hold it accountable<sup>29</sup>.

In contrast to its allies in the Federation, the party decided to participate in the parliamentary elections of 2011. It called on citizens to register in the electoral lists justifying its choice, which was a surprise to its allies at the time, by the necessity for: the practical expression of Morocco's need for real democratic change; real accountability for public officials who have manipulated the people and destroyed employment,

---

27. The Political Document of the constituent conference of the Unionist National Congress Party, October 2001.

28. Intervention by the secretary-general of the Unionist National Congress Party Abdulsalam Lezeez at the panel discussion «The Crisis of Democratic Transition and the Unity of Moroccan Left», Benjereer, February 2013.

29. The Concluding Statement of the eighth conference of the «Unionist National Congress» Party, December 2012.

education and health and enhanced corruption, bribery and poverty, and trade in the voices of the Moroccans to maintain their positions and protect their illegal interests and wealth; strongly confronting all forms of humiliation and insulting of Moroccans through purchasing consciences and votes; and resisting political, electoral and financial lobbies. The party saw participating in elections as a national duty to stop all kinds of fraud, electoral corruption and fabricating fake institutions with no credibility<sup>30</sup>.

However, the party quickly resorted to self-criticism in its eighth conference, acknowledging indirectly that its choice of electoral participation in this context was not correct. It described these elections as corrupt and directed towards containing the political situation of social and political mobility, ensuring the continuation of absolute rule, corruption and intellectual misery, and maintaining the economic and social choices that have brought Morocco to a dead end. The party viewed the current government as weak, confused, lost and unable to respond to the expectations of Moroccans in the fight against corruption and tyranny raised as a slogan for its campaign.

The Federal National Congress Party has a special status almost non-existent among other left-wing organizations. The relationship between the party and the trade union is almost that of absolute identification; the trade union even influences and dominates the party. In its strength, the party bets on the masses affiliated with the Union, and most of its decisions depend on the options and considerations of the central council of the Union – objectively related to it. This situation has been a point of division within the party bases of its two allies in the federation, as many voices within the Vanguard and Unified Socialist Parties have refused to ally with a party at the mercy of the Union and its fluctuating options.

## The Democratic Socialist Vanguard Party

The Democratic Socialist Vanguard Party was formed as an extension of the critical Leftist wing of the Socialist Union Party, within which emerged internal contradictions between a radical current and another tending to move to the Right since 1979, when the party leadership

---

30. Statement by the party political bureau calling for participating at elections, 5 October 2011.

refused to implement the party central committee's decision to withdraw from parliament and local councils. The period between the third national congress of the party and May 1983 witnessed intensification of the conflict between the party leadership and the critical current. This current severely criticized the growing integration of the party into the state apparatus and the practices of a number of its corrupt officials as well as the position of the referendum of 23 May 1980 (to determine the king's full legal age at 16 years), until the conflict was resolved in May 1983 when a number of activists were imprisoned, and the critical wing continued outside the Socialist Union which viewed itself as the true representative of the idea of the Socialist Union, describing the other wing as illegitimate. Eventually, this wing split naming itself the "Democratic Socialist Vanguard Party" on 6 October 1991. The Vanguard Party views itself as an extension of the authentic federalist movement heritage.

The party adopted the slogan of "parliamentary monarchy" in its seventh national conference (April 2012) and its involvement in the Left Federation has confirmed its inclination towards this option. Its recent conference reflected the continued oscillation within the party between two viewpoints, one pro the line of explicit demands for "parliamentary monarchy" and another against determining a limit for demands and leaving the issue at a point where the power is to the people. The party calls for the establishment of a parliamentary monarchy system, similar to that of Britain and Spain, where the king reigns but not rules, and where the regime ensures a real separation between powers. The party considers that the present regime opts for liberal choices while the party calls for the equitable distribution of wealth. The party also decided to boycott the 2011 constitution as being non-democratic in terms of the way it had been prepared by a committee appointed by the king, and in terms of its content assigning all powers to the king<sup>31</sup>.

The Democratic Socialist Vanguard Party continued to refuse to participate in the electoral process until it changed its attitude towards participation in the 2007 elections, together with the Unified Socialist Left and the Federal National Congress. The party had for decades refused to engage in any elections, on the basis of the lack of political and legal conditions for a genuine democracy with democratic

---

31. Interview with Abdul-Rahman Benamr, the national secretary of the Vanguard Party, the «Usbu'» weekly, March 2014.

constitutional reforms and free elections. However<sup>32</sup>, it has now moved from the “absolute boycott” stage to the logic of viewing elections as a way to achieve democracy, which participation in or boycotting is subject to prevailing situation.

The party notes, in the statement issued by its seventh congress, the lack of will for comprehensive reform by the ruling class through passing a constitution that does not respond to the expectations of the Moroccan people and their legitimate aspirations to establish a true democracy and through conducting parliamentary elections with controlled results, lacking credibility and popular legitimacy due to the exclusion of at least one-third of the electorate.

## Party of Progress and Socialism

The Party of Progress and Socialism is viewed as a legitimate heir of the Moroccan Communist Party, founded in 1943. To talk about the development of the Communist Party, participating today in a coalition government led by Islamists, we have to go back to the roots of the emergence of the Communist tide in Morocco. The first Communist cells in Morocco had appeared by 1935, before the French Communist Party established a branch in Morocco comprising at the beginning French members living in Morocco and Algeria, and Italian and Spanish members. But Communists had great difficulty in launching their action because of conflict with the Protectorate authorities and due to differences on the disengagement from the mother party in France. Attracting Moroccan members was difficult, and in 1939 the party leaders were arrested and the party itself resolved by a French decision to dissolve the mother party in France. But the party restored legality under the name of “the Moroccan Communist Party” and attracted more Moroccan members, totalling about 2,000 in 1945. By 1945, Ali Yata assumed the party leadership, and thus began a gradual process of Moroccanization of the party and the disappearance of European elements<sup>33</sup>.

After the evacuation of French Protectorate forces, the party was banned again in 1959 by a decision of Abdullah Ibrahim’s government, despite the party’s support of the government and its good intentions

---

32. Stands by the Party published at the «Tariq» newspaper, 20 April 2002.

33. Jami’ Baida, «Communism in Morocco during the Colonial Period», October 2010.

toward the regime. The decision was justified by anti-monarchy and anti-Islamic charges. Banned during the 1960s, the party began gradually to revoke its Communist approach and to abandon the principle of Marxism-Leninism and replace it with Scientific Socialism. In 1966 the Moroccan Communist Party held its third congress in secret and decided to change its name to the "Liberation and Socialism" Party, which initiated its actions in 1968. In 1974 the party moved to the legitimate stage under the name "Progress and Socialism Party". Since then, the party adopted the democratic struggle strategy and would adopt, according to its documents, a Socialist concept based on loyalty and renewal, taking into account the Moroccan context<sup>34</sup>.

In formulating its own concept of Socialism, the party tried to approach a dialectic link between the class frame of reference meant for the emancipation of exploited and oppressed classes and groups, on the one hand, and the national frame of reference meant to liberate the nation from colonial oppression and then to build a national democratic state within the confines of the indivisible territorial integrity, on the other hand. The party had its own concept of the national democratic revolution as a historical stage that opens the prospects for Socialism through its relationship with the monarchy action within the institutions. In its official discourse, the party still sticks to its ideological socialist and progressive foundations and claims that it was able to withstand the successive shocks of the collapse of the Socialist system thanks to its control of the dialectic of the constant and variable<sup>35</sup>. The political document of the ninth national conference of the party (May 2014) emphasized that the ideological identity is not subject to revision, and the party still claims its link to the toiling and vulnerable classes.

The party rejects the classification of the government, which it participates in and which is led by Islamists, as a conservative government which the Left should fight out of pure ideological logic. The party maintains that this government is not based on an ideological right-wing positioning, but rather on a reform program agreed upon by majority forces. The party finds itself calling for a distinction to be drawn between an ideological alliance and a government coalition, pointing out that alliances are subject to political positioning that

---

34. Abdul-Salam Bu Raqaba et al, «Features of the History of the Moroccan Communist Party».

35. Speech by the party secretary-general Nabeel ben Abdulla at the 70th commemoration of founding the party.

require the same measure of political will on the side of all democratic and progressive partners on the basis of an agreed-upon compromise, otherwise, the desired coalition would become a useless formality<sup>36</sup>.

However, many voices rose from within the party accusing the leadership of Rightist deviation, ending with several resignations of prominent leaders such as Yusuf Bilal and Mohammed Saeed al-Saadi. The most prominent among these criticisms were manifested in the strong opposition expressed by the leadership to the February 20 Movement, describing it as suspicious and irresponsible and moving outside the institutions, in addition to the position of the party of parliamentary monarchy and its support of the new constitution without highlighting its shortcomings. Add to that, the alliance with the “religious right” and “traditional right” against the resolutions of the eighth national congress, which clearly identified the political alliances of the party as the Democracy Block, the left and the Modernist Democratic line. Such voices opposed to the party’s attitudes believe that the positions and choices of the current leadership have affected its reputation within the popular groups, and also impacted negatively on the credibility within the ranks of the democratic, progressive and modernist forces, as well as among intellectuals and elites<sup>37</sup>. Others felt that the party advocates from within the government for the interests of the palace, neo-colonialism and the rentier economy<sup>38</sup>.

## Party of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces

The Party of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces is the most important Moroccan left-wing party. It dates back to the late 1950s when the left-wing split from the Independence Party, forming what was known as the National Union of Popular Forces, led by figures such as Mehdi Ben Barka, Abdullah Ibrahim and Abdul Rahim Buebaid. The party then experienced a bitter conflict with the palace, especially following the overthrow of the government led by Abdullah Ibrahim. That period was characterized by a campaign of arrests and trials of a number of its leaders as well as the assassination of the famous Leftist leader Mehdi

---

36. The political document of the party’s ninth national conference, May 2014.

37. Muhammad Saeed Al-Saadi, an article «The Progress and Socialism Party We Want», March 2014.

38. Text of resignation of Yusuf Bilal from the party’s political bureau, April, 2012.

Ben Barka in France under mysterious circumstances, when the party held the royal regime responsible for the act.

However, the party's path would witness a radical change starting 1975, when it held an extraordinary conference which decided to change the party's name to the Socialist Union of Popular Forces and to adopt a strategy of "democratic struggle." The conference was a critical turning point in determining the intellectual, social, political, and economic parameters of the party<sup>39</sup>. Yet party leaders continued to be targeted, through the assassination of the party theoretician and planner Omar Benjelloun and the arrest of several of its leaders, especially after the 1981 uprising. In 1983 the party agreed to participate, with two cabinet ministers, in the transitional government led by Mohammad Karim Amrani following a call by Hassan II to unify the national position on the Sahara issue, and then the party ministers withdrew from government<sup>40</sup>. The party resumed its policy of opposition and became a powerful political force in the Moroccan scene in 1997. The improved relation with the palace following the positive vote on the 1996 constitution would open the door to what is known in Morocco as the "harmonic rotation experience" in 1998, when Abdul Rahman Al-Yusufi led a government formed from the Block parties, the National Gathering of Independents, the Popular National Movement, the Front of Democratic Forces and the Socialist Democratic Party, a government viewed as the product of a consensus between the palace and the traditional left-wing opposition. The party participated later in the government formed after the 2002 elections, despite severe criticisms from party members and sympathizers with the rotation experiment, which considered the appointment of a non-political prime minister to be a coup against the democratic process that necessitated withdrawal from the government. The Party leadership accepted the participation in the experiment, justifying the move by the importance of completing the workshops begun by the previous government. In 2007 elections, the party retreated to fourth place and was satisfied with a few seats in the Abbas El Fassi government, a stage considered by observers and sympathizers with Leftist parties as the beginning of the end, especially following the failure in fulfilling the campaign promises and the initiation of a democratic transition experience<sup>41</sup>.

39. The political document of the party's ninth national conference, May, 2014.

40. Fayiz Sara, «Parties and Political Forces in Morocco».

41. Muhammad Al-Taye', «Abdul-Rahman Al-Yusufi and the Aborted Democratic Rotation», 2014.

As of the Abdul Rahman El-Fasi government, the party remained a participant in all governments, up to the elections of 25 November 2011, which resulted in the victory of Islamist Justice and Development Party. The Socialist Union decided to return to the ranks of the opposition and the national council of the party considered that those legislative elections, though marred by violations, clearly identified the political and party scene of the current phase and the natural position of each of its components. Accordingly, there should be respect for the will of the male and female voters who chose whom they have seen as expressing them in the government, and those embodying their expectations and aspirations on the opposition side. The National Council also announced that the Socialist Union Party return to the opposition is in the national interest and a political need of the progress of Moroccan democracy on the basis of a clear sorting of the diverse political actors, representing a move towards establishing a true and complete democratic rotation<sup>42</sup>.

The ninth national congress in December 2012 showed the extent of the party's internal crisis, following the conflict with the party leadership exploding into mutual accusations between supporters of the elected first secretary Idris Leshkar and the supporters of his rival, Ahmed al-Zaidi, as the latter decided to establish a current within the party named "Democracy and Openness" but the leadership refused to allow a mechanism for organizing currents within the Party to manage differences, as was the case in the Unified Socialist Party. This ordeal exploded dramatically during what was named by the media "the crisis of the Union parliamentary group", when the new leadership sought to adopt a new framework for the group instead of the previous framework loyal to the "Democracy and Openness" current. This conflict reflected negatively on the central committee of the trade union affiliated with the party.

This new faultline can be seen as an extension of what the party has witnessed since its inception. Most conferences have witnessed splits and withdrawals, beginning with the withdrawal of the Abdul Rahman Benamr and Ahmed Ben Jelloun group, which established the Vanguard Party, followed by the decisions taken against Abdul Rahim Buebaid in the fifth conference in 1989, and the organizational crisis experienced by the party during the sixth congress in 2001, which led to the defection of the Democratic Federal Trade Union Central Committee for Labour, and the withdrawal of the Loyalty for

---

42. History of the party published on its official site.

Democracy group led by Mohamed Sassi and Najib Akesbi<sup>43</sup>.

On 23 May 2013, the party announced the re-merging of two small Leftist parties which had previously dissented: the Labour Party and the Socialist Party. The two parties justified the move on the basis of the need to face the policies of recidivism aimed at undermining the socialist democratic hope, and that the building of a modernist project able to confront the conservative forces required assembling the Left, in addition to the fact that the unity of the Left is a necessity dictated by the need to rationalize the political scene through moving it from balkanization to conditions of great polarization<sup>44</sup>.

## Front of Democratic Forces

A party positioned on the Left, the Front was established on 27 December 1997, upon the defection led by Al-Tuhami Al-Khyari from the Party of Progress and Socialism, following a heated struggle for the party leadership after the death of its leader Ali Yata. The Front participated in the rotation government with two cabinet ministers; however, it was excluded from the Idrees Jettou government despite showing its willingness to participate. But the electoral and political significance of the party has declined dramatically, as it obtained a single parliamentary seat in the last elections. The party has witnessed in turn several protests and corrective movements until the death of its founder Al-Tuhami Al-Khyari.

## Green Left Party

The party was founded in 2010 by former members active in other left-wing political currents, specifically the Unified Socialist Left. The party presents itself as a left-wing party of the democratic Left, adopts socialism and draws from the environmental defence discourse. However, this party took the strange position to enter an alliance

---

43. Muhammad Zareef: The socialist Union at crisis, February 2013.

44. Interventions of Abdul-Kareem Ben Atiq and Abdul-Majeed Buzoba', leaders of the two parties integrated at the Socialist Union at the integration meeting, 23 May 2013.

comprising a mixture of administrative and right-wing parties known as the “G8”, on the eve of 2011 elections, which caused many internal splits, leaving it paralyzed.

## The Traditional Left and the New Left: the Impossible Encounter

It is agreed that the Moroccan Left today is like a debilitated man, suffering a severe crisis between the dispersion of its components committed to a genuine Leftist line, and the loss of credibility by other components which deviated from Leftist positions. If we assume that the history of the Moroccan Left is the history of its splits, it would be naive to think that the solution to this crisis is the organization of the largest number of components into unified entities. In fact, the crisis of the Left is not only a matter of fragmentation; it is rather a complex crisis which could not be confined to a particular cause and its reasons are basically historical. What makes it even more complex is the impossibility of convergence between a traditional Left exhausted by its governmental experience, which have made it lose the support of its popular and social base, and an untraditional Left engaged in criticisms and steeped in “theoretical concerns” without creating any real alternative that can restore the stature of the Left, or being able to rally popular support.

The Moroccan Left has been severely affected by the failure of the “harmonic rotation” experience. Its electorate felt betrayed following its engagement in policies that distanced it from the essence of its project, and it broke its promises by accepting half- solutions, when it opted for government participation in order to participate and identify with the Right, borrowing its methods. This experience reflected negatively also on the other Left which did not participate, yet paid for the mistakes of others. The public no longer distinguished between the Left and other political actors, which was apparent during constitutional deliberations as the demands of these parties were limited, dismissing the demand for a “parliamentary monarchy”. The recent conferences of the Socialist Union and the Progress and Socialism Parties have revealed, despite the different positions of the two parties, the absence of any view corrective of their paths or critical of the government experience and

a number of past practices, which would show signs of hope for a possible rebuilding of the Moroccan Left.

Consequently, we conclude that the present political line of the traditional Left parties is a far cry from the hopes pinned upon a Left to defend a comprehensive democratic transmission which ensures a clear separation of powers, not the acceptance of a political game initiated by the regime and based on maintaining the decision-making center in the hands of the royal institution. Thus, the “new Left” remains the only carrier of the idea of real radical change which leads to the establishment of a genuine democratic system and restores the role of elected institutions, but this Left in turn is facing many problems, despite retaining its symbolic capital.

## Current challenges facing the militant Left

The birth of the Democratic Left Federation as an alliance between the Unified Socialist, the Vanguard and the Federal National Conference parties has raised great hopes within the Left about bypassing part of the radical Left crisis. However, this step was not without fears of repeating mistakes of previous regrouping experiences, whose shadow still hangs over the parties themselves. The experiences of regrouping the Left in Morocco have always attached utmost importance to the organizational aspect at the expense of any other considerations, and were not subject to in-depth discussions, which is a situation repeated through the two nascent groups, the Democratic Left Alliance and the Democrat Left Grouping.

Will the federation be a mere co-ordination dictated by the need for clear alignments ahead of the next elections? Or is it a project that could form the nucleus of a future unity? There is no doubt that these are pressing questions which were omitted during the stage of forming this co-ordination framework, especially as the arguments that were usually made to postpone the debate on any projected front still exist. It is noted that the federation is unable to criticise its constituent parties and continues to reiterate statements that place the whole responsibility on the governmental Left, hurting the image of the Left in the community, and on acts of harassment by the state. These parties are still incapable of developing themselves or increasing their effectiveness and their actions are still far below the required level.

It seems that parties of the radical – or “militant”, as it describes itself - Left (the federation components and the Democratic Nahj Party), are trapped in monotony, dominated by a dogmatic tendency, and lack initiative. They therefore became marginal in terms of size, popularity and political influence, and the administrative and religious right-wing parties became more capable of attracting people. The approach of the radical Left has not evolved at all from the traditional methods long proven of limited effectiveness in the mobilization of workers, peasants and the oppressed.

The causes of this vulnerability of the militant Left can be traced back to a sharp decline caused by a lack of willingness among its members to criticise their own parties. The conflict with the state and an excessive fear of “enemy penetration” have made party members unconditionally support the attitudes and decisions taken by their parties in the belief that criticism may further weaken them, without losing sight of aspects of contradiction between discourse and practice within these parties. If the traditional Left has found in the “electoral dilemma” a justification for such contradiction, the need for internal solidarity cannot be a convincing justification for this situation. Among its negative consequences is the fact that that recent party conferences have not introduced any innovations, whether at the program level or the strategic level, or even at the level of the leadership. This has consolidated the climate of recession and stagnation and the lack of innovation, which is still a salient feature of these parties.

In conclusion, it could be said that the Moroccan Left, which still aims to create full political change and refused to participate in a political game that does not ensure the conditions for a genuine democratic transition, needs interaction with ongoing profound developments in society. It must create new political ideas and methods so as not to miss the opportunity of establishing a rival social and political project that can compete with the state and the Right, thus creating an alternative dynamic of the sacrifices made by the Moroccan Left on the way to democracy.

Assuming that unity is not a necessary condition for the way out of the crisis of the militant Moroccan Left, the spread of a climate of confidence, and discarding the narrow mindset of Leftist components appear to be necessary in order to activate the left-wing and overcome the frustration caused by the failed reform project. This applies equally to those who have engaged in the federation project or who have preferred to continue acting from outside.



# Leftist Movement in Algeria: A Legend to Glorify Hope

---

Mehdi Larbi

*Dr Mehdi Larbi is a lecturer at the University of Oran, Algeria and chair of a research team in the Laboratory of Urban Dynamics and Social Development in Algeria, University of Oran.*

## Preface

The Leftist movement in Algeria, in its official form, emerged after the collapse of the National Liberation Front state and the creation of a new constitution in 1989, which recognized the right to political organization and a multi-party system. The movement was represented by parties that participated in all scheduled elections to strengthen their presence on the local and national level. The ideological discourse of the movement aimed to keep pace with modern transformations. It began to benefit from the climate of freedom and democracy after the decline of the radical Islamic ideology that caused the spread of one of the ugliest phenomena of the end of the 20th century: terrorism, which led to the death of more than 200,000 people and the destruction of much of Algeria's infrastructure.

The form of the Leftist movement has changed as a result of new events and it has started to pursue different activities, such as strikes organized by free and informal trade unions, marches led by the Unemployed Youth Organization and peaceful demonstrations by political and human rights organizations demanding the removal of the authoritarian regime.

As a result of this, the Leftist movement appears in different forms, which adopt different positions stemming from their different situations, and

express their rejection of the social situation through different practices that emphasise their differing visions and proposed solutions.

This new shape of the Leftist movement, in its different forms, makes us question whether its attempts to become stronger and more effective on the ground serve this purpose or not. Its history shows that its discourse was charged with Marxist-Leninist ideas defending the principles of the revolutionary socialist project, which was established along with the national movement against French colonial imperialism. Can we link the Algerian Leftist movements' trend towards democracy to global structural and strategic transformations that are redefining the balance of power of major forces? Are there internal factors that have played an active role in creating the new shape of the Left?

The contemporary Leftist movement continues to appear as a symbolic movement bearing the slogan of hope. It aspires to freedom and equality of employment opportunities for all social strata. It insists on separation between politics and religion, considering that politics relates to the administration of practical affairs, and calls for equal rights for the two sexes. It considers religion to be a sacred belief, which does not change with externally changing conditions. This "project" is dependent on the extent of agreement in views and objectives that underlie the creation of the groups that are struggling in various ways to reach their goals.

The basic idea that we would like to put forward to enrich the complexity of the contemporary left-wing movement in third world countries, in terms of the experience of Algeria, is based on results derived from ethnographic research and field investigations, which have developed the "anthropology" of North African countries since the 1960s. The decline in this research was due to the development policy adopted by these states to build national economies and complete the socialist project, which played a part in the majority of revolutions and wars of the 20th century. The leaders of these revolutions adopted Marxism-Leninism as an ideological cover to protect themselves against the development of imperialist capitalism. This made them neglect local structures and their social dynamics, which anthropology considers the main theme for understanding the reality of the political system that controls its process. We believe that relying on these results constitutes a fundamental scientific tool to help us assess the situation and the effectiveness of the Leftist movement as a political opposition in Algeria.

While the previous decline of the Leftist movement in Algeria was associated with the decline and collapse of the Soviet Union, it is useful

to consider to what extent the modern Leftist movement has succeeded in achieving its democratic project, which at the same time requires local responses to maintain what can be protected under the new world order.

# Leftist movements in light of new political practices in Algeria

The modern Leftist movement in Algeria consists of groups and trends, emerging from the radical transformations experienced by the society, that have emerged in multiple forms to condemn existing conditions and demand new rights. The new shape of the Leftist movement in Algeria is reflected in the multiplicity of party, trade union and human rights organizations, each looking to consolidate its position and gain recognition from the regime and society. These organizations, as social resistance organizations, are seeking to build a state of law, which still faces obstacles posed by the dictatorship imposed by the military since Algeria gained independence<sup>1</sup>.

Despite the similarity of these movements' demands, they have not been officially recognized by the regime, so some have become official and the rest remained illegal, confronted with repression and violence to suppress their demonstrations. On this basis, the Leftist movement in Algeria can be divided into formal parties represented by historic political parties whose leaders lived through the revolutionary libertarian era and who were imprisoned and marginalized after independence because they opposed the authoritarian regime that governed through a single official party without political authority. This movement has used its historic capital, characterized by its struggle, to gain a legitimacy that enables it to make its voice heard inside the regime's institutions. It saw in its participation in the elections an opportunity to gain status and either to gain power or to share it with other parties in the local administration: municipal and regional elections. In addition, the official Leftist movement, which opposes the ruling regime, agreed to compete in the parliamentary and presidential elections to enable it to supervise and participate in major political decisions. However, it been unable to

---

1. Larbi, Mehdi, Crise de l'Etat et de la nation en Algérie, Revue Dirassat, N° 4, Janv 2014, P: 65-78.

win in the presidential elections despite the many attempts made by Louisa Hanoune, the head of Algeria's Workers' Party, the only woman in the Arab world to occupy this position.

The political opposition stances of the Leftist movement parties vary. The Socialist Forces Front, which was led by Hocine Ait Ahmed for a long time, believes that boycotting elections is a key strategy to force the regime to respect freedom and democracy.

Participation in a pluralistic and open electoral system did not allow the Leftist movement to reach power in Algeria. The biggest obstacle to real change, ie, control over the administrative body that supervises elections, was the presence of parties affiliated with the ruling regime such as the National Liberation Front Party and the National Democratic Alliance, which was established by a group of army officers and technocrats in 1997 during a political rearrangement imposed by developments at the time.

The Workers' Party performs weakly in elections after losing the support that grew among the labor movement in public institutions under the National Liberation Front. The closure of these public institutions as a result of the economic restructuring imposed by international financial institutions on the Algerian regime has deprived the Workers' Party of its main source of support, the workers, who became unemployed. Of this period, Bouyacoub wrote the following: "This movement has collapsed as a result of arbitrary mass expulsion, due to the closure of the public economic enterprises imposed by the new policy dictated by international bodies such as the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. Statistics show that more than 130,000 workers were fired during the period from 1997 to 1998 and this figure increased to 300,000 and then 400,000 workers, most of them from the industrial sector and public construction<sup>2</sup>".

The slogan of welfare state promoted by Louisa Hanoune, the party representative, had no impact on social sectors deprived of employment in the public industrial institutions, the dream of all Algerians after independence, with the state abandonment of this role. There was a decline in confidence in the young state, which had vowed to improve the social status of groups that suffered from the scourge of arbitrary colonial liberal policy.

---

2. Ahmed Bouyacoub, *L'économie algérienne et le programme d'ajustement structurel*, Confluence, 45 printemps 2003.

The absence of a strong political opposition made the Workers' Party decide to participate in the municipal and regional elections and follow the activity in the National Parliamentary Council. Representatives of Louisa Hanoune's party believe that the goal behind staying in the political game overseen by the ruling system is to defend the remaining public facilities and oppose any attempt to privatize state property and natural resources.

The Workers' Party is one of the official left-wing parties that did not work with the masses to form a political force capable of hindering the new policy and creating a program opposed to the free market policy of importing all industrial products and miscellaneous goods.

The trade policy pursued by the regime, as a measure to join the World Trade Organization, became the main problem facing private institutions attempting to maintain national production. When the regime stripped the majority of public institutions of their financial and human resources, private companies and institutions faced the same problems and were obliged to close down, lay off their workers and lose human and professional expertise. The encouragement of new traders to import all supplies at the expense of domestic production was a problem recognized by the Workers' Party but it failed to mobilize to confront it. This was the reason for categorizing it as a purely ceremonial Leftist opposition that serves the ruling regime by giving it a democratic image, at the expense of the suffering experienced by vulnerable social groups.

For its part, the Socialist Forces Front continued its political struggle, calling on the regime to recognize tribal identities and the Amazigh language<sup>3</sup>, which have declined because of the imposition of a single ideology, language and religion. The single-party rule made the Arabic language the official language and Islam the official religion of the state to create a social entity that fed Algerian nationality at a time when political violence evolved. This violence took the form of authoritarianism in the society, a trend that developed inside state institutions with the start of the military coups, which were frequent in the early years of independence.

The Socialist Forces Front, as a formal Leftist movement, during the political openness phase, continued to work on building local Berber identity. Although the ruling regime has recognized indigenous identities, economic deterioration and the erosion of social bonds have deepened the wound created by the military regime.

---

3. Mohammed Harbi, *Quelle démocratie en Algérie ?* In, Mostefa Lacheraf : Une œuvre, un itinéraire, une référence. Alger, Casbah, 2006, p: 137-148.

This Leftist movement is trying to adapt to the new situation by developing the image of the “historical victim”. It is still denouncing the political system, which is not enthusiastic for real political openness, because it will not accept Amazigh as an official national language in educational institutions alongside Arabic. Identity and language became the main political issues keeping the Socialist Forces Front alive, especially in the north-east, the tribal areas and the Aures. This issue, which the ruling regime attributes to “regionalization”, appears in all electoral events. The Socialist Forces Front foregoes electoral work because of ethnic and religious problems, which the regime has used as a weapon to consolidate its control, and always asks its supporters to boycott elections.

## Official Leftist Parties in Algeria: organization and relationship to pluralist elections

Most of the current official left-wing movements in Algeria pretend to have a political discourse, condemning the non-achievement of social and political demands, in line with ongoing global trends and the majority of the national social groups. The official Leftist parties are active by virtue of the number of parliamentary seats they win in national elections. They become effective through participation in sessions held by the National Popular Council, and their political action is confined to speeches by the party’s MPs on dates set by the Speaker of the Council. Most of their political speeches broadcast on national radio contain a critical assessment of decisions made by the government. An official Leftist party enjoys full freedom to announce its acceptance or rejection of all or some of the decisions taken, and has the right to appeal against them with the aim of reversing them as being counter to the demands of social groups it represents.

The weakness of the official Leftist parties, which are restricted to the Workers’ Party or the Socialist Forces Front, still does not allow them to block laws and programs proposed by the government. Thus, the government passes its laws and programs under a pluralist system, with an official Leftist opposition. The parliament is considered to be

the “express post”, designed to serve the regime’s interests under the cover of freedom and transparency.

Accordingly, parliamentary political work, which was established with the multi-party system in Algeria, is a failed process for the official Leftist movement as it has not succeeded to date in attaining a majority of seats that enables it to become an effective political force able to stand against the policies of successive governments.

In fact, the survival of the official Leftist parties in the political game supervised by the regime since the introduction of free elections made these parties hollow political institutions, as they were blind to the social groups that would have helped them to build a strong political base.

Besides, the institutional division upon which the Leftist movement established itself during the period of political openness made it lose a historical opportunity to be a real political front, able to confront the Algerian system. According to data on the legislative elections of 2007, there have been four official Leftist parties. Following the announcement by the Socialist Forces Front that it would boycott elections over accusations against the regime concerning forging elections, a widespread phenomenon since their inception in 1989, the remaining three parties ran the race on separate lists.

The Workers Socialist Party waged an electoral campaign through which it couldn’t reach a respected status, as it obtained 42,735 votes out of about 572,608 votes, or nearly 0.75% of a total turnout estimated at 35.65%. It was followed by the Algerian Progressive Party which obtained 81,046 votes, or about 1.41%. The Workers’ Party got 291,312, or 5.08% of the votes<sup>4</sup>.

These results deeply affected the official Leftist front; in the next election race, only the Socialist Forces Front and the Workers’ Party participated. These two Leftist parties almost vanished in the absence of a platform that clearly laid out their future political project.

The elections results of both 2007 and 2012 show that the Leftist movement, which had put its political status at stake through conforming to the official political establishment, was not aided by such conformation in obtaining the majority of parliament seats necessary to impose its presence<sup>5</sup>.

---

4. [http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C89%3lections\\_en\\_Al%C3A9rie](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C89%3lections_en_Al%C3A9rie)

5. Ibid.

When we take into consideration that the percentage won by liberal groups in both elections (9.83% in 2007 and 7.19% in 2012) was much higher than that of the two Leftist parties, we question the real presence of these two parties in society. Despite the high possibility of forgery by the regime as it alone supervises the elections, the question arises: to what extent is the official Leftist movement efficient and what is its real strength in Algeria?

Therefore, the participation by the official Leftist movement in elections directed by the ruling regime is a risk that endangers its status and legitimacy in the eyes of nonofficial social groups and unionist organizations. Such groups and organizations still struggle against the ruling regime through public demonstrations to be repressed and strikes to be broken by legal penalties, despite the rights given them by the Algerian Constitution.

The official Leftist movement was supposed to take the side of these groups in demanding their right to peaceful demonstration and denouncing strikes aimed at maintaining and improving the situation, especially those demands concerning the social professional dimension.

The official Leftist movement remains divided and away from commanding the support of social groups with different interests. This maintains its weak condition and confirms its participation in the conspiracy plotted by the ruling regime through holding formal elections aiming at preserving its status and serving its own interests at the expense of public interests. Instead of addressing the material and social problems which the ruling regime brought about, the Leftist movement, to justify its being as an official political opposition, opted for a new political discourse such as demanding respect for freedom and equality between sexes to achieve democracy.

The discourse of the official Leftist movement has changed to emphasise democracy as the optimal solution in a society in which the majority of social groups are still deprived of effective education and vocational training enabling them to build a material independence that ensures their future. Meanwhile, Algeria is importing a significant volume of foreign labour as a result of the high price of fuel to build, in a fast and shoddy way, long-awaited residential projects. Reports indicate that the Chinese labour force occupies the top of the list of foreign workers with work visas, with 45% of the total, mainly concentrated in the construction sector, followed by Egyptians, 11%, and lower ratios of 5.3% Italians, 5.2% Syrians and 3% French and Philipinos<sup>6</sup>.

---

6. [www.djazairiss.com/elmassa/874](http://www.djazairiss.com/elmassa/874)

The left-wing movement goes on ignoring urban and environmental crises, added to the huge number of Algerian unemployed and destitute, to raise the slogan of freedom and citizenship. In addition, the movement disregarded the employment policy that established poverty as a new social phenomenon into which graduates fall.

This support for the ruling regime has resulted in the policy of professional integration because of the risk of unemployment, which reached 30% in 2000, before falling in recent years to 10% thanks to the National Agency for the Integration of Young People. However this policy has been unable to improve the social and economic situation of young people. Young graduates earn 15,000 dinars in wages subsidized by the state budget, so that such wages did not exceed the limit of one-third of the baseband wage set at 18,000 dinars, let alone those who have been reintegrated while holding medium certificates and who are without qualifications<sup>7</sup>.

In light of the grave shortage of jobs, foreign private companies find an opportunity to deal with Algerian labor outside the labor law. They recruit employees for low wages without insurance or social security, with a detailed report of the Algerian Human Rights Association confirming that: "violations are represented in depriving the simple Algerian workers of their most basic rights guaranteed by law and stipulated in the Algerian labor law, including food and transport expenses, marital grants, and grants for night shifts, in addition to granting professional experience and insurance, with delays in paying workers' wages, the use of the feudal method and converting workers into slaves, and the non-recognition of the right to trade union and labour representation..."<sup>8</sup>

## Reasons for the weakness of official left-wing parties in Algeria

The division and weakness of the official left-wing parties in Algeria reflect the nature of the social and political organization of all political parties. The short-lived experiment of Algerian society with so-called political

---

7. <http://www.djazairress.com/elhayat/177>

8. According to a report by the head of the provincial office of the League, Houari. <http://www.akhbarona.com/world/74809.html#ixzz31KqnhRP>

organizations is a key indicator for the analysis of the current situation. Social structures and local groups have not had a good opportunity, through history, to develop in a way allowing them to join in organizations and political parties to defend their interests and participate in public policy with the various authorities of their geographic regions.

The political power that arose with the nation state increased the paralysis of social ties as it appeared similar to that of the French colonial power. The proclamations of this power that it aimed to build a fair and just socialist state turned to be mere lip service, because the political conflicts that arose among the state's theoreticians during colonial rule overthrew the spiritual father of the national movement and caused the collapse of one of the core left-wing parties. This was the party of "Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Freedoms", another face of the People's Party, founded in 1937 by Messali Haj who used it to resist successive French governments from the arising of the North Africa Star, asking France for the right of Algerians to independence, adopting the idea of "Algeria is Algerian"<sup>9</sup>.

The left-wing movement emerged as a banned political opposition, following independence, in a society with an illiteracy rate of 85%<sup>10</sup>.

Various political figures and university cadres excluded from political activity by the regime tried to gather in secret Leftist movements in opposition to the way of using the socialist project to complete the social revolution. Their main goal was to build a powerful socialist state to support third world movements in the formation of a socialist social pole, in solidarity with the Soviet Union, to confront the expansion of the American capitalist system. The attention became focused on socialist theories concerning the concept of the state, disregarding the idea of society together with attention to social structures in the real transformations following independence. This process led to ignoring local realities and the perceptions and practices related to the building of social relationships within the society<sup>11</sup>.

Pierre Bourdieu, one authority on contemporary sociology, has noted since the national liberation war the destruction of local community

---

9. Mohammed Harbi, *L'Algérie et son destin, Croyants ou citoyens*, Ed, Arcantere, Paris, 1992

10. Mohammed Hachemaoui, *Clientélisme et patronage dans l'Algérie contemporaine*, Paris, Karthala, IRMAM, 2014.

11. Larbi Mehdi, *Réalité sociologique et quête du sens chez Pierre Bourdieu : le cas de l'Algérie*, *Revue At-Tadwin*, N° 05, Dec 2013, P : 22-30.

infrastructure through an ugly colonial policy that damaged the social link through which the Algerians used to communicate. After conducting field research and in-depth interviews with all the social groups affected by capitalist colonization, he issued his famous book "Work and Workers in Algeria"<sup>12</sup>, banned by the French authorities during the war years because of the painful truths that it presented.

The book was published a few years after "Sociology in Algeria", first released in 1958. The "Uprooting" by the late researcher and thinker Abdelmalek Sayyad, was published in 1964. These books are complementary to each other and motivated Bourdieu to create one of the most prominent French social schools of the 20th century.

Bourdieu confirmed through field research that Algeria is not French, and explained this by the tribal nature of the indigenous people. He further deepened his scientific analysis for dismantling the colonial alienation policy<sup>13</sup>.

Bourdieu develops his sociological concept of the "uprooting" complexity to show the consequences of colonialism in terms of corrupting Algerian rural communities and the displacement of villagers to collective camps.

The researcher worked hard to explain the colonial way of stealing and violating lands, and the dismantling of the tribal system, which resulted in the migration phenomenon. This historic migration dispersed individuals and groups, and severed completely their communications with their world of symbolic and cultural heritage, as the new Algerian was raised in a foreign urban space (the European city) in which it was difficult for him to integrate, due to cultural differences and his individual perception of the economic phenomenon.

The Algerian became affiliated against his will with an exploited and alienated "semi- proletarian" because of the historical process imposed by the colonial phenomenon. The famous expression by Pierre Bourdieu expressed an extraordinary situation, when he wrote that in Algeria there are "peasants without land, workers without work or profession

---

12. Pierre Bourdieu, *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*, Paris, Mouton (avec A. Darbel, J-P. Rivet, C. Seibel), 1963.

13. Loran Bazan, *Sociology of Algerian Workers from the present anthropology point of view*, pp. 41-51, , Pierre Bourdieu, *al-Tadween Magazine*, No. 5, December 2013.

or craft, civilians without a city”<sup>14</sup>.

After independence, the researcher Joan Vefrat Saada, an expert in anthropology, wrote about the relationship between Algerians and local officials during the post-independence push for the success of the agricultural revolution model, which was adopted by the Algerian regime as a socialist method. She based her analysis on field research and interviews, which are complementary to the approach Pierre Bourdieu used previously. The writer says: “when we came we met Algerian officials and talked to them while we noticed that the workers remained silent and clinging to us without interruption. The next day, we started to conduct our scheduled interviews without the presence of officials. In the evening, we took desperate people away to talk with us about the status of work in villager and farmer communities. Then we realized that the history of the agricultural sector issue after the departure of the Europeans in 1962 is still firmly on the table. After several attempts we became sure not to delve into the problem as the peasants thought we were justice people”<sup>15</sup>.

Such analyses, derived from reality, help us know the truth about the presence of political forces in the scientific sense. Then we note clearly the basic problem raised since independence with regard to the nature of political organizations in general and the left-wing movement in particular.

The problem lies in the nature of the ideas and ideologies in political circles after independence, where a deep rift appeared between them and the social reality of the majority of Algerian peasants. The lack of interest among the majority of peasants about the content of socialist ideas and goals, and the non-development of sound approaches to the issue of governance in the agricultural sector in order to contradict the colonial order, resulted in a status quo by which Algerian officials supervising this agricultural sector reproduced the same process initiated by the European colonists. These factors made Algerian peasants semi-independent individuals as they encountered a new administrative authority not much different from its predecessor, the colonial power.

We have seen through the works published by Bourdieu, a researcher and specialist in Algeria of the 1960s, that the symbolic and cultural

---

14. Pierre Bourdieu, Abdelmalek Sayad, *Le déracinement, crise de l'agriculture traditionnelle en Algérie*, Paris, Minuit, 1964.

15. Jeanne Favret-Saada, *Algérie 1962-1964 : essais d'anthropologie politique*, Paris, Bouchene, 2005.

capital of the ordinary Algerian was moving away from the culture and perception required by the ideologies that have been able to build a left-wing social base, the proletariat, to their advantage

The phenomenon of “organic solidarity” (E Durkheim, 1984), which allowed workers to build a strong social bond on the basis of material interest, emerged on the basis of collective consciousness, stemming from their experience related to major events such as the French revolution and the English industrial revolution.

The social history experienced by European workers differs from that of the Algerian workers, so that the first discovered circumstances and human potential that allowed them to identify the political function of the left-wing organization as an essential tool for preserving social and economic interests. The second’s experience was different because he faced colonialism. Therefore, it can be said that the Leftist ideology that emerged in the colonial period among the Algerians was restricted to a limited group, mostly influenced by Marxist ideology and the ideology of socialism as a result of close contact with the workers in the diaspora, as was the case with Messali Haj. Another small group, including Farhat Abbas, joined the French School, a school founded in Algeria to qualify them to get to know the thinkers and philosophers of the Enlightenment era who wrote about and resisted the ethnic, religious and imperialist systems.

This work ceased with the outbreak of the liberation war, which caused the spread of “populist” ideas and the enhancement of personal and family relations, to become after independence the real and basic practice, which developed patronage relations to lead and manage the public affairs and institutions of the state.

The crisis faced by the evolution of the Leftist movement in Algeria was represented in the absence of close and continuous relationship in time and place between the elite and the social base. The elite embraced a paradigm and concepts different from the paradigm and terminology of the local community. The elite was saturated with theoretical ideas and deeply believed in an ideology far from their lived reality. Some political and intellectual figures were deeply shocked and disappointed when they were surprised by their community voting overwhelmingly in favour of the Islamic Salvation Front in the first free and pluralistic elections. These figures then discovered the vast distance that separates their philosophical beliefs and culture from the beliefs and cultures carried by the rest of the community. Such a large gap led to the brain drain,

so that Algerian universities and scientific research centers began to suffer from the lack of pedagogical training and the dramatic decline of intellectual and technological production.

The political openness known as party pluralism provided an opportunity for the regime to rebuild itself in line with global developments. It was able to reposition itself inside new terminology such as democracy, freedom and gender equality in order to empty them of their original contents and to give each a new look in a way that allowed it to survive. The leaders of the regime together with their allies and clients formed an alliance to become the representatives of civil society, through establishing political parties and societal organizations, in order to address the community as active characters targeting the development of freedom and political participation in order to embody the citizenship project in Algeria.

As to other political parties, the role of their leaders has emerged through linking these new institutions to social perceptions that apply the rules of local community, tribal and clan, to the domain of political activity. This commended the members of the electoral campaigns as political representatives in order to receive substantial support, allowing them to dominate municipal and provincial councils<sup>16</sup>.

This process shows that the socialization of political parties is strengthened by ties and local social relations controlled by tribe and clan systems, which drive conflicts in order to achieve what the local community sees as its benefit, disregarding all considerations external to its social and economic reality.

This fact, studied by the researcher in political anthropology, Mohammed Hacmawi, while conducting his lengthy field investigations, expresses that the public discourse adopted by the political parties is a "mask" that hides the fact of the ongoing real conflict. The latter expresses the idea that individuals and groups interact due to the conflict aiming at seizing a formal political organization (the party) and the exploitation of the power vested in them to, at the same time, serve and maintain the physical and symbolic interests of local social structures, including tribal and clan.

The political discourse remains theoretical, whether it is the one that adopted leftist perceptions and ideas or that which believed in the

---

16. Hannah Arendt, *L'impérialisme : les origines du totalitarisme*, Paris, Gallimard, 2002.

modern ideas of the democracy project. They have both become a tool hiding the reality of conflicts between individuals and groups comprising the Algerian society. For this reason, we can focus on the idea that political parties distanced from everyday reality become dry structures, looking for survival through the restoration of a theoretical and legendary discourse void of the conflict that activates domestic political action. Their existence became related to their own status and to the nature of the relationship that can be built within the political space created by the culture of loyalty to lobbyists within the regime. The researcher Ayet Hamadduche maintains that the Algerian political parties "seem to belong to the pre-policy. They appear to exist in electoral official occasions, while their screaming ends and their pictures disappear until the advent of the coming events. They pretend a formal existence of being active in specific official occasions then turn off their lights in political life until the programmed seasons"<sup>17</sup>.

## Organizations, free unions and alliances that constitute a "new" Leftist movement in Algeria

All organizations, free trade unions and alliances that began to form and regroup in order to be a strong opposition against the authoritarian regime can be considered as part of a Leftist movement that aspires to work in solidarity for changing the regime.

The demand for a radical change in the regime structure and for changing the nature of the authority to open the door for building a civil state, are the two distinguishing differences between these new movements and the former official left-wing parties.

These New Leftist movements have emerged independently of each other as a result of the diversity of their causes and the different stages of their appearance. Each one of them has in its own way expressed its rejection of the ways of the ruling regime, while each has its own demands stemming from its own distinct and different conditions.

---

17. Louisa Dris-Aït Hamadouche, " L'abstention en Algérie : un autre mode de contestation politique", L'Année du Maghreb, V, 2009, p : 263-273.

All these movements were characterized by their nonofficial status despite the fact that some have been active in public sectors to reflect the dire situation in their social vocational sphere. The latter were called the Free Trade Unions, which originated from the demand to freedom from dependence on the National Trade Union of the General Union of Algerian Workers, the only organization that represented workers of the public and economic sectors since independence.

This Leftist movement was launched in the demonstration process years ago, demanding the regime to reconsider the basic law regulating public service, so as to improve professional and social conditions. Many sectors have gone along with this new approach, which set off a wave of strikes in all state sectors, such as educational, hospital and university institutions, ending with economic institutions such as the Company for Hydrocarbons Production.

Perhaps more significant is the banning and non-licensing of rallies in all governorates despite the decision of the Minister of the Interior and the local groups that was related to the prevention of marches in the capital only, but was extended automatically to all provinces without reference to a particular legal decision.

Every organization or movement must comply with the laws organizing demonstrations and marches. They must provide the license application to the governor a minimum of eight days before the date of the demonstration, stating the identity of the organizers, signed by three of them who enjoy civil and political rights, as well as stating the goal of, and the course pursued by, the demonstration, to the practical means used to ensure its functioning from its beginning until the demonstrators disperse, provided that the governor receives, as soon as the file is deposited, a receipt of the license application. The governor issues his approval or rejection of the gathering at least five days earlier than the planned date. He or one of his subordinates can prohibit any gathering by informing the organizers that they represent a real threat to public order or that it seems clear that the purpose of the gathering represents a threat to public order. Also, the law prohibits any activities in gatherings conflicting with the national interest, or which are harmful to the symbols of the first of November 1954 Revolution or to public order or public morals.

The Law 91-19 on meetings and public demonstrations faces sharp criticism from associations and opposition political parties as well as international organizations because it restricts the right to freedom

of assembly, as it changed the legal requirements for holding demonstrations, and asked groups which plan to assemble to seek official permission from the authorities, not simply to notify them.

The regime deepened the suffering of the Algerians by removing their right to assemble through punitive legal articles imposing the imprisonment of any individual who participates or calls others to participate in an undeclared demonstration, punishable under the same law with imprisonment of three months to one year and a fine of 3,000 to 15,000 dinars, and the referral of irregularities in this regard in accordance with Articles 97 to 101 of the Penal Code.

Despite all such attempts to prevent demonstration by various means, the free trade union organizations were able to expand their numbers so as to compel the regime to deal with them as a partner, enhanced by the fact of being the sole representative of the workers and employees of the public sector.

These movements have witnessed fluctuations in their fortunes. Their influence decreased after the regime bought their silence with repeated increases in wages and the policy of distributing social support to different groups. Many factors helped these movements regain their original standing to face the regime and demand it to leave power immediately and peacefully, in order to allow progression towards the construction of a civil democratic state.

In addition to the development of a collective sense of rejection of the current social situation, the rise in prices of basic food items in 2011 resulted in riots led by unemployed young people, disregarding official attempts to prevent the demonstrations, as this allowed the spread of the phenomenon of the burning of bodies in front of public institutions. This kind of demonstrations is a new and hideous practice of the struggle of the 21st century, in front of which hearts chill and analysts are driven to reconsider the construction of a new scientific approach by reference to the behavior of slaves and the oppressed during the Middle Ages.

These events prompted political parties, human rights organizations and trade unions to organize peaceful marches and demonstrations denouncing them and holding the regime responsible for the despair that led to the secret illegal immigration referred to in popular language as “hargah”, “heartburn”, which ended in the burning of bodies because of the daily suffering in Algeria, which should be rich from its natural resources.

Thus a collective desire to intensify mass mobilization and repeat the peaceful demonstrations developed among both formal and informal Leftist movements. Where the first kind of movements maintains that this process was a strong political demand in order to make the regime comply with international laws and rights it had ratified, the second kind acted by various peaceful means to demand the regime leave power so that the signs of openness to build a true democracy would appear<sup>18</sup>.

There appeared within the unofficial Leftist movement new alliances comprising figures active in the human rights organization, such as the activist Ali Yahia Abdelnour<sup>19</sup> and in the free trade unions that have emerged in the public workers sector and the National Supreme Council for Teachers of Higher Education, backing the various protests that occur in most Algerian areas. Consequently a political project was founded that aimed at consulting on peaceful transition to a democratic system. These alliances were named National Co-ordination for Change and Democracy (CNCD)<sup>20</sup>.

This new organization was unable to dominate the affected social groups because they pursued their own demonstrations demanding the regime improve the situation, which has become an impediment to social stability. These groups expressed the collective disgust that swept the streets, threatening the regime through closing the roads in an effort to make it respond to their demands. These practices were repeated in order to specifically condemn lists planned to deliver social painkillers, and the phenomenon spread in both urban and rural areas. These spontaneous gatherings are experiencing a temporary lull, leaving behind marks of anger on public facilities shattered by the absence of dialogue with the authorities.

The new Leftist movement that threatens the regime split into two parts: an organized group, not recognized as separate from the official

18. Louisa Dris-Aït Hamadouche, "L'abstention en Algérie : un autre mode de contestation politique", *L'Année du Maghreb*, V, 2009, p : 263-273.

19. Né le 18 janvier 1921, Maître Abdenour Ali-Yahia est le doyen des défenseurs arabes des droits de l'homme. Il est l'auteur de "Algérie: Raisons et déraison d'une guerre" (Editions L'Harmattan, Paris 1996) et "La dignité humaine" (Editions INAS, Alger, 2007). Maître Abdenour Ali-Yahia est le fondateur en 1985 de la Ligue algérienne pour la défense des droits de l'homme ([www.la-laddh.org](http://www.la-laddh.org)), reconnue officiellement par les autorités algériennes en 1989; il en est aujourd'hui le président d'honneur.

20. This movement emerged on 21 January calling for the grouping of social forces to collectively denounce the arbitrary practices of the regime. It started demonstrating in the capital during January-June 2011, demanding the regime step down.

left-wing parties and the National Union, which struggled peacefully for the departure of the regime in order to achieve political change; the other represented in the groups that emerge spontaneously, threatening public security and social stability in various violent ways, demanding that the regime listen to their problems.

Such circumstances drove the regime to rapid intervention, subsidizing the basic prices of food products with oil revenues, which reached \$200 billion in 2011, as well as controlling market prices and punishing speculators. The regime took upon itself the responsibility of covering the deficit, published by the National Bureau of Statistics, whose statistics pointed to a significant price rising that affected all necessary consumer items: beef prices rose by 30.3%, vegetables by 28.7%, cereals by 5.66%, and chicken meat by 16.3%<sup>21</sup>.

In addition, the regime initiated an irrational housing policy, which led to the emergence of residential complexes lacking basic needs or an aesthetic appearance urban development basics and away from the aesthetic appearance of nature, as well as hurting the health of the beneficiary families.

As well, the regime continued to intervene through lavish spending on economic programs that divide the youth rather than bringing them together around a unified development project, so that the regime's written program neglected the basic content of the scientific value of labour, which is based on training to develop the production process, not on the distribution basis.

The unemployment phenomenon and housing problem came to be the basic new policy that the regime depends upon in order to divide and weaken the social and Leftist forces threatening its survival<sup>22</sup>.

Accelerating the arrangement of lists of housing beneficiaries under the supervision of provincial governors has clearly expressed the nature of the state in Algeria. Laurent Bazan commented on the basis of an ethnological search and field study, stressing that "the governor changed its function through making it void of its administrative content when he himself supervised the bureaucratic operation to become a play displaying the distribution of stop-gap measures, which represented

---

21. The National Center for Statistics in Algeria, Statistics and Report, 2013.

22. Laurent Bazin, *L'Etat endetté en Algérie : Demande d'Etat, conflits sociaux et ressorts imaginaires du pouvoir*, in *DETTE DE QUI, DETTE DE QUOI ? Une économie anthropologique de la dette*, Paris, l'Harmattan, 2013 p : 171-200.

a vision of a “distribution-state” rather than a “redistribution-state”, which means that his status at the local level is more representative of the state than of the government<sup>23</sup>.

More than that, the governor oversaw several operations and waged media campaigns to promote the idea of distribution for all segments of society affected by the housing. This process led those segments to refrain from demonstrations and to draw closer to the administrative departments to fulfil the registration process. The regime exploited these material and human resources and took advantage of the special circumstance in order to win large segments of the community, aiming at buying social peace and avoiding the popular revolutions that have occurred in both Egypt and Tunisia.

The authoritarian regime continued its intervention through raising wages for all social strata, which showed a new behaviour of consumption, and it began addressing the unemployed youth, especially university graduates, offering them new facilities in order to get jobs in the public sector. This resulted in a contraction of the unemployment rate so that the National Organization for Statistics announced a decline in the unemployment rate of graduate youth in 2013 by 9.8% compared to 11% in 2011 and 10% in 2010.

As to the general unemployment that concerned all social strata, especially women, despite its decline in recent years, it remained stable in 2013 at 16.3% after it was 17.11% in 2011. In addition, the same organization estimated a large percentage of the unemployed without rehabilitation at 56.1%, while another organization put the estimate at 62.2%. Such unemployment involved the youth group that had graduated from vocational training centers.

The legitimacy of the political power has become a hostage of its achievements related to the unemployment problem and the housing crisis, which led to many demonstrations and protests across Algeria.

Investment in these projects curbed the evolution of social protests and paralyzed the political discourse of the left-wing movements which were and still are demanding the regime to step down.

The Algerian public praised the efforts made by the state to ensure the integration of the social groups affected by the opening-up policy imposed on the Algerian state in the 1990s. The regime, thanks to the

---

23. Statistics and Report, 2013. The National Center for Statistics in Algeria.

new policy, provided a large number of people with jobs, upgrading social housing to get them to defend its policies and reject any political discourse aimed at organizing popular demonstrations against it. In addition, all public channels and institutions, especially mosques, were used to call for showing proper behaviour to maintain national security and for rejecting groups that called for a popular uprising, as being acts that threaten the Algerian state.

In return, the regime in Algeria has become a hostage to the policy it follows to reduce social and economic problems. Despite the results achieved so far, one cannot say that the new situation is promising as far as political stability in the long-term is concerned, with the sharply growing social demands as a result of demographic growth on the one hand and the increasing rates of college and university graduates on the other. It is clear that the policy of benefits from oil revenues has become the primary tool used by the authoritarian regime in order to confront the Leftist tide that threatens its status. The fact is that the left-wing political discourse, confined to a limited group on the one hand, and prohibited from demonstrating and developing a critical constructive dialogue on the other, has lost status and become unable to bring large numbers to adopt its ideas. The danger remains because the tactics used by the regime are related to temporary wealth, whose price is controlled by global economic and political transformations, far from what is happening in the Algerian market. On this basis, the strategy adopted in Algeria, to weaken the Leftist protest movements, becomes weak and dangerous to national security, as Algeria is dependent on external economic shifts on which it has no influence, and can cause strong and violent strikes which make it lose the ability to respond to future transformations.

## The process of hope policy<sup>24</sup> under the swing of political action

The disempowerment of social groups is still in evidence and contributes to the regime's survival. The ineffectiveness of political activity and the lack of discipline of representatives of political, especially the left-

---

24. 24 Nabil Abdul-Fattah, In Search of Hope Policy in Social Protests and Civil Revolutions, Policy Transformations in the Arab Mediterranean Countries, the Arabic edition, edited and forwarded by Nabil Abdul-Fattah, Egypt, 37-56, ARMOND COLLIN, 2011, The Ahram Center for Social and Historical Studies.

wing, parties, is one cause of the loss of confidence by the majority of people, who do not take seriously the promises made by parties during their election campaigns. The link was cut in its first embryonic stages because of the shock experienced by the majority of the social groups disillusioned after election campaigns. These groups received a blow that shattered the hopes formed when the representatives of the political parties promised to work to improve their conditions in return for their votes during the legislative elections, which took place in the early years of political openness. The process of forming political parties in Algeria made them further away from plurality and did not get them closer to the social strata, being a process dictated by external influences and pressures dictated by international institutions. Sarah Ben Nafisa has written about this new situation experienced by most authoritarian regimes, confirming that "it was forced under public opinion and international financiers to submit to the actors at home and abroad guarantees related to democratic openness. Thus it had to deal with different types of pluralism 'in the absence of pluralism', which weakened the standard of political pluralism as a way to distinguish patterns of systems and made it lose accuracy. First and foremost, the idea of classification placed at the forefront, according to a purely dualistic method (democratic regimes vs authoritarian regimes) is an outdated idea in its entirety, which confirms the theory of generalized hybrid of regimes<sup>25</sup>.

The Algerian social groups came to live reality through their vision and their own experience since the beginning of pluralistic elections. They became independent from the Leftist political parties and developed their own style of conducting direct dialogue with the regime, refusing all types of representation to make it respond to their demands.

The regime has taken notice of the weakness of all left-wing, Islamic and democratic parties in bringing large numbers of social strata to their side, and began to enhance its status among them through the politicization of rights such as employment, housing and the creation of urban space. It groomed its representatives later in political campaigning, during which they explained in detail the achievements that the regime realized for the benefit of the people.

---

25. Sara bin Nafeesa, Revolution and Mobilization in the Arab Mediterranean Countries: Era of Political «Hybrid» in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunis, in: Social Protests and Civil Revolutions: Policy Transformations in the Arab Mediterranean Countries, the Arabic edition, edited and forwarded by Nabeel Abdel-Fattah, Egypt, 37-56, ARMOND COLLIN, 2011, The Ahrum Center for Social and Historical Studies.

The regime was able to attract the majority of the social strata, thanks to the “distribution policy” it announced, which enabled it at the same time to contain other political parties because of the new material inducements, thus making itself a magnet for changing the function of parties, so as to counter criticism describing it as an authoritarian regime.

Multiple phenomena are still affecting the new left-wing movement and preventing it from entering contemporary history records because of the historic rift, which is still defeating repeated attempts to create real political change. This behaviour can be regarded as a social phenomenon penetrated for a long time in different social groups, distracting their attention and destroying hopes for collective solidarity to end the effects of the ruling regime’s policy. Besides, some left-wing parties criticize public policy, while giving support to the president of the republic to stay in power as if he was separate from the ruling regime. They praise his achievements without taking the negative sides into account, while refraining from mentioning the abuses and illegal actions of the regime in dealing with the suppression of freedoms, such as the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of the press and expression.

We notice that such division continues to negatively affect the Leftist movement in the various organizations that have recently emerged to express their absolute rejection of the fourth presidential term of a president governing by arbitrary power since 1999, having stripped state institutions of the powers vested in them by the constitution in order to monopolize authority. The support extended by the head of the Labour Party, Louisa Hannoun, for this step and not boycotting the presidential elections held on 17 April 2014 led the new Left movement to wait and cling to hope, which was still alive at certain parties, but wore off after a short period of time due to personal conflicts and individual interests that are always at the expense of public interest.

Then emerged the “Barakat”<sup>26</sup> movement, defined by its founder Hafnaoui Ben Amer Gul in 2014 as “the holy born who spoke to people in the cradle and was given rule while a boy. It is a gift of God to the Algerian people, the genuine, the good, and the noble, the pure lineage, to get them out of the injustice into the light of freedom.”

The movement expressed its rejection of the fourth presidential term of the president, whose stay in power exceeded 15 years. Despite its small numbers and lack of experience, the movement has proved that

---

26. <http://www.z-dz.com/z/opinion/5509.html>

the formation of a left-wing movement is not impossible to achieve in countries with longstanding authoritarian regimes.

The fact is that this new Leftist organization played a key role in showing how vulnerable the ruling regime was. It shocked the regime and drove it to show its actual policy, so that it resisted the movement with all its repressive tools to destabilize it and disperse its popular support. Despite excessive violence to suppress peaceful protests organized by this Leftist opposition, which rejected the regime and demonstrated to boycott the presidential elections, Louisa Hannoun, the representative of the Workers' Party, proceeded to participate in the presidential elections, thus providing them with a legal cover. She ranked fourth, obtaining 1.37% of total votes, not reaching half of the population. This result turned her to be one of the Leftists accused of supporting the present regime to keep an elderly patient in office. The election results were as follows: 49.81% of votes for Abdelaziz Bouteflika, followed by Ali Ben Fleis supported by many organizations of many political parties with 12.30% of votes, and Abdul Aziz Bal'eed, the new personality, who got 3.06% of votes following his presiding over the Future Front Party, formed two years ago. Voices were raised rejecting the fourth presidential term and refusing the election results, calling for action away from them and from supporters of reorganizing the regime and for confronting its policies. Despite all this action and boldness, the Leftist movement is still searching for the best route to consolidate the voice and power of social groups considered to be its base.

The problems of the left-wing movements in developing countries became more serious since the emergence of the state with a concept of "alienation", which imposed its own values on individuals and groups, till visions are clarified for both sides, so that they achieve communication and integration.

The state emerged within a legal entity that imposed its presence on individuals in a repressive manner, and was used by the military for the managing of public affairs, neglecting in the process one of the foundations of growth. Such neglect was represented by not taking into consideration the relations of individuals and groups with public institutions and departments for paving the way for all to participate in the development process. As a result, the growth experiment failed and opened the door to the emergence of conflicts.

Leftist movements have suffered from a variety of obstacles that prevented them from growing and establishing a strong presence and

status in communities such as Algeria. Social and political research used to analyze the weakness of left-wing movements, basing themselves on cultural and religious dimensions. Today, however, these movements are challenging the conclusions of such research, and working to show that their field of concern supersedes the dimensions used as a frame of reference for analyzing their problems.

The Leftist movement represents a complex and ideas-rich history. Its experience and forms of struggle provide lessons in social sciences generally and in political science particularly; they reflect a human action in building methods that enable it to resist authoritarian regimes that hinder its freedom.

On this basis, all kinds of resistance that mankind produced over time can be considered Leftist movements, being built on a certain idea of denouncing authoritarian rule and of sacrifice for that idea to confront all forms of domination.

Leftist movements have formed their history through symbols and legends, and books have recorded their struggle, becoming lessons for generations to come, and models for oppressed peoples.





**ROSA  
LUXEMBURG  
STIFTUNG**

**North Africa Office**

23, Jugurtha Street,  
1082 Tunis - Tunisia

**+216 71 84 34 73**

infotunis@rosalux.org

**www.rosalux.org**



