

Chapter 1

BACK TO PARTIES?

PARTISAN LOGICS AND TRANSFORMATIONS OF POLITICS IN THE ARAB WORLD

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

The first reveals an analytical question, even a theoretical problem: how is it relevant and interesting to look at political parties, as a special and unique form of political organization in contexts where they have been apprehended as structures of clientelist mobilization, communitarian or tribal, with little power over the political destiny of their societies?

The second challenge is of empirical order: how to renew the reflection on the phenomenon of parties, in a context of scarcity and ageing of data? All of the recent works devoted to political parties in the region, within all disciplines, are not numerous. They deal with the history of these parties more than their sociology. We must therefore investigate, go to the field, and return to the parties, to try to understand some of the dynamics that are crossing them at present.

In front of the transformations that characterize the scenes and the backstage of the Arab political arena, this dual challenge seems stimulating. Observers of the political changes in Eastern Europe or Latin America grant them a decisive role in the processes of contemporary democratic transitions. Some authors point out that the parties have been very closely associated with the rise of “Western representative democracies” - the party is then presented as “child of universal vote and democracy” (Weber, cited in Seiler, 2001). In the Arab world, other types of movements, mainly associations have been put at the forefront in the recent decades in terms of regime change. If we refuse to prejudge the democratization of the regimes that we are interested in, we do not rule out the hypothesis of a pluralization and liberalization of their political spaces. Instead, we propose to examine the various relationships between the development of political parties and political transformation - transformation of the regime or within the regime (Albrecht and Schlumberger, 2003).

In the light of these issues, what is happening in the parties of North Africa and the Near East? We made the assumption that in a period where a “crisis of representation” was announced, they are particularly interesting places of observation of changes in political action, against a caricatured image of a political arena characterized by the confrontation between authoritarian regimes in search of second wind and Islamist movements, often presented quickly as dissident forces or, depending on the case, as non-democratic “in the absence of viable secular parties, political competition in the Arab world is reduced to a dangerous confrontation between Islamists and rulers” (Ottaway and Hamzawy, 2007, p. 3). On the contrary, focus on the becoming of partisan life, including its unexplored aspects, its defeats and its pretenses, leads to

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examining the changing patterns of political activism, of political competition and political socialization. It is from this perspective that the first chapter aims to think about partisan politics in the region.

Note that if we chose to work in six Arab countries, Morocco, Algeria, Lebanon, Iraq, Bahrain and Yemen, we do not envision an “Arab space” of politics (Camau and Geisser, 2003, p. 19). Our reflection which draws upon the six countries is not confined to the borders of the Near East and North Africa. It does not claim to cover all situations in the region either. We seek instead to focus on what we learn from observation in these countries that present both similarities and differences: a first common denominator certainly lies in the logic of repression with which political parties may have been confronted with, and the context of limited pluralism in which they develop and evolve: a “feckless pluralism” (Carothers, 2002) which results in a disconnection between the governed and the political elite or a system of “dominant-power politics” (Linz and Stepan, 1996) where participation in political life is relatively closed and shallow and where the procedures for contestation are poorly institutionalized. The high-cost of the commitment determined directories of specific collective action (Geisser, Vairel and Karam, 2006). Oddly, the academic literature has focused little on this issue.

Several cases of this study emphasize the concurrence under which our area is subject to “sociation” which supposes partisan commitment. Far from withering away for the benefit of a voluntary collective action and formerly free one, do the communitarian and primordial solidarities “saturate” the substance of political relation? Are they obstacles in the development of a partisan system? Tribalism, ethnic or community networks, local, national or transnational *‘asabiyyat*, including their renewed forms, do they all take into charge more efficiently, the defense of interests and the voicing of demands beside the central political institutions ? (Picard, 2006, p. 46)?

But the case studies that we have chosen are also characterized by important differences, particularly regarding the conditions for invention of parties and the rules of the political game: some have experienced a colonial period and national movements whose legacy remains central; while others, such as Yemen or Bahrain, have been preserved from direct colonial domination (Burgat, 2005, p. 191). Some, Lebanon, Morocco, have since independence established a multiparty system, even if this system is sometimes drastically framed and limited not to mention defused (Tozy, 1999). Others like Algeria's National Liberation Front or Iraq's Arab and Socialist *Baath*, have been the scene of the implementation over several decades of a single party, sometimes called “State party”, any opposition or dissent being irretrievably taken down. In Bahrain, the party's activity itself remains forbidden until today. The influence of the socialist experience has also known very different avatars in each of these countries.

It is in the light of these preliminary remarks that we propose to organize our thoughts, dealing with three issues: Are the political parties of these six countries undergoing a crisis? How have the partisan dynamics been affected by the formation of States in the region, and how is this legacy expressed today? Do “new parties” stand out today, especially in the vein of Islamist movements which seem to be reinvesting in partisan organization on many levels?

ARE THE ARAB PARTIES UNDERGOING A CRISIS ?

The theme of the “crisis of parties” or the crisis of the “partisan system” runs through the literature on these six countries. This fact echoes the generalization of the thesis of the decline of

“classical” party¹. Depending on the fields, some highlight the persistence of proto-parties (the parties never existed), and others foresee the development of post-partisan systems, with the study of innovative or alternative modes of collective action, social movements, networking, etc. (Lawson and Merkl, 1988). These issues come under the theme of “crisis of representation” (Catusse, 2004) or the crisis of some parties, notably “secular” parties (Ottaway and Hamzawi, 2007). The presumed death of the parties (or some of them) or at least their ban, leads first to examine three issues raised within our fields:

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

On the other hand, what does the weakness of the parties consist of today? Empirically, has the partisan call become blunted? How do anti-partisan feelings and denunciations conjugate? In final, what are the political parties “counter-performances”?

And finally, does the rhetoric on the crisis, denial, or death of the parties no occult the real place that central political organizations occupied and continue to occupy, the leftist movements of yesterday, the Islamist movements today?

An object without interest?

For nearly a century in most countries of the Arab world, political parties were formally instruments of public participation, political mobilization and elections. More precisely, the category “party” (*hiṣb*) is used to refer to political organizations, or to regulate their activities, as opposed to “clans” for example (*ʿachira*), to “communities” (*tawāʾif*), to “associations” (*jamʿiyyāt*), to political clubs (*endiyya siyāsīyya*), to enterprises (*muʿsasāt*), to unions (*naqabāt*), or interest groups etc. Often, it is in the context of the national struggle and then independence that the term stood out. This is the case of *hiṣb al-Istiqlal* (1943) in Morocco, the Lebanese Communist Party in 1924 (*el-hiṣb el shuyuʿi el-lubnani*), the Iraqi Communist Party (*el-hiṣb el shuyuʿi el-iraqi*) in 1934. Generic and used by the law, the label “party” remains challenged in practice. The names given to “parties” may also take other references: “front” like the FLN (*jabhat al-tahrir al-watani*) in Algeria (1954), “movement” (*haraka*), “gathering” (*tajjamuʿ*), “current” (*tayyar*), “union” (*ittihad*), “organization” (*tanzim*), etc.

The partisan structure was also established - or not - through the bias of the law and its normalization: after the “second-liberal era” (Salamé, 1991, p. 319 et seq.), struggles for independence and development of Arab nationalism, political organizations quickly fell under the laws on “political parties” and continue to be with the adoption of new laws, according to the transformation of regimes (in Morocco (1996, 2005, 2006), in Algeria (1989, 1997, 2002, 2008), in Yemen (1991, 2001), in Iraq (1960, 1971, 1991, 2004 and 2005)) - and / or on associations (in Lebanon (1909)), in Bahrain (2006). Some political organizations are banned in the name of the prohibition of political parties, often by reference to the fear of the *fitna*, the division of social body of the nation or community. This holds true in regimes that were formed out of nationalist movements (the single party as embodying the nation as a whole, beyond its divisions), but not only that. In Bahrain for example, between 1975 and 1999, all partisan activity was banned. The law on communitarian associations (*ahliyya*) of 1999 prohibited the formation of religious association on a partisan basis and the 2005 law on political associations did not recognize any

¹ For a critical discussion of this literature, see R. Gunther, J.J. Montero, J. Linz (2002)

political association with a religious base². In Yemen, the contributors to this book stress that the reference to “partisan spirit” (*al-hizbiyya*) was connoted disapprovingly: “in the collective representations, the reference to the party is associated with the division, corruption and exclusive and close allegiances. In the 1980s, the Yemeni contemporary political scene was largely influenced and dominated by the formula of the General People's Congress out of which, at least formally, the structure of partisan or call to *hizb* in the name of solidarity transgressed - and stigmatized - the partisan divide.”³ In Iraq, with the establishment of the Baathist regime, the parties could not develop outside a limited and controlled National Front (*al-jabha al-wataniyya*). In Lebanon, the Syrian Nationalist Social Party (*al-hizb as-suri al-qawmi-al-ijtima'i*) is prohibited from 1949 to 1971. In other cases, on the contrary, as in the Moroccan elections of 1997 and the following, candidates without party affiliation are compelled to join partisan forms to run.

The media also contributed to the naturalization of “party.” They used the term in a quite consensual manner, and attributed an important place to partisan activities in their political pages. Indeed, the history of the partisan press - and wider partisan media - is rich in the region and has contributed greatly to informing political debates and voicing their intellectuals and ideologues (Aflaq, 1978, Qutb*, 1990, Qasim, 2005). This is verified in our field, including contexts of censorship. Each of the two main political associations in Bahrain has a magazine, the association *al-minbar al-taqadumi* publishes the magazine *akbhar al-minbar*, and the association *al-'amal al-dimuqrati* publishes the magazine *al-majala al-dimuqratiyya* (Al-Murshed (2008)) ; in Morocco, political parties have their own official organs, such as *ittihad ishtiraki* and *Libération* for the USFP, *al-'alem* and *L'Opinion* for the *Istiqlal*, in addition to *at-tajdid* for the Party of the justice and development, etc. In Lebanon, the television channel *El Manar* is a media tool for Hezbollah, Future TV for the Future movement, OTV for the Free Patriotic Movement, and so on (Lamloum, 2008; 2009). In Yemen, the weekly *al-sahwa* and *al-madina* are the organs of *al-islam*.

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

Yet the object “political party” has long been regarded in the region as unworthy of attention,, especially from social and political sciences. It must be said that research on the partisan phenomenon was hampered by the regimes and even by political parties themselves, reluctant to self-criticism (Malki*, 2008). Despite pioneering work (Waterbury, 1970; Batatu 1978), recent studies documented on the parties in the Arab world are few. They essentially take three forms: a history of political thought (Hourani 1962, Abdel-Malek 1969, Al-Douri* 1984, Salamé 1987, Khalidi *et al.* 1991); partisan monographs exist (Darraj and Barout*, 1997, 1999, 2000) but they are not legion and often stop at the years 1970/1980; at last biographies of leaders, the fate of the man often mistaken for that of the organization he led (Abdel-Malek, 1970, etc.).

The recent numerical development of political parties, and the contemporary mutations in Arab regimes have caused a prudent regain of interest for the object. Over the past ten years, some works in social science point out new problems and renew approaches⁴. Monographs of parties or political currents denote the displacement of interest of the scientific community and political actors (Eshtay* 1997; Charara*1996; Norton, 1999; Kienle, 1990; Tozy 1999, Mallat*, 1993). The

² See study of *al-Minbar el-Islami* by A. El-Murshed* (2008).

³ See the contribution of L. Bonnefoy and M. Poirier to this volume

* The references followed by an asterisk (*) refer back to the bibliography in Arabic.

⁴ Today some publications, recent gatherings and research programs reveal a regain of interest. By witnessing the two tomes of the REMMM (1998, 2006), the conferences and publications of the LCPS (2002; 2006), and the research program of the Institute for Strategic Studies, etc. See: Aboujaoudé, 1985 ; Malki*, 1993 ; Eshtay*, 1997; Abdel-Jabbar, 2003a-b; etc.

development of Islamist organizations attracted the most attention. Nevertheless, they remain relatively marginal compared to studies that focus or have focused on political currents⁵ and more recently on economic elites (Kienle 2003; Heydemann, 2004; Catusse 2008, etc.), elections (Gamblin, 1997; Legrain, 1999; LCPS*, 1998; 2002; 2007; Bennani-Chraïbi *and alii*, 2004; Favier, 2001, etc.) or associative structures (Bianchi, 1989; Norton, 1995; Carapico, 1998; Ben Nefissa, 2002; Karam, 2006, etc.).

Few studies focus on forms of militancy within the party structures, on the recruitment, the sociology of militants (Favier 2004; Bennani Chraïbi, 2008), as if “the parties” were emptied of people and amounted to their leaders or even to personalized clans or networks. This is the thesis of F. El-Khazen (2003), in Lebanon, who describes political parties “in search of partisanship.” However, exploration of political staff brings to light the shifting of sociological cleavages, the transformation of the logic of collective action within and around the parties. This is evident in the recent work of M. Bennani-Chraïbi (2007) in Morocco and its contribution in this work: they allow to put in parallel diachronically and synchronically militancy that some tend to oppose: the Islamist *versus* Marxist militancy, or the involvement in political parties *versus* associations.

Major trends in the literature (in Arabic as in other languages) show us two periods of scientific production on political parties. They reflect the role of political parties in each sociopolitical context. The first period of high interest on the subject developed in the mid-sixties to mid-seventies, when the regimes stabilized. It was informed on the one hand by the research on political modernization, and on the other hand by the pluralization of political scenes in the aftermath of independence in several of these countries. The second is more recent: it starts in the nineties, when the liberalization is listed at the top of the reform agenda of regimes. The issue of political Islam began to grab the interest of observers. The number of parties on each of our fields then increased considerably, either because of the withdrawal of the single party system (Algeria), the permission to create autonomous political parties (Iraq, Bahrain, North Yemen and South Yemen etc.) or because of successive divisions (Morocco, Iraq).⁶

Thus in Bahrain, eight political organizations (*tanẓīmat siyāsīyya*) in 1973, not recognized as a parties, increase to fifteen political associations (*jam'īyyat siyāsīyya*) in 2007. In Algeria, through the “Spring of Algiers” in 1988, over 60 new parties are registered, before some are prohibited in 1992 (first and foremost the FIS). Between 1990 and 1991, with the reunification, the number of Yemeni political parties also grew: the two- hegemonic party systems that characterized North Yemen (General People's Congress) and South Yemen (Socialist Party) came to be substituted by a multiparty system with about forty official and recognized parties. In Morocco, with the help of each election, the number of parties grew: 30 in the 2009 legislative elections. For that matter, observers of the Moroccan politics speak of “scissiparity” and “atomization of the partisan field”(Santucci, 2006b). The creation of “new” parties often translates lengthy “fraternal” dissidence or old “filial” frustrations, that the framework of the internal life of the party cannot solve (*idem.*). For A. Khatibi (1998), this multiplication of political parties, by splitting and successive cloning, expresses the predominance of a pervasive culture of authority that creates the bond of the political community with “birthright and patriarchy”, and as a result that legitimizes any new political party based on the same principle, namely “the creation of another symbolic lineage.”

⁵ To skim quickly, in the 60's, on the national movements, see: Antonios, 1938; Berque, 1967; Batatu, 1984; Al-Douri, 1984. In the 60-70 on Arabism, see: Khalidi, 1999, Carré, 1993 or Dawashi, 2003. And then in the 80's on Islamism, see: Carré et Michaud, 1983; Etienne, 1987; Kepel et Richard, 1990; Roy, 1992; Kepel, 1993; Burgat, 1995; Abdel-Jabbar, 2003a-b, etc.).

⁶ For a table representing the divisions inside certain Iraqi political parties, see the contribution of A. Jameel* and F. Abdel-Jabbar (2008) to the project Arab Political Parties Studies. www.appstudies.org.

This cautious return to the party, of both political actors as well as research, is accompanied by a questioning of the relevance of the concept. Thus, in the special issue of *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée* (REMMM) on political parties in the Maghreb (Badel and Catusse, 2006), all contributions collected do not specifically tackle the parties. In the case of Libya, Mr. Djaziri (2006) questions the point of using this concept to describe political organizations while partisan activity is prohibited and punishable by death. The same question arises in this volume in the case of Bahrain. Two other contributions in this issue of REMMM focus on political movements that do not take the partisan form. In the case of *'arab* in Algeria, K. Dirèche-Slimani (2006) thinks that we are facing new names, actors and practices that “upset the traditional representations of politics in Kabyle and Algerian milieu’s”. We find this problem in many cases in the region, where after all, the supply of various political organizations is particularly dense: political parties look pale in comparison with the development of protests, and other forms of outsiders politics, advocacy organizations and social movements (Karam, 2006; Bennani Chraïbi and Fillieule, 2003; Geisser, Karam and Vairel, 2006). In the case of Moroccan agrarian corporatism, T. Desrues (2006) shows that this is precisely a kind of mobilization that refused the partisan form: “the corporatist formula which tried to become institutionalized [in the domain of agrarian politics in Morocco] provides, without considering the risk of competition and political concurrence, a control of the profession as well as a monopoly and a personalization of representation.” We will have the opportunity to re-discuss these two arguments along with other examples.

Other cases show that using the party as a reference relates to multiple processes. Like was formerly the case of European communist parties (Kriegel, 1970), parties are sometimes set up to be capitalized and singularized: this is often in the context of a single party, but also in Lebanon today *hiṣṣa* *allah* is commonly called ‘the party’ (*al-hiṣṣa*). Nevertheless, the article by Catherine Le Thomas in this book or articles from other authors show that precisely in this case, the labeling of “party” may be simplistic or inaccurate to describe the social and political activities, as well as religious and military activities, that come into play or in this nebulous “satellite” organizations (Harb, 2005, p. 167), that some authors compare to a “counter- society” (Charara*, 1996)

North Africa and the Middle East have also been the scene for a reflection on “protoparties” in the region, a re-actualization of the concept of M. Weber (Camau and Geisser, 2003).⁷ Thus, the societies which we have examined have experienced the blossoming of “parties”, which are often described as elitist groups more committed to the pursuit of profits and places of choice in the channels of cooptation and redistribution, than to the deliberate will of national and local leaders of the organization to take and exercise power, alone or with others, and not simply to influence power; at the concern to seek popular support through elections or any other way (The Palombara and Weiner, 1966). It would be rather by renouncing ambition and the exercise of the power that these organizations would find themselves a place in the political arena. In the case of Jordan, Mr. Shtuway* (2006) notes that almost the majority of the founders of political parties that emerged after 1992 [the date of approval of political parties and multiparty system] are the old bureaucratic elites of the State. Some have sought to create a state party, using these structures to reinvest public institutions in the era of democracy. That is why these parties remained elitist. Their membership is related to the calculation of what they could make in terms of personal political benefit. In Yemen, the development of the Yemeni Gathering for Reform (*al-islāh*) starting 1990 (again the year when multiparty system is allowed) is played out in waltz-like hesitation with public authorities. As the contribution of L. Bonnefoy and M. Poirier in this book shows, “discreet, peaceful and intellectual”, the elite of the party manages its inclusion in

⁷ This designates partisan formations still in the embryonic stage, evolving in a kind of partisan proto-history. (before the introduction of universal voting in Europe) as opposed to parties exercising mediation functions, in the name of a certain idea or general interest founded on the free association and not on primary integrated forms. (Camau and Geisser, 2003)

the intricacies of power, “a political scene that pluralizes (through the institutionalization of the opposition) and that ‘de-pluralizes’ at the same time (through the monopolization of resources by the government).”

Plus, if since 2003 [the U.S. invasion and fall of the Baathist regime], the number of declared Iraqi parties exceeded 200, “few of them have a history and a remarkable political activity and are taken into consideration on the Iraqi political scene. Most of them are just political slogans. For this reason, it is difficult to classify them, as they have no clear activity that could indicate their ideological orientation, no communication, and some of them do not even have local headquarters.”⁸

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

These doubts about the uses of the concept and therefore about its scientific value and the obvious risk of conceptual stretching deserve attention. A category of analysis or labeling or stigma in the political competition (*ibidem*), a marker of identity, and sometimes a mobilization tool even a manipulation tool, the “political party” is polymorphic. This pushes to question seriously the conditions of the “return to the party” that we propose: if we find it pertinent and useful to open the file of the partisan phenomena in the region – be it only because these actors organize themselves on behalf of political parties –, we should take it into consideration: it is less about (re) discovering a “new political object”, even less giving meaning to shells emptied from their content, than to look at it as an original and plural fabric of politics to be analyzed as such.

Failure of parties

Besides the question of the definition of political party, the readings then show that not only is the partisan object often considered without interest in the region, but also that the political parties are left out by the observers. This leads to analysis that is often normative, which has the disadvantage of implicitly or explicitly disqualifying the object of the study (if this can be justified in the context of actual political action, this is very annoying from a strict approach of social sciences).

The weakness of parties

Indeed, the view shared by the works is that of the “weakness of political parties” in the fields of our investigation. It is about a common place that we locate elsewhere (Fretel and Lefebvre, 2004). It is here aggravated by the extreme limitation of pluralism in which the parties develop. According to F. Abdel-Jabbar, two elements have contributed to the “weakening” of the Iraqi Communist Party: the repressive apparatus of the Baathist regime in 1970-1980 and from 2003, the strengthening of political and militia violence, the confessional conflict and the development of conservative Islamist movements, which have undermined the popular base of the party.⁹ Paradoxically, it is against all this that the Communist Party now hopes to strengthen its project. This is the same evidence that M. Ottaway and A. Hamzawi (2007, p. 1) bring forward:

⁸ See the contribution of A. Jameel* and F. Abdel-Jabbar (2008) to the project Arab Political Parties Studies. www.appstudies.org.

⁹ See the contribution of F. Abdel-Jabbar to this volume

“Conditions in most Arab countries are quite difficult for secular parties, just as they are for any political organization seeking to act independently of a government or even more to challenge a government. But the crisis of secular parties is also in part of their own making.”

Asserting that political parties are weak certainly is a matter for sociological explanation. Many elements prove that, even if the question remains on what scale this strength or weakness is measured. But it is also a discourse and positioning of political actors:

Within the parties, the argument is often used, particularly at the time of tension and internal crises, not to mention splitting: this is the case of the Lebanese Communist Party in 2005, in the upheaval that followed the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister. A dissident group denounced “the line taken by the party that led to catastrophic results, which affected the party and its supporters. Its effectiveness has been reduced to nothingness, isolated from the people and far from any intellectual or political influence, its role has been weakened, its alliance with groups close to its ideological family defeated”¹⁰ The “anti-party” discourse and the discrediting of partisan systems still function, used both by “outsiders” as much as by “insiders” and public authorities. It is largely fueled by opinion makers.

Basically, the arguments made about this weakness that would prevent the parties to play the role that is “expected of them,” are many: the authors denounce their organizational weakness. Parties are often described as poorly organized, highly personalized, if not at the service of a man, a family, or a clan like the Takritis for the Iraqi Baath (Luizard, 1998) or a confessional or ethnic community (on Lebanon: El-Khazen* 2002). Parties are often characterized by a low degree of institutionalization, scattered militants, and fragile resources. Many of them do not come alive and become consistent except during election campaigns. Their ideologies are weak. Finally, they would only rarely be able to secure, monitor, and control effective collective mobilizations. In other words, according to these authors, parties are mainly empty shells which would also justify in many studies their anthropomorphism (“the party” has said or has done) and the reduction of partisan life to the activities of their leaders. This finding is not limited to the fields in which we worked.¹¹

The malfunctioning of party

Another argument regarding the parties in the region lies in the denunciation of their “malfunctioning.” This argument is sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit: the party does not function like a “real” party. Alternatively, the parties “are no longer what they used to be” in reference to a golden age often de-historicized, to go quickly, the Arab liberal age (Salamé, 1991, 1994).

On this basis, the political parties in Arab countries are not always considered like that by analysts. They consider them as elements of authoritarianism, poorly organized for the conquest of power and replicating within them authoritarian and personalized behavior, without being able to create a civic conscience. The developmentalist literature made of Arab parties’ importations which would be difficult to transplant in political societies where civil representation is challenged by primordial solidarities, familial, clan, ethnic or communitarian. For B. Badie (1989) for example, three features of political parties would be “in-exportable” because shaped by the European political history: the “sociation” in Weber’s sense (the decline of communitarian societies); the articulation between the development of political parties, the enterprise of

¹⁰ See the contribution of C. Eshtay* to the project Arab Political Parties Studies. www.appstudies.org.

¹¹ We join here the conclusions of B. Reilly (2008) on a bigger scale.

conquest of power and electoral mobilization; finally, “the partisan game” which would impose itself to other divisions (Charaf Eddin*, 2006, and El-Kourani*, 2004).

These arguments are not satisfying, either empirically or theoretically. Culturalist explanations (the distrust of Islam from division, the quest for the *Umma*) produce de-historicized explanations. The weight of the history in the fragile formation of Nation-States and the stigma of the single-party are certainly more interesting to discuss. In fact, revolutions and struggles for independence have largely contributed to set up the political arenas where conflict (and partition) is not institutionalized, where unanimity is embodied in the form of State party by the independent and revolutionary State: this is the case of the Algerian FLN, but also the Iraqi Baath (Batatu, 1978; Devlin, 1976) where the contrast is strong between partisan excitement in the aftermath of independence, the expression of strong differences (right left; tradition / modernity, conservatism / progressivism, urban elites / new middle classes; pro-occident/pro-soviet; capitalism / socialism, religion / secularism, etc..) and the “lead weight that falls down” a decade later (Picard, 1996). The Baath party and the “clique” that directed them eliminated all forms of contestation even within the party (Luizard, 1998). Can we still talk of a party then? The ambition of a monopolist party is that of power without sharing, without alternating, without competition: “promoted basic authorities of the State, its nature has changed. A number of political scientists designate it by the term “party-state” -and the hyphen is essential. Not in any case can we consider the party-states as systems of parties” (Seiler, 2001, p. 7). From organizational representation of interests and from ideas involved in political competition, it becomes a central hub of the power apparatus, regulating in a total manner the political and social life.

In other cases, if the functioning of parties is not put to question, it is the partisan system itself that is described as dysfunctional: J.C. Santucci (2006b) describes a Moroccan multiparty system as a purely symbolic system of personal foil or instrument of political control. He shows how the recurrent and exponential multiplication of political parties in the country is caused by a scissiparity which fed the feckless pluralism: while keeping the rotation and the competition for power outside the will of their citizens, public authorities tolerate some kind of opposition and political expression as long as it does not call into question the legitimacy of leadership. This thesis is still shared by many authors: in order to better control the political game, the monarchy is trying to “accompany” the emergence of social conflicts that the birth of a party seeks in principle to translate. In contrast to what one may describe such as “partisanization” of the political scene in Eastern Europe during the last decade (Heurtaux, 2005), here, the hyper multiplication of the partisan offer disfavors the role of parties. In a game that is becoming loose, they are unable to monopolize the political game. Even in the case of Lebanon, where political life is largely governed by partisan organizations, they are often described as limited by confessional representation, even reduced to organizations in the service of a man or a family.

In sum, the monist and unanimous representation of society - and the State - driven by national movements, revolutionary movements or the monarchical institution has de-legitimized, in many cases, the partisan representation of the political society (or of *parts* of the society). Hegemonic party, in Algeria and Iraq who have hampered the partisan life, are characterized by a grip on society, a “nationalization” of society. And where multiparty system developed, it is essentially as a feckless or limited pluralism, the real power lying elsewhere than in the partisan arena (at the Palace, in the case of Morocco, in the communities in the case of Lebanon).

The absence of democracy and civil society?

Defects attributed to partisan organizations and systems in the region have also often been associated with two “gaps” that political societies would suffer: a lack of democracy and a lack of

civil society. We will not dwell here on the rich literature that these issues have aroused (Bishara*, 1998), nor the contrasting positions to which they gave rise. This debate (“why the Arab world is not democratic?” (Salamé, 1991)) has weighed on the marginalization of political parties for two decades.

We have already stressed that, intimately associated with the history of representative democracies, parties are generally presented as necessary elements for the emergence and development of the latter. On the one hand, the structuring and institutionalization of partisan systems has contributed to the organization of political competition; and on the other hand the form that political life takes in representative democracies has promoted the rational and bureaucratic structure of modern political parties (Gaxie, 1996). Political activity professionalized in favor of the institutionalization of partisan structures. And on two privileged arenas, the Parliament and the elections, political parties have imposed themselves as vital organizations, which think and organize representative democracy: they intervene in the regulation of political life (for example by making the “political rights”, electoral laws, laws on political parties, on public life financing, etc.). They are also, in theory at least, the central channels for regulating the circulation of elites, by selecting the political personnel etc..

This short term story, geographically situated, is sometimes risen in generality to explain, in reverse, the weakness or dysfunction of partisan systems in other parts of the world, and the Arab world in particular (Baduel, 1996, El Kourani*, 2004). Two points are emphasized by these authors: first, the parties could not develop because of the authoritarian characteristic of the system: either because they were banned (the cost of collective action is then exorbitant), or because they are diverted from their functions. J. Waterbury (1970) for instance said that in Morocco, “opposition to His Majesty” became in favor of the segmentarism of the system, “His Majesty’s opposition”. In this context, the voice of the majority is competed by the call for unanimity. Second, and conversely, the absence of partisan life could strengthen the authoritarian regime: “The crisis of secular parties is emerging as a major obstacle to democratic transformation in the Arab world” (Ottaway and Hamzawi, 2007, p. 2). These approaches help to explain how the party system and political system are narrowly interrelated. But they are also tautological, even simplistic for some, since if we can show that in Occident history of democracies, and partisan histories are particularly mixed, it remains difficult to defend that they are necessarily and univocally related (Manin, 1996). From this point of view, the undeniable partisan life (even if) “imperfect” in Arab world, can actually finely document the modalities of an authoritarian and limited multiparty system (Santucci, 2006a).

Another defect is allegedly burdens partisan life in Arab societies: the difficult formation of a civil society and the importance on the contrary of the weight of notables. Some authors analyze the use of the concept of civil society and its media coverage in Arab countries as a simple imported project and a rallying cry without deep socio-historical roots, even a new ideological tool in the hands of some Arab intellectuals facing the failure of modernizing projects and strengthening of the Islamist discourse (Bishara*, 1998, p. 271). In our case, in front of the inflation of discourse on civil society, and in front of the rise of mobilizations “in the name of civil society” that contrast with the deflation of references to political parties, the debate lies elsewhere: Several authors have described, in European contexts particularly, the emergence of the party system as the transition from the dominance of parliamentarians over the parties to the domination of the parties over the parliamentarians (Duverger, 1992); the counterbalance of power of the notables would be the empowerment of civil society. On the contrary in our fields of study, observers often insist not only on the personalization of political function, but also on the weak articulation between political society and civil society. In the case that interests us, it is less its improbable or imported character, than the weakness in the political space of claims by associations or movements called “civil society” that concerns us.

On one hand, partisan identities appear to remain fragile and badly tied to the construction of causes in civil society. At least, this is what several contributions to this volume highlight. Groups have difficulty organizing mobilizations around social cleavages, even more freezing these cleavages in the words of S. Lipset and S. Rokkan (1967). This is what M. Djaziri (1997) indicates about political parties in the Maghreb. This is also noted in the sections following, by the studies on the Yemeni Gathering for Reform (*al-Islah*) in Yemen or the Justice and Development Party (PJD) in Morocco. The first gathers tribal elites, merchants, and religious people around a flexible and adaptable ideology.¹² The second tends to euphemize, regarding municipal business at least, its relation to Islam and its social discourse. Valorizing instead a managerial discourse and “moral clientelism”, it turns to heterogeneous voters.¹³ In the case of the contemporary Lebanese Communist Party, C. and F. Eshtay* (2008) show that the stated priority of the struggle is more over the refusal of sectarian division than the defense of a class interest, because for Lebanese communists the sectarian divisions would prevent the expression of social cleavages.¹⁴

On the other hand, political formations are often organized around and sometimes at the service of one man (Messara 1996), notables, families, clans, groups that adapt and adopt new clothes according to the transformations of the political scene: the *Hamula* in Palestine (Legrain, 1996), *ta'ifa* (communities) in Lebanon [Picard, 1994, Messara 1996], the reinvented *'asabiyya* (Seurat, 1985), etc. According to this perspective, the “politics of the name” trumps “the politics of number” (or of majority): the leaders and families; and not political parties, eventually monopolize the mobilization and political representation. It occurs for instance in Lebanese political parties, where transmission of partisan responsibility by blood ties (and sometimes in the name of bloodshed) is common. It is also observed in the tribal identification of certain parties.

Whatever it is, these approaches must be nuanced. Recent studies show how the figures and the criteria of notability transform and embrace the changes of the partisan system (Favier, 2003). Parties themselves create their notables, who are more or less faithful depending on the case.¹⁵ In parallel, activist identities speak forcefully and translate divisions or social conflict, sometimes with heavy repression: in a nutshell, leftist movements yesterday, Islamist movements today.

Yet they mobilize...

In summary, the parties in these countries are political objects that are “misidentified”, suspected with inconsistency, structural weaknesses, and victims of the authoritarian regimes that developed during the twentieth century. But, as pointed out by Kh. Suleiman* (2004, p. 436) in a stimulating conclusion of a book on the internal democracy of the Arab parties, the question of whether or not there are political parties in the Arab world is not very enlightening. “Otherwise, what should we call these dozens of organizations that claim body and soul tribute to political parties?” (*Ibid.*).

The political scenes of countries in our study are led by organizations that mobilize and contribute to regulate the political game on behalf of partisan identity. They cannot be reduced to the parties playing the electoral game - many are excluded or have distanced themselves from the electoral race -: they have all housed and generated various activisms. Despite the lack of credibility or trust brought out in investigations on political parties, the abstention rate has often

¹² See the contribution of L. Bonnefoy and M. Poirier to this volume

¹³ See the contribution of M. Catusse and L. Zaki to this volume

¹⁴ See the contribution of C. and F. Eshtay* (2008) to the project Arab Political Parties Studies.

¹⁵ See the contribution of M. Bennani-Chraïbi to this volume

risen in the latest polls¹⁶, and other indications of “the crisis of the parties”, some of Arab political parties continue to ensure structures of commitment and leadership, especially at election time. Hence the need to abandon an “objectifying” and univocal conception of parties, and to consider the variety of cases, to study some parties that are not necessarily under the spotlight, which are witnessing the transformations and constraints facing the political processes as much as the most studied political groups.

THE PATH OF HISTORY

The approach we adopted in this book privileges a historical perspective. To enter the partisan transformation scenes, is to understand how the development of political parties and their current metamorphosis are intimately inscribed in the history of State formation in the region. At a comparative level, the concern of historicizing allows us to explore recurring forms or innovative features in recent partisan formations.

In front of the pluralization of political scenes, and beyond discourse on “democratization” or “the crises of the parties”, two types of histories on the partisan phenomenon in the region emerge. Like the studies compiled in this book, most contemporary works evoke a recent “transformation” or “change”, compared to an earlier period, that of “old regime”, which would determine in part the contemporary socio-political context. So much so that two historicities seem to have combined: that of time short of contemporary mutations, sometimes under the hypothesis of democratization, and sometimes reread in terms of authoritarian reform; that of a long time of formation of political regimes, of the singularity of chosen trajectories, of the reinterpretation of primary solidarities and modern political identities. It is in the interlacing of this long history and this short history that the stakes of a metamorphosis of the Arab parties can be understood. The first wears the glasses of comparison with the international reformist agenda; the second, on the contrary, re-embeds parties in their social, historical contexts, or even in specific places.

Short histories that resemble each other

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

¹⁶ Evidently with exceptions, as the high level of participation in the Lebanese legislative 2009 elections

Internal dynamics:

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

It is true that partisan organizations might not open their doors easily. In addition to opacity or withholding information which certain organizations prove strategically to be, access to the field is largely conditioned by the constraints of repressive regimes and the careful reflexes they can generate. Proximity to the field or permission to investigate on the part of the organization is often necessary to maintain a presence of long observation. This has the advantage of having the means to enter into the mysteries of the party, to be familiar, to understand the codes, or culture, tacit and explicit. But this in return can reduce the effective critical distancing needed for analysis or even lead to different forms of censorship in the restitution of findings.

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

On the one hand, many partisan formations are seeking a second wind to face the alienation they suffer and the trend towards professionalization of their militants. In most of the case, the number of their militants rarefied even though, paradoxically, the pluralization of the political scenes gives them more leeway to act in politics. At the moment of the election process, this results, not only in the high abstention rate, but also in parties’ searching for candidates, or even in seeking the help of salaried staff unrelated the party. It is also expressed in the fragility of partisan loyalty (known as “nomad partisan” in Morocco) in contrast to the inverse forms of militancy far more radical and committed which we observe in fewer cases. As for partisan activism, it became more professionalized, salaried even functionalized. If in some cases this is evidence of a lack of mobilization (benevolent activism would no longer be what it was) in other cases, it is described by observers as by militant partisans themselves, as the pledge of a superior political efficacy: that is the case of the PJD in Morocco, where local elected officials, and all the partisan formation, highlight their political virginity (their involvement would be quite recent), but also the professionalization of their elected activities to which they would devote themselves totally.¹⁷

On the other hand, the recruitment of political personnel plays an important role in partisan transformations. The centralization of partisan devices, their personalization, continues to be highlighted. However, the institutionalization of absolute power of management, expressed for example in the organization of uncompetitive congresses without stakes, is not always the rule. In generational terms, the ruling of the Arab parties, often coming from the militancy of the 1950/1960’s, are nowadays brought to renew themselves. Thus, most of the papers in this volume reflect tension in management, the expression of opposing currents, the old guard being sometimes reversed or at least marginalized, weakened as in the case of *al-Islah* in Yemen or *Al-Wefaq* (*National Islamic Society*) in Bahrain or the Moroccan USFP. In the new parties, the leadership is not always uniform. Unlike the images of purges or exclusion conveyed for example on the Baathist Iraqi and Syrian parties, the link between the party and its elected officials is often floating and negotiated. Candidate selection is variable: it may be an object of bargaining or less

¹⁷ See the contribution of M. Catusse and L. Zaki to this volume

negotiation between the national governing bodies of the party and local notables¹⁸: it can arise from consultation with “the base” but to be subjected to a rigorous selection, conform with the representation that the party leadership wants to give him, as in the case of the Moroccan PJD.¹⁹

However, studies on the members and party activists are virtually absent. Hence the great value of the work initiated recently by Bennani-Chraïbi²⁰, on the political personnel of Moroccan parties, unmatched on the scale of the region. Combining the quantitative treatment of data on activist trajectories and qualitative analysis, it can examine with unpublished and precise data, the process of diversification of the recruitment of Moroccan political personnel. In her contribution to this book, she reveals how the Socialist Union of Popular Forces experiences a notabilization of its political leadership: the former party of militants has been transformed into a party of notables.

More generally, observers often confuse the supporter, the member, the frame, the militant, or the reader of the partisan press or the client of the local or national political leader. This is more the case, given that the conditions of partisan membership are being blurred, informal and poorly defined, as they are sometimes hidden when the party is illegal, or as it reveals in the case of Lebanese Hizbollah as do some communist parties (Kriegel, 1970, p. 214-220), procedures are not disclosed. Entering the party may include initiation. In all cases, it produces social and political identities. The chapter of C. Le Thomas in this book demonstrates that the latter emerge in structures of socialization, of controlling or of training that do not necessarily stop strictly at the narrow frontiers of the party.

After having given rise to a lot of work until the 1970/1980's (Hottinger, 1961, 1966; Gubser, 1973, Johnson 1986; Gilsenan, 1986), studies of leadership of parties became few in number. Even if most of them highlight the often oligarchic organization of political groups, recent work, for example in the Middle East, show that the figures of leaders or *ṣu'amā'* of yesterday do not have the same characteristics as those of today. Not only is the inheritance relationships between *ṣa'im* and his followers combining with generational effects, but the institution of *ṣu'amā'*, by which a leader ensures the loyalty of the local community in exchange of economic redistribution and defense of the community interests, is also changing with the transformations of political economy (Picard, 2001). This translates also within partisan structures, especially when weakly institutionalized, by finding new resources, strategies, and qualities on the part of the leaders. This is even more striking when, at the disappearance of their fathers, new executives and leaders seek to revive not only their social networks within and outside the party, but the charismatic dimension of their power.

Finally, in terms of internal dynamics, the problems of the use of weapons proves to be determinant in several cases: in some cases it is about disarming militias (for example, the post war in Lebanon), going from armed mode to peaceful modes of political regulation (in Lebanon but also in the case of Yemen after unification); while in other cases on the contrary, partisan activism takes up arms and radicalizes its action like in Iraq, in the period following the fall of S. Hussein, either to protect or impose or oppose.

Beyond that is the question of partisan resources. As noted by E. Massicard (2007, p. 12 and ss.) regarding the state of knowledge on Turkish political parties, it can translate into two dimensions: those of the collective resources of parties and those of the individual capital of their members. Their financial resources are little known. Emphasis tends to be placed on resources they may collectively control: the conquest or the preservation of political posts, elective or administrative;

¹⁸ See the contribution of B. Bennani Chraïbi to this volume

¹⁹ See the contribution of M. Catusse and L. Zaki to this volume

²⁰ See the contribution of B. Bennani Chraïbi to this volume

social anchoring of associations or other structures, if not enrollment at least fidelity: The tribe (in Yemen in particular), the confessional community (in Lebanon, in Iraq), or even ethnic group. For instance, we count in Iraq after 2003, twelve new Christian political formations, fourteen Turkmen, and four Kurds (Jameel and Abdel-Jabbar*, 2008); in Algeria, the gathering for culture and democracy, is not explicitly Berber, but carrying cultural claims to the Berbers in Kabylia.

Nevertheless, the remarkable introduction of measures of regulatory action of party finances in the new laws on parties and elections constitutes a new situation for the party life of several countries in our survey. It cuts both ways: firstly, it addresses a concern for transparency in the partisan world and its resources: but on the other hand, it often plays like a sword of Damocles in the hands of public power, which see here new ways to legally interfere in the internal affairs of political parties, notably their challengers.

The rules of the partisan game

Contemporary partisan scenes also share reform packages that are substantially similar: rather than dealing with the liberalization or “de-liberalization” (Kienle, 2001) of the political regimes, in general terms, we focused on the evolution of structures of political opportunities (Tarrow 1998) that represent renovations or changes in the legislative framework within which partisan actors act. In this case, the latter have accelerated over the last decade.

Let us mention first the adoption of new constitutions, often with referendums on which the competing political parties have spoken (Morocco, 1996, Bahrain, 2002, Yemen, 1990, 1994, 2001, Algeria, 1996, 2002, 2008; Iraq, 2005, Lebanon, 1990). In Lebanon, Yemen and Algeria, it is less about pluralizing the political arena than to end a civil conflict and endorse by that the new common rules around a political pact: “It sets rather the preconditions for different Political supplies to be self-restrained and consistent enough not to be considered by the other party, or parties, as an unacceptable threat that would justify the breach of 'democratic rules'” (Leca, 1994, p. 36). In other cases, the adoption of this new political framework is in search of a regulation of political conflicts that escalate about the power and imagined political community. Iraq since 2003 is the most striking example.

These countries also experience major reforms in terms of “political rights” and “right to politics”: this distinction is suggested by J. Heurtaux (2005) concerning the Polish case. After 1989, what he calls the “partisanization”²¹ process is played notably in struggles on the codification of political competition since 1989, the strong “jurisdiction of political activity” but also the strong “politicization of law”. The fields of our research have indeed known in the past decade a transformation of the laws governing ruling political activities (electoral laws, laws on political parties, freedom of the press, public and associative liberties, etc.). They inaugurate a kind of “political pluralism”, at least from a procedural viewpoint. The substantial character of this pluralism, however, is challenged by each of the chapters that follow. If Lebanese parliamentarians have not adopted a new law on political parties, the drafters of the constitutional reform passed in the Taef (1990) reaffirmed the liberal orientation of the existing law. In the other cases, the latest legislation liberalize the space of partisan action, but keep it tightly situated by the control, if not arbitrariness, of the central government. This accompanies the remarkable growth in the number of recognized political parties that we have already noted.

The Algerian case, with the constitutional opening to a multiparty after nearly 30 years of single party system and the interruption of the electoral process in 1991, is the most striking to analyze

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

the waltz-hesitations of these reforms. The transition to multiparty in favor of reform “from above” and mobilizations “from below” seems like a very fragile prelude to democratization. In regard to “false pretenses” of multiparty-system, some stress, as in Morocco, that “all in all, power remains concentrated and held by the same forces since independence, across institutions that crown or mediate their political preponderance.” (Santucci, 2006a, p. 162). But we can also show the emergence of new political forces in recent decades, with the help of legal and political reforms that “open” the partisan scene: The Party of Justice and Development in Morocco, the Islamic Front of Salute in Algeria, Hezbollah in Lebanon, *al-Islah* in Yemen, the Sadrist Movement or *Hizb al-Fadila al-Islami* in Iraq, etc.

The influence of external factors: a domino effect?

Obviously, short histories that the partisan scenes of the region face are intimately linked to transnational processes and especially to the neo-liberal agenda.

Engaged for several years or even decades for some in a process of economic liberalization accompanied by a discourse on democratization (or at least on the need to comply with a number of procedural criteria), regimes renegotiate their inclusion in the market economy. These socio-economic changes are not without effect on partisan configurations that take charge, in a pluralistic and more or less reactive manner, of social demands and unprecedented cleavage brought about by these reforms (El-Salahi* and El-Maitama, 2008). This raises two questions at least: Why do socialist parties have difficulties advocating for social claims which are born in the trenches of neo-liberalism? Has the development of Islamist parties been fed, in part at least, with a new form of populism favored by the social effects of these quick economic reforms? Remarkably, and despite the impending question of economic issue in each of the countries studied, the economic agenda (and controversies that might arise) is virtually absent from most political parties programs.

Let us note also that the Arab regimes on which we focus show certain autonomy in coping with what would be an international agenda of democratization; even more in the process of “partisanization”. In their collective work on political parties in conflict prone societies, edited by the ONU press, B. Reilly and P. Nordlund (2008) do not include any Arab parties, as if these were excluded from this collective reflection on the role that the partisan scene could play in the process of democratization, mediating interests, and regulation of conflicts. Finally, programs of international assistance to Arab political parties are only recent and very modest in relation to assistance given to civil society, whereas even elsewhere, “spurred by the liberalization of previous Autocratic states in African, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America, the international community began to invest heavily in concepts of democratic promotion, electoral support and 'good governance' as essential elements of economic development and the creation of stable and peaceful states “(*ibid.*, p. 5).

In sum, regarding the short history of these last fifteen years, the evolution of partisan dynamics in the six countries discussed in this volume show some remarkable common characteristics: their number increases significantly. They are subject to new formal game rules. Their ideologies seem to lessen at the benefit of political strategies, including partisan formations who claim a distinctive ideological identity, notably Islamists. They maintain close interdependent relations with regimes and central administrations, thought co-optation, prohibition, infiltration or distancing. The interpretation of the law, the exercise of the arbitrary and procedures for financing political parties, largely dependent on public resources (except in the case of Lebanon or Iraq) put the political parties under “conditional liberty”, under the constant threat of

sanctions or even prohibition²². Finally, in contrast with the figure of the professional militant of the 1960/1970's, the relation to parties seems precarious: forms of activism are often flexible, fluid, and prone to many “infidelities.” This is measured as much at the level of the militant base²³ as at the level of political leaders themselves who can change hats depending on the circumstances or create new parties when their partisan formation seems ineffective in managing their individual careers. What follows is a blurring of labels that confuses even the militant base and reduces opportunities for recruitment. In addition, the political parties generally seem not to be key stakeholders in political decision, neither in policy making, especially because of the weakness and marginalization of parliamentary institutions. Their relationship with the “civil society” or at least with a vast network of associations, is finally renegotiated: Far from a binary or Manichean scheme between a vulnerable partisan society, and an alive and active civil society, analysis of the partisan phenomenon in our field shows, if proof were needed, to which point the spheres of the partisan and civil are entangled in each other. Sometimes associations were refuge institutions when the partisan life was prohibited (eg. the association *al-islamiyah al-taw'yya* was a façade for the Islamist party *al-dawa* in Bahrain during the period in which political associations were prohibited from any activity)²⁴. Other times, the association serves as the right-hand of the party to organize social activities, to guide and train its youth²⁵, to reach certain target populations, at the local level²⁶, in universities, etc. In other cases, associative and partisan structures compete: thus, it is often the associations of human rights or civil liberties that fight for political causes and right to politics such as the holding of elections, the reform of political laws, etc. It is noteworthy that in our field, other forms of mobilization organize political societies: communitarian groups, families, tribes, etc. can be the cements of partisan organizations that carry their “primordial” interests. The latter can undermine partisan mobilizations which transgress their social organization, in the name of classist or transverse watchwords.

The singular effects of the long history

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

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

Next, the history of the major political movements is closely interwoven with that of the formation of Nation States. In Morocco or in Algeria, the parties led the national liberation, while in other cases, they occupied a secondary role behind personalities or political and community leaders. The national struggle, the decolonization, and the national construction gave rise to

²² For example : the Lebanese Forces party in Lebanon in 1994, The Islamic Front of Salute, FIS, in Algeria in 1991, the Bahraini Center for Human Rights in 2004, etc.

²³ With notable exceptions: for example the militant base of Hezbollah in Lebanon has shown for two decades, and in different situations (elections, mobilizations, etc.), a solid allegiance to the party and to its leader.

²⁴ For a table tracing the link between associations and political parties in Bahrain see: El-Khawaja* and El-Murshed (2008).

²⁵ See the contribution of C. Le Thomas to this volume.

²⁶ See the contribution of M. Catusse and L. Zaki to this volume.

different political and partisan situations. In Yemen (before unification) and in Iraq, the single party or the quasi-single party (with a partisan coalition as façade) developed. In Algeria, the single-party became a “Party-State.” And in Bahrain, partisan life has been banned. In other countries on the contrary, the multiparty system characterized from the outset the formation of a consociation system in the case of Lebanon or a limited and feckless pluralism in the case of Morocco, ruled by the royal institution. Thus, reading of the long history shows us profoundly different experiences between the parties with ideological or parliamentary and governmental heritage, and others that are recent creations and learn the basics of the sharing of power. The clandestine action is as well a discriminatory experience and has influenced the trajectory of many partisan formations.

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

NEW POLITICAL OBJECTS, GLOBALIZED AND SINGULAR?

If the developments that came before call for a re-conceptualization of the analysis of political parties in the Arab world, it seems equally important to us to reexamine their types, or even to discuss new evidence for their understanding and classification.

Different kinds of “Arab parties” were produced. B. Badie (1989) distinguished in the “Muslim” world “the single parties” like the Algerian FLN; political parties defining themselves through the “outlines of a political ideology”, such as the Baath; the parties that are used as a place of “promoting the legitimacy of a leader”, like the Tunisian Neo-Destour; parties that are constituents of the regimes they support, especially in the “traditional monarchies”; the “pressure parties” that ensure the same constituent function but in a latent manner, as in the case of the Egyptian Wafd, and the Moroccan UNFP; and finally the parties perceive their action from a “counter legitimacy” and advocate the construction of another political system. We realize how much now this typology is not operative.

Still among the French authors, P. R. Baduel (1998) then attempted to adopt the analysis of S. Lipset and S. Rokkan (1967) to the Arab parties, to classify parties around the cleavages “religion / secularism”, “center / periphery”, “owners / workers”, “State / civil society.” Here again the criteria are questionable. Camau and Mr. V. Geisser show for example that the four cleavages of S. Lipset and S. Rokkan are difficult to extend to describe the Tunisian partisan scene, and their findings can be extended to countries in our study. These divides are present in these societies, but political organizations obey logics far more deciding: “it is from an ongoing strategy of euphemism of social cleavages that they intend to draw their partisan legitimacy and not from their exacerbation. They thus contribute to increase the externality of the political order in relation to societal issues “(Camau and Geisser, 2003, p. 248).

We may also, like F. El-Khazen (2003, p. 613) in the case of Lebanon in the 1990s, distinguish the “loyalists”, “authorized” or “forbidden” parties. The first are represented in the parliament and government since 1992, the second have no representation in political power, and the banned parties are systematically tracked, directly or indirectly by government authorities. But given the evolution of the pluralization of partisan scenes, this classification does not reflect contemporary dynamics where the blurring of boundaries between ruling parties and opposition parties in particular is becoming more obvious: either because of government alternating (for example the 1998 “Alternance” in Morocco); or because the notion of opposition itself may refer

to various political strategies, including in the same context, where the opposition can be built against the regime or with the coalition of governing parties (the case of Lebanon and the after-war is striking from this point of view).

Several of the authors of our book have chosen to adopt other classifications. In Yemen, the parties are classified as “clan” (*'acha'eri*), “tribal” (*qaba'ili*), “confessional” (*mazhab*) “traditional” (*taqlidi*) or “modern” (*hadith*) (El-Salahi and El -Maitama, 2008); in Iraq, they are sorted according to their leadership “religious” (*dini*), “traditional” (*taqlidi*), “clan” (*'acha'eri*) or “nontraditional” (*ghayr taqlidiyya*) which intersect with modes of bureaucratic organization, charismatic/personalized, military, Leninist or elitist. These classifications useful to describe the partisan landscape, may however have the disadvantage of the freezing it into rigid categories, not helpful to explain how today partisan organizations are reshaping.

It seems finally that two processes deserve attention as to actual links between the contemporary partisan dynamics and Regime changes: the logics of de-politicization or re-politicization of the debate and of public action; the effects of generations on activism

Politicization and de-politicization of partisan scenes

The transformation of political scenes in the six countries of our study confronts the problems of politicization / de-politicization / over-politicization not sparing the partisan scene. The promotion of “good governance” and “new public management” and the Regimes changes, largely calls for expertise, technocracy and business discourse and tools, at least in a formal manner. Political correctness is increasingly defined through the criteria of “good management” Meanwhile, the anti-partisan discourse get settled, the issue of political representation is relegated to subordinate priorities, the municipal and parliamentary arenas are often pushed around (Baaklini, Denoeux and Springborg, 1999; Dupret and Ferrié, 2008 ; Salem*, Krayem and Antoun, 1998, LCPS, 1999, 2002a). In this logic of anti-politics, associations develop “above” parties (Zaki 2009), or for “lack” of party (Karam, 2006). In return, others pretend to “discover” the degree of politicization of institutions and actors, associates, technocrats, experts, etc. By emphasizing their share of parliamentary action or of local commitment for example, militants of Islamist parties particularly invest these tribunes and provide them again with political stakes.

This raises two questions: in which extent does the transition from old to new regime affect the potential of political parties, that is to say, their ability to enroll in power games, to produce collective identities, to play the mediator in public space? And how does militancy change in their midst?

The old and the new regime

In the framework of this inventory of partisan dynamics in six Arab regimes, our different contributions are based implicitly or explicitly, on a historical perspective that distinguishes a “before” and an “after”, an “old regime” and a “new regime”, which would result in or reflect the emergence of “new parties”. This merits deeper examination. As we have emphasized regarding the different historicities of partisan processes, strong continuity and resilience combine with elements of disruption and innovation. Regarding the internal dynamics of parties and their inclusion in the political field, this can be broken down into several areas:

The transition from being clandestine to legality first, affects relations between partisan organizations and those of civil society, which could play turn by turn the role of refuge in times of prohibition or that find themselves in competitive or subordinate position. The legalization and new laws, while ensuring the pluralization of the game may be a test for political parties previously banned or simply tolerated, since it required from their leaders and militants a revision of strategies, of discourse, modes of mobilization, directories of action, and even the constitution of effective political resources.

The transition from opposition to government has also produced complex opportunities and constraints for the competing parties. The movement from radical and exclusivist positions (which can go to the point of denying the legitimacy of the other, be it the opponent or the ruler) to the formalization of political pact, based on the rejection of violence and the formalization of a compromise on the minimal rules of the game, resulted in the participation of virtually the majority of political parties in the most recent elections, even to their participation in government. Again, this is a test for parties, expensive for some, and not only those that were in power: Equally those that passed from “historic” opposition to the government renounced to former repertoires of action and modes of legitimization which up until then were paramount. This applies to the Moroccan USFP, whose members, leaders, activists and voters find themselves faced with resources, position and legitimacy noticeably opposed to those that were theirs for over three decades. In the case of Yemen, too, *al-islam* finds itself divided between a tendency toward emancipation vis-à-vis the regime under whose tutelage it could become institutionalized and developed; and its position of opponent in the context of a multiparty system but certainly not pluralistic.

The End of Ideologies?

Another recurring issue is that of the mutation or even the erosion of ideologies. In reality, the decline of nationalist and class ideologies seems at first to be compensated by the excitement of discourses on primordial identity. The partisan organization becomes the site for advocacy and representation of Muslim identities, Sunni or Shiite, in the case of development of parties called “Islamists”, but also communitarian or ethnic (Krayem* et al, 2007).

The decline of class identity, also matches the constant displacement of the line of cleavage between secular and religious movements. The crisis of the social State and the shrinking of the capacity of direct redistribution schemes of regimes that are turning to private companies or associations to discharge themselves for social issues help the return of notables, at local and national level. We observe it particularly in the entry into politics of businessmen, traders or employers who invest labor and corporatist unions, but also municipal councils, parliaments and political parties (Catusse, 2008)²⁷. Even if new ideologies and identities of groups may thus be drawn, the main trend identified in our field is that of the “decline of ideology” in favor of strategic politics: the ideological characteristics of parties become blurred because of strategies and political arguments (to participate or not in government, to build coalitions, etc.). This is reflected by the resemblance and weak consistency of political platforms of parties, including election time. Should we, on this point, put forward the secular parties against Islamist parties, while making the hypothesis that weakness of the former is tied to their difficulty to develop a clear vision? M. Ottaway and A. Hamzawy (2007, p. 18) emphasize that “Political parties competing in elections do not always have to have a vision, but they need at least a message about what they will do if they win the elections.” In our field, the Islamist message is also too

²⁷ See the contribution of Bennani-Chraïbi to this volume.

vague and eventually little ideologized. But it tends to «coupled the religion appeal with social services for their constituencies, never taking them for granted” (*idem.*).

These vacillations in the programs are accompanied by clientelisation of militants: it would be less ideology than the provision of services that would make supporters loyal. This is what the elected PJD of our research in Morocco expressed, who euphemize to the maximum their relationship to Islam and the Islamic content of their program at the profit of a discourse on their willing to help their electors and the citizens of their circumscription. This is also what L. Bonnefoy and M. Poirier show in Yemen where the plasticity of the doctrinal and programmatic structure of *al-Islah* and the eclecticism of its surroundings - both Islamist, commercial and tribal - are tools to favor the relations to the clients, but also partisan “nomadism”. In Algeria, A. Boubaker (2008) also stresses that the development of the Salafi movement, in the context of *ad-da'wa as-salafyya*, responds in a way to neutralization of political charge of Islamist parties, either that they be banned or that they be radicalized and equipped with weapons, or that they erase their ideology in exchange for positions of power in the case of Hamas or *en-Nahda*.

What partisan militancy?

We would like to conclude this passage on contemporary partisan dynamics with some remarks about militancy. As noted above, if the work on collective action has very appreciably developed over the past decade in the region (Bennani-Chraïbi, Fillieul, 2003; Karam, 2006; Favier, 2004, Vairel, 2005, etc.) with original and innovative theories, virtually none is on the contemporary partisan militancy. If it is important to open up the study of militant careers, would that not be because they navigate from parties to syndicates, passing by associations and other places of engagement, it also seems to us that the partisan militancy itself deserves attention. Because of that, the study of militant trajectories would include a blind but central angle. We content ourselves by pointing out to several lines of analysis.

First, the arena of mobilizations is reshaping, as we have repeatedly emphasized. If the nostalgia of the “second era liberal” (Salamé, 1991, 1994) reaches here and there, lamenting that militancy is not what it was, others show instead how the expertise and the militant experience move and transpose from generation to generation in different partisan structures. So could it be conversions of leftist militancy: if some are disengaging, others are investing in new partisan arenas (sometimes Islamists (Burgat, 2007) or associative (Bennani-Chraïbi, 2003). The investigation of frame analysis but also circles and networks of engagement can deepen a knowledge that is still poor and not well documented. It would include data to confirm or refute the thesis according to which the actual political and electoral resources of most Islamist parties would reside in the character otherwise exceptional or at least innovative of its militancy: the available works stress, as opposed to other political groups, on the discipline, the expertise and dedication that Hizbollah militants in Lebanon or, to a lesser degree, PJD Militants in Morocco would show (Fawwaz, 2004; Harb, 2005; Chaib, 2008)²⁸. On the field, the gaps between the partisan ideology, even though it may be vague, the slogans of the party, and militants often proves very striking, which questions the ability of parties to provide a framing for their militants.

Next, the militant partisan trajectories can not be understand without regarding the transformations of arenas of mobilization, notably the development of social movements or at least the vast network of associations. Far from observing a civil society against a partisan society, or on the contrary a civil society at the service of a partisan society, we find at least four moving configurations: first, in Lebanon, in the civil movements (Karam, 2006), and in Morocco also

²⁸ See the contribution of M. Catusse and L. Zaki to this volume.

(Vairel, 2005), the party structures are circumvented at the profile of apparently alternative arenas. Militants engage or reconvert their militancy in associative structures in search of something better: for want of finding, they say, political parties capable of carrying their causes and claims. In these cases the associations are potentially competitors of political parties, as their anti-chamber. Analysts of professional syndicates also show that they can serve as places of reliance for defending interests, when the passage to partisan life is blocked or turns out to be too expensive (Gobe, 2006; Bianchi, 1989). Secondly, associations develop in the service of political party, as these “social institutions” in the words of C. Le Thomas in this book on the subject of the schools “of” Hizbollah. Places of mobilization and socialization, they are also places of distribution of social services, creators of loyalty or at least familiarity, as L. Bonnefoy and M. Poirier show about the charity association *al-Islah (jam'iyya lil-Islah al-Ijtima'i al-khayriyya)*, which although officially independent of the party nevertheless contributes to disseminate the ideas of the latter and insure part of its popularity. In a third case, the associative and partisan structures are neither competing nor directly intertwined: they are simply different structures in the course of militancy which often combines the locations and causes of engagement (this may be the case now of a number of associations for human rights that welcome in their ranks against the abuse of rights of regimes, militants of Left parties, secularist militants or even militants from Islamist parties, or for the most not affiliated to any party). Finally, in the fourth possible configuration as in Bahrain, but also in the emblematic case of the association *al-adl wa al-ihسان* in Morocco, the associative space serves as a substitution space for potential political parties, however formally excluded from electoral competition and political representation.

Finally, if we have stressed earlier that militancy would professionalize and would assume the contours of management, the effects of generation in the militant structures remained to be explored: a number of studies show that the partisan framework is aging, sometimes even issued from the first generation. They also show, as in the case of Bahrain, that divisions emerge in or around the political groups, in terms of generational renewal. It would also be particularly useful to continue work on the many faces that engagement takes around the parties: cadres, elected representatives, professionals, militants, combatants, voters, brokers (*mustah Intikhabi*), sympathizers, readers all maintain very different relationships to the party deserving to be better known.

CONCLUSION

This work therefore calls for release the object “political party” from the purgatory of research in the region. The following chapters reflect the joints between the variable links between the partisan evolution and the transformation of regimes in Morocco, Algeria, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen and Bahrain. Based on unpublished data and a field approach, they discuss many facets of partisan life in political societies characterized by their limited and feckless pluralism and having a reputation alternately of being authoritarian or in democratic transition.

The chapters of F. Abdul-Jabbar on the Iraqi Communist Party, of H. I'buchi on the re-conversion of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces and L. Bonnefoy and M. Poirier on the difficult construction of a alternative project from the Yemeni Gathering for Reform, interested primarily with the effects of mutations of the partisan game; on the consequences of the transition from underground to legality, opposition to participation. They pay attention to institutional and legal frameworks in which partisan activity takes place and to the links between “the right to politics and political rights”.

The following chapters look into the life of the parties, the renewal of the elites and their modes of selection, on the favored forms of militancy, on the internal party conflicts and on the variety of their activities, notably social. Thus, in Morocco, Mr. Bennani-Chraïbi examines the parliamentary “notabilization” of a “party of militants”, the Socialist Union of Popular Forces, and M. Catusse and L. Zaki study the transformation of profiles and practices of the local representatives of the Justice and development party. A. Mirza El-Murshed outlines the internal dynamics at the Islamic Association *al-wifaq al-watani* in Bahrain, paying particular attention to the effects of generation within this association seeking partisan systems. Finally, C. Le Thomas looks at the process of political socialization at work in schools in the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon.

Finally, the last chapters, those of Mr. Hennadi on the Algerian FLN and that of R. Tal’at Jawhar on the Turkmen Front in Iraq, bring to light a recurring question on our field: that of the production of identities and political allegiances varying within the Nation State. The paradigm of a single party has, in the name of defending the integrity of the nation state, undoubtedly influenced the ordering of authoritarian and hegemonic regimes in the region. But the development of ethnic parties, community, and confessional, infra or supra State is also one of the recurring characteristics of regional political arenas.

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