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Political opposition in an authoritarian context

A historical reconstruction of the Moroccan
left from independence to the present day

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Home is not where you were born; home is where all your attempts to escape cease.

Naguib Mahfouz

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NOTE ON THE TRANSCRIPTION OF ARABIC TERMS

In the following pages, I will adopt a scientific transcription for the Arabic terms. Nevertheless, an exception will be made for the place names, for the proper names in quotations, and for the quoted authors both in the foot-step notes and within the text. For few other Arabic terms, such as “Makhzen” or “Annahj Addimocrati”, I chose to use the French transcription, as it is widely used in Morocco as well.

المقدمة

اخترت موضوع هذه الأطروحة في نهاية السنة الأولى من درجة الماجستير في جامعة كا فوسكاري في البندقية. بين فبراير ومايو 2019، أتاحت لي الفرصة لأخذ دورة حول تاريخ الشرق الأوسط والتي أعطتني نظرة عميقة وأصيلة على التاريخ السياسي للمغرب. في نهاية الفصل الدراسي ، وبفضل مساعدة مشرفتي ودعمها ، الأستاذة باربرا دي بولي ، قررت أن أركز بحثي على تطور الأحزاب السياسية اليسارية في المغرب من الاستقلال إلى يومنا هذا.

تتألف الأطروحة من أربعة فصول وتتبع التطور التاريخي والملف الأيديولوجي للأحزاب الاشتراكية الرئيسية في المغرب. منذ فترة ما بعد الاستقلال، مثلت الأحزاب اليسارية في المغرب قوى المعارضة الرئيسية التي تقف ضد الحكم الاستبدادي للملكية المغربية. من جراء ذلك، وقع المئات من المقاتلين اليساريين ضحية للاضطهاد السياسي، وكانت جميع هذه الأحزاب هدفا لمحاولات الاستيلاء من قبل الملك. من خلال إعطاء صوت للناس المضطهدين والمهمشين والقتال من أجل عملية حقيقية للديمقراطية، تمكن المقاتلون الاشتراكيون دائماً من التأثير على البيئة الاجتماعية السياسية المحلية، وبالتالي يشكلون موضوعاً رائعاً يستحق الدراسة.

تبدأ القصة بتوقيع معاهدة فاس في 30 مارس 1912، والتي أدت إلى تسوية رسمية للحماية الفرنسية في البلاد. سرعان ما أدى الحكم الاستعماري إلى المواجهة السياسية والثقافية بين السكان المحليين الأصليين والقوى الاستعمارية الأوروبية. يشرح الفصل الأول فكرة، أنه مع استثناءات قليلة، تنطبق الفئات السياسية الغربية بالفعل على السياق المغربي والشرق الأوسط أيضاً. في الواقع ، أنا أزعج أن العمل السياسي للمقاتلين الاشتراكيين والشيوخيين الفرنسيين في المغرب أثر على الشبكات السرية للمجموعات القومية الأولى ، مما وضع الأساس الأيديولوجي لتنمية الأحزاب اليسارية المحلية. ثم تناولت الحديث عن المهدي بن بركة ، أحد أبرز الشخصيات في الكفاح المغربي من أجل الاستقلال ومؤسس الاتحاد الوطني للقوى الشعبية ، وهو الحزب الاشتراكي الأول في البلاد. سيكون الهدف الرئيسي من الفصل هو تقدير الصورة الأيديولوجية والعمل السياسي لابن بركة من أجل فهم أفضل لجذور الأحزاب اليسارية المغربية المعاصرة. أثناء رفض الشيوعية الكلاسيكية، احتضنت العلامة التجارية الخاصة بابن بركة للاشتراكية الثورية كلاً من العروبة والوحدة الأفريقية ولم يظهر فقط كمعارض رئيسي للملك حسن الثاني ولكن أيضاً كقائد العالم الثالث معترف به عالمياً. بعد تأسيس UNFP، أقام بن بركة سلسلة من العلاقات الدبلوماسية الاستراتيجية مع العديد من ممثلي العالم الثالث مثل الثوريين الجزائريين، جمال عبد الناصر، وماو تسي تونج، وما إلى ذلك. في عام 1965، تم تعيين بن بركة رئيساً للجنة التحضيرية لمؤتمر القارة السمراء لعام 1966 في هافانا ، وهو أحد أكبر اجتماعات القوى المناهضة للإمبريالية والرأسمالية حول العالم. بسبب مشاركته الدولية المكثفة ومشروعه الثوري ضد الملكية المغربية ، تم اختطاف بن بركة وقتل في باريس في 29 أكتوبر 1965.

أنا أزع أن اغتيال المهدي بن بركة يمثل أحد أهم نقاط التحول في تطور اليسار المغربي، حيث أنه مهد الطريق لعدة عقود من القمع الدموي ضد أي معارضين سياسيين في البلاد، وخاصة المسلحين اليساريين. علاوة على ذلك، فإن حالة بن بركة مثالية في إظهار كيف أنه، بعد نهاية الحكم الفرنسي، ظلت الشؤون السياسية الداخلية للمغرب مرتبطة بشكل لا ينفصم مع تلك القوى الغربية والتطورات العالمية والمنافسات التي ساهمت بالفعل في تشكيل المشهد السياسي المحلي. بعد وفاة زعيمها، لم يعد UNFP، الذي أصبح الآن USFP، قادر على اتخاذ موقف حقيقي ضد الملكية وتخلت عن مواقفها الثورية بقبول حل وسط للتعايش مع الملكية. في العقود التالية، بدأت المغرب سلسلة من برامج التعاون الاقتصادي والتقني مع الولايات المتحدة والوكالات الدولية، واصطفت أكثر من أي وقت مضى إلى البلدان الرأسمالية الغربية وأصبحت أكثر عولمة واندماجاً في الأسواق العالمية.

الفصل الثاني من الأطروحة يحلل تطور الاتحاد الاشتراكي للقوى الشعبية (USFP) بين التسعينات وبداية العقد الأول من القرن الحادي والعشرين. مع الأخذ في الاعتبار السيناريو الدولي الذي عقب انهيار الاتحاد السوفيتي وأزمة الاشتراكية في أوروبا، يركز هذا الفصل الضوء على التأثير الذي أحدثته الولايات المتحدة والاتحاد الأوروبي على تطور الأحزاب اليسارية في المنطقة العربية، مما يضع حالة USFP في إطار عالمي أوسع. في المغرب، لم يكن الاتحاد الاشتراكي للقوات الشعبية يواجه أزمة إيديولوجية فقط بسبب فقدان المراجع الدولية القوية ولكنه كان لا يزال يناضل ضد القوة الساحقة لحسن الثاني. ومع ذلك، بدءاً من نهاية الثمانينيات، بدأت العلاقة بين الملك والمقاتلين الاشتراكيين تتغير بالفعل. من جهة، حاول الملك دفع حزب الاتحاد الاشتراكي للقوات الشعبية للمشاركة في الحكومات، وتشجيع الانقسامات الداخلية واختيار قيادته من أجل تعديل مواقف الحزب. بعد انتخابات عام 1997، انضم الاتحاد الاشتراكي للقوات الشعبية أخيراً إلى الحكومة الجديدة باعتباره الحزب الحاكم الرئيسي. إن الهدف الرئيسي من هذا الفصل الثاني هو في الواقع التحقيق في تغيير موقف المسلحين اليساريين من التعاون مع النظام. في حين رحب العديد من المراقبين الدوليين بما يسمى "حكومة التناوب" كدليل على التحول الديمقراطي والانفتاح السياسي، فإنني أجادل بأن اختيار الاتحاد الأوروبي لقيادة السياسة العامة لـ USFP لرئاسة الحكومة الجديدة في عام 1998 تم في الواقع من خلال عملية استغرقت عقوداً من مشاركة قيادة الحزب. في الواقع، قبل الاتحاد الاشتراكي للقوات الشعبية الحكم الاستبدادي للنظام الملكي، والنظام الاقتصادي الليبرالي، والتنازل في النهاية عن أي مشروع حقيقي لإضفاء الطابع الديمقراطي على النظام المؤسسي. في أعقاب انتخابات عام 2002، بدأ الاتحاد الاشتراكي للقوات الشعبية في التعاون مع النظام الملكي والقوى الموالية أكثر من ذلك، مؤكداً تحوله الإيديولوجي وفقد دوره رسمياً لحزب المعارضة اليسارية. كما سنرى، فقد تركت مشاركة حزب الاتحاد الاشتراكي للقوات الشعبية فراغاً سياسياً مهد الطريق لتتشنة ما عرّفته اليسار المغربي الجديد.

يمثل الفصلان الثالث والرابع اللب المركزي والأصلي للأطروحة كاملة. في الواقع، في هذين القسمين النهائيين، سأحاول تتبع تطور الأحزاب الاشتراكية الجديدة التي نشأت كرد فعل لأزمة الحزب الشيوعي الأمريكي ولقوة الملك محمد السادس بلا منازع. سيكون حزبي سياسيان مختلفان موضوع بحثي. الأول، فيدرالية اليسار

الديمقراطي (FGD)، هو في الواقع تحالف سياسي مدمج في 2014 بين ثلاثة أحزاب مختلفة، الحزب الاشتراكي الموحد (PSU)، حزب الطليعة الديمقراطي الاشتراكي (PADS) و المؤتمر الوطني الاتحادي (CNI). في حين أن تاريخ جنور PSU في حركة 23 مارس، ظهرت منظمة يسارية متطرفة خلال سنوات الرصاص، تم تأسيس الحزبين الأخيرين نتيجة للانقسامات الداخلية داخل USFP بين الثمانينات وبداية القرن العشرين. في العقود الأخيرة، حاول فريق المناقشة العامة التنظيم بشكل أكثر رسمية، وحشد مقاتليه، ووضع برنامج سياسي والمشاركة في الانتخابات من أجل التأثير بنشاط على المشهد السياسي المغربي. الطرف الثاني الذي سألته يدعى النهج الديمقراطي وتم تأسيسه في عام 1995 بعد إطلاق سراح مئات من المقاتلين اليساريين من السجن. على الرغم من أن الحزب حصل على اعتراف رسمي في عام 2004، فقد تم تأسيسه في النصف الثاني من التسعينات، وقد برز أعضاؤه في مواقفهم الماركسية واليسارية الراديكالية في معارضة علنية للنظام الملكي.

الهدف الرئيسي من الفصلين الأخيرين هو تقديم إعادة بناء تفصيلية للبيئة السياسية والاقتصادية والاجتماعية التي انبثقت منها هذه الأحزاب اليسارية الجديدة، في محاولة لفهم الدوافع الأساسية والخطوات الرئيسية التي أدت إلى إنشاء اليسار المغربي الجديد. سأقدم صورة شاملة عن القادة الرئيسيين، والتحقيق في خلفيتهم التعليمية، ومراجعهم الإيديولوجية ومشاركتهم السياسية في العقود السابقة. بعد ذلك، سأقدم تحليلاً لبعض الوثائق السياسية للأحزاب إلى جانب مقتطفات عديدة من المقابلات مع المتشددون البارزين من أجل تحديد الصورة الإيديولوجية لكل من FGD والنهج الديمقراطي. علاوة على ذلك، سوف أسعى إلى إعطاء فهم جيد لعلاقات اليسار الجديد مع الحركات اليسارية المغربية التاريخية الأخرى وموقفها تجاه المنافسين الرئيسيين الآخرين في الساحة السياسية المعاصرة، على المستويين الوطني والدولي. وبهذا المعنى، سيتم التركيز بشكل خاص على العلاقات بين الملكية، و FGD والنهج الديمقراطي. من الضروري بالفعل تحليل الدور الذي تلعبه هذه الأحزاب فيما يتعلق بكل من إعادة إحياء اليسار المغربي وتأسيس كتلة ديمقراطية تقدمية تعارض الحكم السلطوي لمحمد السادس.

في الختام، أزعم أنه في أعقاب الأزمة العالمية للاشتراكية وتراجع الحزب الشيوعي الأمريكي من الجبهة الديمقراطية والتقدمية، دخل اليسار المغربي في مرحلة أزمة لم يتم التغلب عليها بعد. ومع ذلك، هناك شيء يتغير الآن. أصبح عدد متزايد من المقاتلين اليساريين والقوى الاشتراكية يدركون دورهم كمعارضين رئيسيين للنظام المغربي، وهم ينظمون بالفعل من أجل إحداث تغيير حقيقي في المشهد المؤسسي والسياسي للبلاد. ما كان تأثيرها الحقيقي على السكان حتى الآن، فمن الصعب تحديد ذلك. وبالمثل، ليس من السهل التنبؤ بمزيد من التطورات للكتلة اليسارية وكيف ستتطور المواجهة مع الملكية. ومع ذلك، يمكن أن يقدم التحليل المتعمق للسياسيين السياسيين المغربي رؤية أكثر تفصيلاً على الساحة السياسية المحلية المجزأة، ويسلط بعض الضوء على الأصوات المعارضة التي تحاول، على الرغم من الحكم المحلي القمعي، اقتطاع هويتها المميزة ودفع من أجل الديمقراطية الحقيقية للبلاد.

باختصار ، أنا أزع أن الأطروحة تزيد بالتأكيد من فهمنا للمشهد السياسي للمغرب ، لأنها تقدم رؤية قيّمة للأحزاب اليسارية التي تأسست في العقدين الماضيين. كان الضعف الرئيسي في هذا العمل هو عدم تمكني من إجراء بحث على الأرض بسبب تفشي وباء فيروس كورونا. في الواقع ، كنت قد خططت لزيارة المقر الرئيسي للأطراف للتحديث مباشرة مع الأشخاص المعنيين وللعثور على البيانات مباشرة من المصادر الأرشيفية للأطراف. وغني عن القول أن استحالة السفر إلى المغرب أثرت بشكل كبير على استراتيجياتي البحثية ، والتي تغيرت بشكل كبير وفقاً للأقسام المختلفة في عملي. في الواقع ، تتطلب كتابة هذه الأطروحة مجموعة واسعة من المصادر المختلفة.

بالنسبة للفصل الأول ، اعتمدت في الغالب على الدراسات باللغة الفرنسية على الحماية الفرنسية في المغرب وعلى فترة ما بعد الاستقلال. تمكنت من استخدام خدمة القروض بين المكتبات التي قدمها كا فوسكاري والتي زودتني بالعديد من الدراسات التي سمحت لي بالبحث عن إنشاء القاعدة الفرنسية ، ونشاط الأحزاب الفرنسية في المغرب ، وتاريخ الحركات اليسارية المحلية بعد عام 1956 ، استخدمت في الفصل الثاني بشكل أساسي المقالات والتقارير الأكاديمية باللغتين الإنجليزية والفرنسية. ساعدتني هذه الأدبيات في استكشاف التطورات السياسية لسنوات الرصاص ، ولا سيما تطور الأحزاب الاشتراكية المغربية في التسعينيات. بدلاً من ذلك ، وبسبب قلة الأدب الأكاديمي حول FGD و النهج الديمقراطي، في الفصلين الأخيرين ، اعتمدت في الغالب على استخدام الإنترنت والوسائط الاجتماعية والمواقع الرسمية للأحزاب ومقالات الصحف المحلية باللغتين العربية والفرنسية.

INTRODUCTION

I chose the topic of this thesis at the end of the first year of my master's degree at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Between February and May 2019, I had the opportunity to take a course on the history of the Middle East, which gave me a deep and original insight on the political history of Morocco. At the end of the semester, thanks to the assistance and the support of my supervisor, Professor Barbara de Poli, I decided to focus my research on the evolution of the leftist political parties in Morocco from independence to the present day.

The thesis consists of four chapters and it traces the historical development and the ideological profile of the main socialist parties of the country. Since the post-independence period, the leftist parties of Morocco have represented the principal opposition forces that stand against the authoritarian rule of the Moroccan monarchy. For this reason, hundreds of leftist militants fell victim of the political persecution and all these parties have been the target of co-optation attempts by the King. By giving voice to the oppressed and marginalized people and fighting for a real process of democratization, the socialist militants have always managed to influence the domestic socio-political environment and therefore they constitute a remarkable and worth studying subject of research.

The story starts with the signing of the treaty of Fez on March 30, 1912, that led to the formal settlement of the French protectorate in the country. Soon, the colonial rule resulted in the political and cultural confrontation between the native local population and the European colonial powers. The first chapter elaborates on the idea that, with a few exceptions, the Western political categories apply for Moroccan and the Middle Eastern context as well. In fact, I argue that the political action of the French socialist and communist militants in Morocco affected the underground networks of the first nationalist groups, as it laid the ideological groundwork for the development of local leftist parties. Then, I will dwell on the person of al-Mahdī bin Barka, one of the most prominent figures in the Moroccan fight for independence and the founder of the National Union of Popular Forces (UNFP), the very first socialist party in the country. The main objective of the chapter is to appreciate the ideological profile and political action of bin Barka in order to better understand the roots of the contemporary Moroccan leftist parties. While rejecting classical communism, bin Barka's own brand of revolutionary socialism embraced both pan-Arabism and pan-Africanism and he did not just emerge as the main opponent of King Hassan II, but also as a globally recognized Third Worldist leader. After the foundation of the UNFP, bin Barka forged a series of strategic diplomatic relations with numerous representatives of the Third World, such as the Algerian revolutionaries, Gamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir, Mao Tsetung and so on. In 1965, bin Barka was appointed as president of the Preparatory Committee of the 1966 Tricontinental Conference in Havana, one of the largest meeting of anti-

imperialist and anti-capitalist forces around the globe. Due to his intense international engagement and for his revolutionary project against the Moroccan monarchy, bin Barka was kidnapped and murdered in Paris on October 29, 1965.

I argue that the assassination of al-Mahdī bin Barka represents one of the main watershed in the evolution of the Moroccan left, as it paved the way to several decades of bloody repressions against any political opponents in the country, especially the leftist militants. Furthermore, the case of bin Barka is exemplary in showing how, following the end of the French rule, the domestic political affairs of Morocco remained inextricably linked to those of the Western powers. Indeed, the global developments and rivalries contributed in shaping the local political landscape of the North-African country. After the death of its leader, the UNFP, now Socialist Union of the Popular Forces (USFP), was no longer able to make a real stand against the monarchy and it abandoned its revolutionary stances: they accepted a compromise of coexistence with the monarchy. Furthermore, in the following decades, Morocco started a series of economic and technical cooperation programs with the United States and various international agencies. Indeed, the country aligned itself ever more with Western capitalist countries and it became increasingly globalized while integrating into the global markets.

The second section of my thesis analyses the development of the USFP between the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. The chapter takes into account the international scenario that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the crisis of socialism in Europe. Hence, by placing the case of the USFP in a wider global framework, I will highlight the influence that the US and EU exerted on the evolution of the leftist parties in the Arab region. In Morocco the USFP did not just face an ideological crisis due to the loss of strong international references, but it was in a continuous struggle against the overwhelming power of Ḥassan II. Nevertheless, from the end of the 1980s, the relation between the monarch and the socialist militants began to change. On one side, the King attempted to push the USFP to take part in the governments, he encouraged internal splits and co-opted its leadership in order to moderate the positions of the party. After the 1997 elections, the USFP finally joined the new government as the major ruling party. Indeed, the principal goal of this second chapter is to investigate the changing of attitude of the leftist militants towards the cooperation with the regime. While many international observers welcomed the so-called “alternance government” as evidence of democratization and of political openness, I argue that the choice of the USFP to head the new government in 1998 was dictated by a decades-long process of co-optation of the leadership within the party. In fact, the USFP accepted the despotic rule of the monarchy, the liberal economic system and eventually it gave up any real projects of democratization of the institutional system. In the aftermath of the 2002 elections, the USFP started to cooperate with the monarchy and the loyalist

forces even; it confirmed its ideological metamorphosis and it officially lost its role as a leftist opposition party. As we shall see, the co-optation of the USFP left a political vacuum that cleared the way to the emergence of what I defined the new Moroccan left.

The third and the fourth chapters represents the central and most original core of the entire thesis. In fact, in these two final sections, I will attempt to retrace the evolution of the new socialist parties that arose in reaction to the crisis of the USFP and to the unchallenged power of King Muḥammad VI. Two different political parties will be the object of my researches. The first one, the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique (FGD), is actually a political alliance consolidated in 2014 between three different parties, the Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU), the Parti de l'Avant-Garde Démocratique et Socialiste (PADS) and the Congrès National Ittihadî (CNI). The history of the PSU roots in the 23 March movement, a far-left organization that emerged during the years of lead. Moreover, the last two parties were founded as a result of internal splits within the USFP between the 1980s and the beginning of the 2000s. In the last decades, the FGD has tried to organize itself more formally: it mobilized its militants, it prepared a proper political program and it began to take part in the elections in order to actively influence the Moroccan political scene. The second party that I will study is named Annahj Addimocrati. Founded in 1995 following the release of hundreds of leftist militants from prison, the party gained official recognition in 2004. Nevertheless, from the second half of the 1990s, its members have stood out for their Marxist and radical leftist stances in open opposition to the monarchy.

The main objective of the last two chapters is to offer a detailed reconstruction of the political, economic and social environments from which these new leftist parties emerged in order to understand the primary motives and the main steps that led to the establishment of the new Moroccan left. I will provide an overall picture of the main leaders, investigating their educational background, their ideological references and their political engagements in the previous decades. Then, I will offer an analysis of few political documents of the parties alongside numerous excerpts of interviews of prominent militants, in order to define the ideological profile of both the FGD and Annahj Addimocrati. Moreover, I seek to give a good understanding of the relations of the new left with the other historical Moroccan leftist movements and its attitude towards the other main competitors in the contemporary political arena, both at national and international level. In this context, special emphasis will be placed on the relations between the monarchy, the FGD and Annahj Addimocrati. Indeed, it is necessary to analyse the role played by these parties regarding both the rebirthing of the Moroccan left and the establishment of a democratic and progressive bloc which opposes the authoritarian rule of Muḥammad VI.

In sum, I argue that, following the global crisis of socialism and the retreat of the USFP from the democratic and progressive front, the Moroccan left entered a crisis stage that is yet to be overcome. Nevertheless, something is now changing. An increasing number of leftist militants and socialist forces are becoming aware of their role as main opponents of the Moroccan regime. Indeed, they are organizing in order to bring about a real change in the institutional and political landscape of the country. It is hard to state what their real impact on the population has been so far. Likewise, it is not easy to predict further developments of the leftist bloc and how the confrontation with the monarchy will evolve. However, in-depth analysis of the Moroccan political scenario can provide more detailed insights on the fragmented domestic political arena, shedding some light on the dissenting voices that, despite the oppressive local rule, are attempting to carve out their own distinctive identity and to push for a genuine democratization of the country.

In conclusion, I argue that the thesis certainly adds to our understanding of the political landscape of Morocco, as it offers valuable insight into the leftist parties established in the last two decades. The main weakness of this study was my inability to carry out a research on the ground due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, I had planned to visit the headquarters of the parties in order to talk directly with the people involved and to find data straight from the archival sources of the parties. Needless to say, the impossibility to travel to Morocco has deeply affected my research strategies, which changed significantly according to the different sections of my work. Indeed, the writing of this thesis required an extensive set of different sources.

For the first chapter I mostly relied on the scholarship in French language on the French protectorate in Morocco and on the post-independence period. I was able to use the interlibrary loan service offered by Ca' Foscari which provided me with numerous monographies that allowed me to research on the establishment of the French rule, the activity of French parties in Morocco and on the history of the local leftist movements right after 1956. For the second chapter I mainly used academic articles and reports both in English and French language. This literature helped me investigating the political developments of the years of lead and, in particular, the evolution of the Moroccan socialist parties in the 1990s. Instead, due to the paucity of academic literature on the FGD and Annahj Addimocrati, for the last two chapters I mostly relied on primary sources acquired from the use of internet, such as official websites of the parties and social medias. Local newspaper articles both in Arabic and French language were another important source of information.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Morocco is a constitutional monarchy, “a system of government in which the monarch shares power with a constitutionally organized government”.¹ The 3rd article of the 1962 constitution officially prohibited the one-party system paving the way to an increasing political plurality. Over the decades, this new multiparty system has been marked by various European style parties, such as the communist, socialist and liberal parties, as well as other political groups as the Independence party (PI), the Amazigh party and the Islamist ones.

Over the past years, several studies, as the “Democracy Report International”², highlighted how the exceedingly varied Moroccan political plurality reflects a specific strategy of the regime aimed at weakening the parliament rather than an actual democratization process.

Other researches also pointed out that in numerous Arab countries the classical European ideological divisions rarely offer a real overview of the situation³, considering more appropriate a partition of the political parties into “pro-regime” and “opposition” ones.⁴

Regarding the case of Morocco, it has been emphasized that, since the independence, numerous parties have been co-opted by the regime, the Makhzen⁵, when they were not even created by the Palace with the specific purpose of supporting the monarchy. Until the 1990s, the parties belonging to the Koutla⁶ were considered the main opposition forces to the domineering monarchical power. Therefore, right after the 1997 elections, the choice of the King, to offer the leadership of the new government to the Koutla was likely to be the attempt of the Makhzen to co-opt the main political opponents.⁷

¹ Definition of the Encyclopædia Britannica. Available online: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/constitutional-monarchy>.

² Democracy Reporting International, *Taqīm itār al-intiḥabāt (al-intiḥabāt al-tašri‘iyya wa al-istiftā’āt wa al-intiḥabāt al-maḥalliyya) al-maḡrib*, Berlin, Democracy Reporting International, January 24, 2007. Available online: http://democracy-reporting.org/ru/dri_publications/report-assessment-of-the-electoral-framework-of-morocco/

³ In 1955, Rézette claimed that: “Les partis politiques marocains ne s'ordonnent pas, selon l'éventail classique des partis européens, en partis de droite ou de gauche. [...] Chaque parti groupe des éléments de droite et de gauche sans que cette nuance n'entraîne un désaccord au sein du parti. Le véritable plan de clivage des partis marocains est leur attitude à l'égard de l'Administration française, du problème du Protectorat et de l'indépendance; pour ou contre la France, pour ou contre le Protectorat, pour ou contre l'indépendance immédiate, telles sont les attitudes qui distinguent les partis marocains.” (Rézette R., *Les partis politiques marocains*, Librairie Armand Colin, Paris, 1955, p. 250-251).

⁴ Willis M. J., “Political Parties in the Maghreb: Ideology and Identification. A suggested Typology”, *The Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 7, n.2, 2002, p. 1.

⁵ The Moroccan monarchy and the system of power and government around it.

⁶ Political coalition between the major left-wing parties and the Independence party (*lit.* Bloc).

⁷ Willis M. J., *op. cit.*, p. 3-6.

All these considerations underline the intricacy of the political and institutional landscape in Morocco as well as the problems that might be encountered studying the Moroccan political and social organizations, especially in terms of ideological independence and freedom of action.

Nevertheless, I believe that the study and the analysis of the political and ideological landscape of the country constitutes an extremely interesting field of research that still deserves wide ranging and in-depth studies.

Through my thesis work, I will attempt to carry out an historical reconstruction of the leftist political forces in Morocco, with a specific focus on those parties founded from the 2000s onwards. I will aim to provide a political and historical analysis of the various groups through an investigation of their ideological background and their social and political activity.

One of the first issues I will address is to comprehend if, due to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Moroccan socialist parties experienced the same crisis as the European leftist or if the collapse of the Soviet bloc favored the development of new original leftist currents somehow disconnected from the European political context that was emerging.

As mentioned, another question is whether the experience of governing of the main socialist parties (the USFP and the PPS) really confirmed their ideological emptying and alignment with the monarchical power. In this case, are there new political expressions that suggest a progressive reading of society? If so, how have they evolved and what is their goal today? What is the role of the leftist political parties in the socio-political scene and how much influence do they exercise within the civil society? What is their relation with the monarchical power and what are their international references today?

From the very first phase of drafting my thesis, I realized the need to identify a methodological and analytical basis related to specific categories of the political sciences, so as to define the theoretical dimension within developing my work.

At first, I could not help sharing the thesis of those who maintain that nowadays the contraposition between only two opposing parts (left-right) is getting more inadequate. Democracy is, or should be, pluralism of opinions, interests and ideologies that can sometimes converge and diverge, giving rise to the most contrasting combinations that are hard to categorize in the right-left dichotomy.⁸

Nevertheless, as stated by Norberto Bobbio⁹, the categories of right and left should not be conceived as absolute concepts but rather as relative ones, meaning that they are not qualities of the political

⁸ Bobbio N., *Destra e sinistra, ragioni e significati di una distinzione politica*, Donzelli Editore, 2009, p. 22-23.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 64-65.

universe but places of it. Therefore, the left-right categories can designate different contents and political horizons depending on the times and the situations.

Bobbio also provides a further consideration around the principle of equality as the distinctive criterion of the left-right categories. He defines the center-left as the ensemble of all the political doctrines and movements both libertarian and egalitarian. On the other side, he describes the center-right as the set of movements that, while being part of a democratic and libertarian system, consider the equality before the law the only kind of equality that the State must preserve. Given the fact that there have been, and still are, both left and right libertarian movements, it is a different attitude towards equality (or more precisely towards inequalities) that can be used as a criterion to distinguish the two groups.¹⁰

These reflections will constitute one of the starting points of my work in which I will investigate all those political forces whose cultural references are inspired by socialism¹¹ and social democracy.¹² All those movements, to mention Elias Diaz's attempt to redefine the left, that consider a left-wing identity to be:

a greater propensity for economic policies involving a redistribution of wealth and proportional levelling out, based more on work than capital; a greater consideration for the organization of that which is public and communally owned, rather than that which is private and individual; prevalence of the values of co-operation and working together rather than those of comparison and competition; more openness towards new social movements and their pacifist, ecologist or feminist demands; concern for the effective implementation of human rights, especially in relation to marginalized groups, old people, children, etc.; the priority of all the fundamental necessities such as good health, schooling and housing; greater international concern and friendliness towards poor, dependent and depressed areas; and autonomy of free will and rational debate both in majority and democratic decision-making

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 92-93.

¹¹ With the term *socialism* I refer here to the broad complex of socio-political ideologies and movements primarily based on the Marxist ideology as a set of socio-economic, philosophical and political analysis that conceive the socialist parties as the political tool through which the proletariat organizes itself and advances its claims for the conquest of political power without ever giving up the revolutionary perspective, which will lead to the overthrow of class relations, the abolition of private property and the creation of a classless society (Bobbio N. *et al.*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 138-142).

¹² With *social democracy* I indicate here what was defined, in the European context, as a sort of "degeneration" of the socialist parties, characterized by the acknowledgment of the difficulty of overcoming capitalism and culminated in the will to govern pragmatically abandoning the revolutionary instances and the process of building a classless society. The social democratic governments have not followed the traditional communist path consisting in the expansion of the state sector and have rejected the nationalization policies, opting for an intervention of the state in the economy by guiding the governance of the overall resources of the system. Still regarding the European experiences, social democratic parties have often become the expression of the working class by establishing an interdependent relationship with the unions. Although the class structure of social-democratic countries has not been substantially undermined by the government action, the policies pursued have tried to improve the living conditions of the working and middle classes in terms of improving living standards, social security, social and gender inequalities. A key element of social-democratic experiences is also the welfare state, progressively extended to vast social sectors (Bobbio N. *et al.*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 885-888).

and in constructing an ethical system and change not imposed by authoritarian arguments or the dogmas of religious organizations of a charismatic or traditional nature.¹³

I will therefore study and reconstruct the historical evolution and the ideological profile of all the parties that, accepting the fundamental rules of democracy, focus their socio-political action on the protection of all those who live in a situation of oppression and inequality, on the governance of the market economy and on a rational state intervention in the economy itself, which takes place respecting the rights of the individual with particular regard on pacifist, environmentalist, feminist values, on the principle of *laïcité*, and on the rights of freedom and equality.

Freedom, as fundamental *status* of every individual and the respect for citizenship rights such as civil, political and social rights.¹⁴ In addition to equality, which cannot be confined to economic issues, but conceived as the inclination to remove all the obstacles that make women and men less equal.¹⁵

¹³ Diaz E., “Derechas y izquierdas”, *El Sol*, 29 April 1991 in Bobbio N., *Left and Right: The Significance of a Political Distinction*, John Wiley & Sons, 2016, p. 115.

¹⁴ The first belong to the personality of the individual, such as freedom of thought, religion, assembly and economic independence. Political rights are linked to the formation of a democratic state and imply freedom of association in parties, electoral rights and freedom to determine the political direction of the state. The social rights (right to work, to get assistance, to study, to have health protection, freedom from poverty) are instead matured by the needs of the new industrial societies and imply and active commitment by the State towards the citizens (Bobbio N. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 255).

¹⁵ Bobbio N., *op. cit.*, p. 113.

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

In November 2020 Morocco will celebrate its 64th year of independence since the French-Moroccan agreement signed in 1956, which established the total autonomy and sovereignty of the country. After more than six decades, the political and economic trends, alongside the institutional framework of contemporary Morocco, still reflect the socio-economic dynamics and changes faced by the country through the French protectorate and during the transition towards independence.

To investigate the current expressions and versions of the left in terms of ideologies and political parties, it requires the full understanding of the roots of the Moroccan socialism. Indeed, the emergence of the first leftist party of the country lie in the local political landscape under the protectorate, notably in the cultural and political confrontation with the European powers and in the nationalist movement.

For all those reasons, I chose the French protectorate in Morocco as a starting point of my study. In the following paragraphs, I will address my researches on the French political economy in Morocco, the modernization reforms, the urbanization processes and, broadly, the economic transition of Morocco into a larger and westernized economic system.

After that, I will briefly dwell on the French leftists in Morocco over the years of the protectorate, summarizing their contradictions and the influence they exerted over the nationalist movement.

Afterwards, I will investigate the main historical stages that led to the rising of the Moroccan socialism, with particular emphasis on the person of al-Mahdī bin Barka and on the role played by the National Union of the Popular Forces (UNFP) in the political and economic environment after the independence.

In the end, I will study the evolution of the institutional role of the Socialist Union of the Popular Forces (USFP) between the 1960s and the end of the 1980s. Indeed, I will analyse its political activity as the major socialist party in order to outline the political and ideological metamorphosis that transformed the USFP from leading opposition force to principal ruling party.

2. THE FRENCH PROTECTORATE

The French protectorate in Morocco was formally established by the treaty of Fez in 1912. Nevertheless, the encounter with Europe and the Western military and economic interferences in Morocco date back at least to the 17th century. Particularly, between the 18th and the early 20th century

several peace and friendship treaties, as well as economic agreements, were signed both with European countries and the United States.¹⁶

From the 19th century, the European capitalist states, primarily concerned with opening markets for their products, started to affect both the Moroccan economy and the power of the Sultan. For instance, the Anglo-Moroccan agreements of December 9, 1856 established the absolute freedom of trade and the abolition of most of the Sultan's monopolies and privileges in the country.¹⁷

Starting from the second half of the century, Morocco was no longer able to control the trade liberalisation which led to the establishment of foreign settlements in its territories that officially allowed the proper European penetration into the country.¹⁸

Clearly, the internationalisation of Morocco attracted the economic interests of numerous European states, which contributed in setting an international crisis between Germany, France, Spain and Britain. The Algeciras Conference (1906) recognized the French predominance in Morocco as it formalized the so-called Open-Door Policy and it set out the first features of a modern economy. Furthermore, the European powers that participated at the conference entrusted France and Spain to carry out a reform program in the country. As reported by Germouni:

Les puissances présentes ont reconnu notamment à la France un intérêt spécial au Maroc et l'ont chargé avec l'Espagne d'y «représenter la civilisation européenne pour exécuter le programme de réformes dans le respect de la souveraineté et de l'indépendance du Sultan, de l'intégrité de ses États et la liberté économique sans aucune inégalité».¹⁹

The treaty of Fez, signed by the Sultan Mūlaī al-Ḥafīz and the French minister Eugène Regnault on March 30, 1912, officially settled the protectorate. Moreover, it represented a further step towards the aforementioned implementation of modernization reforms and to the rearrangement of the administrative and bureaucratic apparatus of the country.²⁰

Indeed, with the formal submission to the protectorate, the structure of the Makhzen was completely "réformé". The Sultan preserved few symbolic and religious competencies, but he was stripped of his traditional powers. Basically, he was deprived of the governmental direction of the country with particular regard to the foreign policy, the control of the army and the appointment of the ministers.²¹

¹⁶ Germouni M., *Le protectorat français au Maroc: un nouveau regard*, L'Harmattan, 2015, p. 30.

¹⁷ Ayache A., *Le Maroc*, Éditions Sociales, Paris, 1956, p. 51.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 52-56.

¹⁹ Germouni M., *op. cit.*, p. 67-68.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

²¹ Ayache A., *op. cit.*, p. 82-83

Nonetheless, by submitting to France, the Sultan Mūlaī al-Ḥafīz and the elites close to the monarchy took advantage of the opportunity to protect their class interests. As stated by Germouni, the Sultan required special protection for himself and those close to him, as well as economic safeguards and numerous real estates. At this stage, the French domination was seen by the ruling classes as the strategic opportunity to carry out modernisation processes and to handle the rural tribes that often evaded from both the sultan's authority and the collection of taxes.²²

At the beginning of the 20th century, Morocco relied on an economy of subsistence characterized by the dependency on the environment and rainfalls, archaic production techniques and the precariousness of the production.²³ Both in the rural and urban contexts, shepherds, farmers, merchants and local artisans produced mostly for their individual and community needs. Furthermore, until the end of the 19th century, Morocco was totally devoid of any viable communication routes, electricity was not in use and the administrative apparatus was rudimentary and inefficient.²⁴

Within this framework, thanks to their political power and through the large funds and advanced production techniques at their disposal, the French easily managed to control and to lead the economy.²⁵

The main reforms concerned public health, tax and education systems and land grabbing policies. Furthermore, large-scale infrastructure projects revolutionized the communications routes (roads, ports, railways), the telecommunications services (telegraph, telephone and postal services) as well as the supply of electricity and the hydraulic systems.²⁶

However, it is noteworthy that the economic activities of the colonization attracted, above all, the interests of European banks and holdings. Indeed, the introduction of a capitalist economy benefited almost exclusively a minority of men and financial groups that were able to exploit the country for their own businesses.²⁷

For instance, the major infrastructure projects carried out in Morocco were conceived, realised and taxed by French banks and industrial groups generally not residing in the country.²⁸ Although these companies were usually charged by the French government, they used to pursue their own interests

²² Rivet D., *Le Maroc de Lyautey à Mohammed V. Le double visage du Protectorat*, Denoël, Paris, 1999, p. 28-29.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 158-164

²⁴ Ayache A., *op. cit.*, p. 125.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

²⁶ Germouni M., *op. cit.*, p. 169-238.

²⁷ Ayache A., *op. cit.*, p. 206.

²⁸ For instance, the “Société Marocaine des Travaux Publics”, was a Franco-German company that allowed private European corporations to compete for any port and rail concession (Germouni M., *op. cit.*, p. 71).

at the expense of the State and local authorities.²⁹ Between 1914 and 1953, states Ayache, up to 600 billion francs of public investments were parcelled out by these financial groups operating in Morocco.

Among the main groups, Ayache lists: the Schneider et Cie company, the Banque de l'Union Parisienne, the Gradis, Hersent, Mas and Quilmès groups, the Banque d'Indochine, the Banque Rothschild and, last but not least, the Banque de Paris et des Pays-bas. The latter, through the Banque d'Etat and the Banque commerciale du Maroc, had full control of the monetary circulation and the credit within the country.³⁰

These banking groups, also thanks to their previous colonial experiences in other countries, played a decisive role in managing the political, administrative and financial organization of the regime. Through the expropriation of lands and the exploitation of cheap labour they were able to direct the capital investments in order to create modern trade bodies and industries,³¹ leading the way to the emergence of a proper modern economy.

Nevertheless, the high economic growth drove by this new Moroccan capitalism led to a deeply uneven development that irreversibly disrupted and changed the local social structures.

For a variety of reasons,³² among them the economic development and the ever-increasing demand for workforce, numerous pastors and farmers migrated from the rural areas to the industrial regions. The resulting unbridled growth of conurbations, such as Casablanca,³³ Rabat-Salé, Port-Lyautey, Oujda, Safi and Agadir, caused a full-scale urban revolution.³⁴

From the 1920s, huts, tents and precarious settlements started to spread outside the medinas turning into the first *bidonvilles* of the country.³⁵ Through 44 years of colonialism, these shantytowns were occupied by almost one million of Moroccans emigrated from the South regions, the Atlantic plains, the Western Sahara and the Atlas Mountains.³⁶

²⁹ Ayache A., *op. cit.*, p., p. 142-144.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 203-206.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 77 78.

³² The causes of the strong migration flows in the first half of the 20th century cannot be ascribed exclusively to the colonialism. In fact, reasons such as overpopulation, severe droughts and previous overgrazing affected the life of the rural communities as much as the economic changes brought by the protectorate. For a more detailed analysis: Montagne R. (dir.) *Naissance du prolétariat marocain : Enquête collective exécutée de 1948 à 1950*. Nouvelle édition [en ligne]. Rabat : Centre Jacques-Berque, 2016 (généré le 26 juillet 2019). Available online: <http://books.openedition.org/cjb/556>.

³³ In 1950, up to 10% of the population of Casablanca used to live in the shantytowns. (Waterbury J., *Le commandeur des croyants, la monarchie marocaine et son élite*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1975, p. 228).

³⁴ Montagne R., *op. cit.*, Available online: <http://books.openedition.org/cjb/556>.

³⁵ Rivet D., *op. cit.*, p. 259.

³⁶ Montagne R., *op. cit.*, Available online: <http://books.openedition.org/cjb/556>.

This new and low-paid labour force started to work for European companies and industrial groups, thereby becoming the very first proletariat of the Moroccan cities.³⁷

This working-class, developed between mines, factories and yards, will eventually constitute a real concern for the French authorities. Indeed, it is precisely among the new industrial proletariat that the first trade union movements evolved, becoming the voice of the workers' demands.³⁸

The activity of the unions enabled the proletariat to develop a sort of class consciousness that will affect the future evolution of the Moroccan political parties.³⁹ Indeed, in the aftermath of the independence, new socialist and Third-Worldist movements will continue the fight against the Western powers and the development of a European capitalist system.⁴⁰

3. THE FRENCH LEFTIST IN MOROCCO

The Moroccan Federation of the Socialist party was founded in 1924 and in few years it reached 122 members divided into 8 sections: Casablanca, Rabat, Meknès, Fez, Oujda, Settat, Marrakech and Kasba-Tadla. In the same period the Radical Federation of Morocco was established as well. It incorporated 8 committees between Casablanca, Rabat, Meknès, Fez, Oujda, Safi, Marrakech and Mogador, and it also had its own newspaper, the biweekly *Le radical franco-marocain*. Moreover, another significant French leftist organisation was also the Ligue des droits de l'homme that included 17 sections and 1920 activists.⁴¹

The socialist and radical militants, alongside the activists of the Ligue, claimed the democratisation of the local institutions and establishment of a system that could ensure the same respect for rights and freedom of France. Nonetheless, their demands concerned almost exclusively the French communities in the colony, and their requests in support of the Moroccan people were extremely rare and merely addressed to the abuses of the local authorities without ever really questioning the colonialism itself.⁴²

Moreover, even though the trade union rights were not granted, different forms of associationism abounded since the very beginning of the occupation. From the 1930s, the unions started to be

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Ayache A., *op. cit.*, p. 309-3011.

³⁹ Rézette R., *Les partis politiques marocains*, Librairie Armand Colin, Paris, 1955.

⁴⁰ Germouni M., *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁴¹ Oved G., *La gauche française et le nationalisme marocain 1905-1955, 2 voll.*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1984, Vol. II, p. 17-18.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 19-20.

countenanced by the French Residence though the Moroccan labours and their demands continued to be excluded.⁴³

In the meanwhile, between 1930 and 1934, the first nationalist movements started to assume an increasing awareness of their role, as they sought to organise a proper political structure based on a common agenda. This, states Rézette, was also made possible through a gradual approach to the French leftist parties.⁴⁴ As believed by Oved: “le développement de l’industrialisation et corrélativement l’accroissement de la base populaire du mouvement national marocain vont cependant faciliter les rencontres avec la gauche française et l’expression d’un langage commun”.⁴⁵

Thanks to the role played by Robert-Jean Longuet, Karl Marx’s great-grandson, the socialist party S.F.I.O. was the first French political organisation that entered into relations with the nationalist movement. The Moroccan militants had the opportunity to learn more about the structure of the party and the general rules for the mass mobilization, as they gradually approached and assimilated the socialist ideas.⁴⁶

The relations between the nationalists and the leftists led to formal and crucial actions: a striking example is the “Plan des Réformes marocaines” prepared by the Comité d’Action Marocaine (CAM)⁴⁷ and handed to the Residence in 1934. Indeed, it was presented under the patronage of fifteen French members, including Robert-Jean Longuet, the President of the radical-socialist party and numerous deputies and former MEPs.⁴⁸

Nonetheless, this collaboration approach was never a real merger plan and it always represented a temporary and precarious project. The French politicians who supported the Moroccan nationalism belonged to a minority within their parties and they actually encouraged the nationalists as far as their demands matched with their own political stances. In summary, although the impact of the French leftist on the rising Moroccan political parties cannot be underappreciated, it would be disingenuous to affirm that the Moroccan nationalist movement was ever really supported by the federations of the French leftist parties.⁴⁹

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁴⁴ Rézette R., *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁴⁵ Oved G., *op. cit.*, p. 352.

⁴⁶ Rézette R., *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁴⁷ The CAM was the very first Moroccan political party, founded in 1934 and consisting of ten different nationalist groups. Also in 1934, the CAM published the Plan de Réformes Marocaines, a program of reforms and political claims which, without questioning the treaty of Fez, called for the suppression of the direct administration, the establishment of a single judicial system for the whole country and the participation of the Moroccans to the exercise of power. (Ayache A., *op. cit.*, p. 339; Rézette R., *op. cit.*, p. 87-95).

⁴⁸ Bleuchot H., *Les libéraux Français au Maroc (1947 – 1955)*, Editions de l’Université de Provence, 1973, p. 24-25

⁴⁹ Rézette R., *op. cit.*, p. 70-71

The Communist Party is worth a comment of its own. In 1934, the French Communist Party established its regional committee in Morocco, based in Casablanca. In 1943, under the leadership of Léon Sultan, the party was renamed Parti Communiste au Maroc (PCM), even though it did not really change in terms of militants and party leaders. However, while Moroccans were admitted, the party consisted for the most part of French and Algerian activists. Specifically, one key aspect should be stressed: on one side, the communists condemned the violent French military interventions and reproached the Socialist Party for not denouncing the war in Morocco sufficiently. Nevertheless, while claiming “le droit des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes”⁵⁰ as well as the will of “marcher main dans la main”⁵¹ with the nationalists, the communists bounded indissolubly the political actions and the future of the Moroccan and French proletarians against all forms of capitalism and fascism, overshadowing the question of the country's independence.⁵²

In 1945, the new secretary general ‘Alī Ya‘tah renamed the party again, creating the very first Moroccan Communist Party (PCM). Within a short time, its European members quit the party that aligned itself with the positions of the Istiqlāl⁵³, calling for the abrogation of the protectorate, for the independence and unification of Morocco and for the election of a constituent assembly by universal suffrage.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, the PCM did not receive great support among the masses. Indeed, the Moroccan proletariat always prioritized its local socio-cultural features over the European ones. While the working class developed a certain class consciousness, the Muslim community, the religious sphere, and the fight for the independence always prevailed over the struggle against capitalism. Therefore, due to the ideological positions, the atheistic vision and the foreign origins of the PCM, the Moroccan labours approached the Istiqlāl party way more than the Communist one.⁵⁵

4. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STRUGGLES BETWEEN 1956 AND 1965

4.1 The role of the Monarchy

Here, I will not dwell on the intricate national and international political developments that led to the repeal of the protectorate, in 1956. However, I will briefly delineate the main socio-political factors

⁵⁰ Bleuchot H., *op. cit.*, p. 26

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Oved G., *op. cit.*, p. 43-44; Rézette R. *op. cit.*, p. 324.

⁵³ The Istiqlāl party (IP) was founded in 1943 and it represented the evolution of both the CAM and the National Party. With the end of World War II, the IP started a particularly intense propaganda activity expressing its anti-colonial demands. In the 1950s, the IP was the most influential political force and it was highly organized, it had two media outlets (*al-‘Alam* and the *Journal de l'Istiqlāl*) and a wide popular base extended from the bourgeoisie, traders, and student associations up to the working class (Rézette R. *op. cit.*, p. 291-314).

⁵⁴ Bleuchot H., *op. cit.*, p. 45.

⁵⁵ Rézette R. *op. cit.*, p. 348.

that determined the institutional structure of the independent Morocco and the installation of an authoritarian rule.

In my view, there are three key elements that we must bear in mind: first, the nationalist fight and the encounter with Europe led to the emergence of modern political parties, that were among the main players in the processes of independence and in the following political phases. Second, the politicization of urban and rural masses, who were increasingly involved in the political issues. Finally, the increasing political power of Sultan Mūḥammad bin Yūsaf and the enhancement of his role in the nationalist movement.

Indeed, in the last decades of the protectorate, the Sultan exposed himself further and further in the anti-colonial fight and, also thanks to the endorsement and the propaganda of the political parties, he stood out as the main opponent in the struggle against France.⁵⁶

At this point, the Sultan and the leaders of the nationalist parties, notably the IP and the DIP⁵⁷ started to collaborate more and more, as they shared common claims and goals. However, already in the 1940s, the sultan authority emerged as the main and only symbolic reference for the population, leading the political actions towards the specific project of political hegemony. The subordination of the parties to the Sultan is revealed during the formation of the first Moroccan government, in which the IP found itself strongly marginalized, while the presidency and key ministries were entrusted to men loyal to the crown.⁵⁸

In 1956, the Sultan Mūḥammad bin Yūsaf officially assumed the title of King Mūḥammad V and the country regained its independence as a constitutional monarchy. Still, despite the Makhzen worked to establish a modern institutional system inspired by Western models, it aimed to strengthen the superiority of the Monarch over the institutional structures by ensuring to the King full legislative power and the complete control of both the army and the police. In fact, the new political framework that was emerging was determined by a façade of a multi-party system in which the monarch reigned and governed holding absolute power.⁵⁹

Indeed, the palace sought to preserve the interests of the Makhzen, as it tried to prevent the actual democratization of the institutions. On a socio-economic level, the economic framework of the early

⁵⁶ Rivet D., *op. cit.*, p. 388.

⁵⁷ The Democratic Independence Party was founded in 1946 by Ḥassan al-Wazzānī. The party sought to raise public awareness in order to establish an actual democracy. However, just like the IP, the DIP remained an elitist force and it never defined itself as mass party. He found support mainly from the middle class, the merchants, the intellectuals and, in general, from cultured and educated environments. (De Poli B., *Dal Sultanato alla monarchia: la formazione culturale dell'élite nel Marocco coloniale*, Aracne editrice int.le S.r.l., 2015, p.386-387).

⁵⁸ Waterbury J., *op. cit.*, p. 78.

⁵⁹ De Poli B., *op. cit.*, p.

1960s was marked by the predominance of a powerful elite that controlled the agricultural and trade sectors. Thus, King Hassan II, succeeded to his father in 1961, turned down every political or economic actions that might undermine the status quo of the ruling classes. A striking example, that was discussed lately in *TelQuel*, it is the five-year plan (1960-1964) of the Ibrāhīm ministry. Indeed, the government tried to overhaul the entire financial system, to invest in the industrial and education sectors and to realize a proper agrarian reform focused on the redistribution of lands, whose ownership passed from the French colons to strong Moroccan landowners close to the monarchy. As one can imagine, they did not achieve any results. In fact, the King was afraid that this kind of policies would have turned Morocco in a socialist state, as he feared a real democratization process that would have undermined the interests of the Makhzen. In the end, the principles of financial independence, economic reforms and social changes were set aside in favour of an increasing capitalistic liberalisation that benefited the monarchy and served the interests of the ruling classes.⁶⁰

As mentioned, another strategy of the King was to encourage the internal fractures within the parties by favouring political splits and rivalries in order to avoid the rise of too powerful political forces. Hence, this façade of a multi-party system became an actual tool to stem the risk of a potential predominance of the parties on the monarchy.⁶¹

In this institutional environment, marked by an extremely weakness and fragmentation of the political groups, in 1959 the leftist and populist forces of the IP split from the party to form the National Union of the Popular Forces (UNFP), thereby constituting the first strong political opposition to the monarchy.

4.2 The National Union of the Popular Forces

Even before the independence, in the Istiqlāl party coexisted different political currents both within the supporting citizens and the leadership of the party. After 1956, following the end of the colonialism, the IP managed to preserve a sort of unity in order to defend the Moroccan sovereignty in spite of the numerous disputes among the leaders.⁶²

Nevertheless, as De Poli points out, the lack of a true ideological framework and the absence of a clear political tactic allowed the rise of multiple currents within the party. Different views on

⁶⁰ Chahid S., Hamdani H., “Aux origines du premier modèle de développement”, in *Telquel* n. 873, 27/3/2019.

⁶¹ De Poli B., *op. cit.*, p. 443.

⁶² Waterbury J., *op. cit.*, p. 193.

modernism, conservatism, populism and elitism exacerbated ideological divergences while advantaging the monarchy that was able to impose itself on the Istiqlāl.⁶³

On January 25, 1959, the left-wing of the Istiqlāl party, led by al-Mahdī bin Barka, ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Bū‘abīd, and ‘Abdallah Ibrāhīm, split from the IP by founding the National Union of the Popular Forces (UNFP). As highlighted by Waterbury, what occurred in the IP is a spontaneous segmentation process determined by the socio-political life within the leadership of the party.⁶⁴

Indeed, a large social and generational gap divided the leaders of the first national movements and the younger generations of political militants. This divergence played a major role in the development of a class consciousness and a strong social ambition that tightened up the fragmentation within the Istiqlāl.⁶⁵

The reasons behind the scission of the UNFP are not easy to identify. However, states De Poli, beside the ideological divergences and the intergenerational clashes there was also a strong conflict between the traditional notables and the emerging middle class as well as opposed ideas of politics. In fact, while the Istiqlāl was an oligarchic and elitist party, the UNFP aimed at broadening as much as possible the participation of the people in the exercise of power.⁶⁶

After 1959, the Istiqlāl party, chaired by ‘Allāl al-Fassī, reached its support in the urban and rural middle class and among a large part of the upper middle class. The latter consisted in powerful landowners who basically controlled the farming sector and had a strong political influence.⁶⁷

Instead, the new party founded by al-Mahdī bin Barka gained its political support among the lower middle class rooted in the rural environment as well as in the labour class, also through the Union Marocaine du Travail (UMT), the worker’s union. In particular, the working class supported the most radical militants of the UNFP, who aimed at achieving the claims of the urban masses by trying to organize popular uprisings.⁶⁸

The political project behind the National Union of Popular Forces relied on the socialist ideology and on a strong populist propaganda. With the foundation of the UNFP, bin Barka refused the autarchic power strategies and the ideological emptiness of the traditional parties, as he was trying to affirm:

⁶³ De Poli B., “Mahdi Ben Barka e le matrici del socialismo marocchino”, in G.G. Filippi, *Il concetto di uomo nelle società del Vicino Oriente e dell’Asia Meridionale*, Venezia, CAFOSCARINA EDITRICE, 2011, pp. 55-70

⁶⁴ Waterbury J., *op. cit.*, p. 194-195.

⁶⁵ De Poli B., *Mahdi Ben Barka...*, p. 55-70.

⁶⁶ De Poli B., *op. cit.*, p. 453.

⁶⁷ Majid M., *Les luttes de Classes au Maroc depuis l’Indépendance*, Rotterdam, Hiwar, 1987, p. 21.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

Une conception plus moderne des partis politiques. Alors qu'auparavant les partis se définissaient beaucoup plus comme un rassemblement ou par rapport à leur leader, qu'en fonction de leur programme [...], on peut dire que maintenant, de plus en plus, les partis à clientèle vont se distinguer nettement des partis basés sur un programme et une idéologie.⁶⁹

Furthermore, the UNFP emphasized the importance of tackling the deep crisis that Morocco was experiencing due to severe economic stagnation and to an increase in population and consumption that were not supported by the promotion of teaching and adequate job opportunities.⁷⁰

The UNFP believed that the crisis could only be overcome through deep structural reforms, among them: the complete democratization of the political and institutional structures, because “la démocratie n'est pas une enseigne qu'on exhibe pour les touristes, c'est une réalité qui doit ouvrir concrètement à chacun des possibilités de progrès et de culture”⁷¹; the introduction of a system that respected human rights and freedoms; the emancipation of women and their empowerment; the nationalisation of the economy and serious industrial policies; the provision of a modern, quality teaching; and, finally, reaching an agreement with the King in order to pursue a genuine land reform and to foster solidarity with the revolutionary Arab and African countries. According to bin Barka, none of these aims would have been achieved without a democratic State institution truly representative of the popular will and whose legitimacy was undeniable.⁷²

Thus, the UNFP paid a great deal of attention to the economic, social and cultural development that the independent Morocco needed above all else. Also, this large socio-economic development could only be accomplished through the popular mobilization, conceived as the political tool to achieve material and cultural needs with immediate effect.⁷³

At the same time, by focusing on the centrality of the socio-economic development of his country, bin Barka was well aware of the international nature of this project, as he always put particular emphasis on all those undeveloped countries that suffered the imperialistic European exploitation. Therefore, the necessity to foster solidarity with the revolutionary Arab and African countries emerged as one of the core aspects of bin Barka's political thought.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Ben Barka M., *Problèmes d'édification du Maroc et du Maghreb*, in *Quatre entretiens avec Raymond Jean*, Plon – Tribune Libre n. 52, in *Mehdi Ben Barka : Ecrits Politiques, 1957-1965*, Paris, Syllepse, 1999, p. 114.

⁷⁰ Lahbabi M., *Ben Barka et réalité politique ancrée dans le peuple marocain*, in Gallissot R., Kergoat J., *Mehdi Ben Barka. De l'indépendance marocaine à la tricontinentale*, Casablanca, Eddif, 1997, p. 26.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 26-34.

⁷³ Monjib M., *Du développement et de la direction politique dans la pensée de Mehdi Ben Barka*, in Gallissot R., *et. al., op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

4.3 Al-Mahdī bin Barka

As recounted by Daoud and Monjib, al-Mahdī bin Barka was born in 1920 in Sidi Fettah, a neighbourhood in the medina of Rabat. As a child, he attended the *madrassa*, the Quranic school, where he learned the Quran, the Arabic grammar and some basic arithmetic. Soon, the people around him noticed his great skills and abilities and they pushed him to pursue a proper educational path. At first, since he did not belong to the notable class, he did not get direct access to the French schools, where young scholars were educated through a modern and westernized educational system. However, with the aid of an old teacher, he managed to be admitted as a free auditor, getting the opportunity to learn French and proving himself as the best student in the class.⁷⁵

Already by the 1930s, Mūḥammad Al-Yazīdī, prominent member of the national movement and one of the signatories of the 1944 Manifeste de l'Indépendance, approached the young bin Barka, initiating him to the underground activism within the Moroccan Action Committee (CAM), the first nationalist group gathered around 'Allāl al-Fassī and al-Wazzānī.⁷⁶

Just like all the nationalists, bin Barka was strongly affected by the Dahir Berbère and by the protests and repressions that followed. The young al-Mahdī never accepted the idea of dividing Arabs and Berbers and he upheld the concept that “au Maroc il n'y a pas d'Arabes purs ni de Berbères purs car plusieurs siècle de brassage ont eu pour résultat qu'un même sang mixte coule dans les veines du peuple marocain”.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, although bin Barka developed a political consciousness already as a young man, education was his primary occupation up to the age of 22. After attending both the French and Moroccan schools in Rabat, he furthered his studies at the University of Algiers, where he completed a bachelor's degree in mathematical physics. In Algeria, he was engaged in the political activities among the students where he came to know the leaders of the national movement and the futures founders of the National Liberation Front (FNL) and members of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA).⁷⁸

Right after his graduation, in 1942, the leaders of the National Party in Morocco asked bin Barka to return home and to join the underground networks of the nationalist movement once again. In

⁷⁵ Daoud Z., Monjib M., *Ben Barka*, Paris, Michalon, 1996, p. 63.

⁷⁶ De Poli B., *op. cit.*, in Filippi G.G., *op. cit.*, p. 55-70.

⁷⁷ Daoud Z., *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 65-65.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 75-76.

Morocco, he started to work as a professor teaching in different schools as well as in the Royal College, thereby becoming Ḥassan II math tutor.⁷⁹

From that moment, al-Mahdī “se lance corps et âme dans l’action politique”⁸⁰, as he dedicated his all life to the nationalist cause. He constantly tried to rise the political awareness of people and he came to know new younger supporters, such as ‘Abd al-Raḥman Yūsufi,⁸¹ that will join him becoming a leading members of the national movement.

Among the nationalists, al-Mahdī bin Barka was part of a second generation of militants that emerged on the political arena after the repressions of 1937, when most of the old members and leaders were exiled or detained.⁸²

In 1942, following the Allied landings in Morocco, the role played by the French communists in the anti-Nazi resistance led to a strong revival of the trade union movement. In this phase, the young nationalists just like bin Barka, ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Bū‘abīd, ‘Abdallah ‘Ibrāhīm and ‘Abd al-Raḥman Yūsufi, started to be interested by the unions and al-Mahdī gradually approached the French communism.⁸³

Towards the end of the 1940s the Moroccan Communist Party joined the Istiqlāl positions on the national question while the IP re-joined the PCM on the social issues, expressing its support for the working class.⁸⁴

However, especially after the independence, bin Barka tried to distinguish himself more clearly from the other political actors, including the communists. By approaching Marxism, bin Barka's ideology articulated in a very unique way, including new and original demands such as the Moroccan, Maghreb and Arab nationalism as well as the Third-World progressivism.⁸⁵

Therefore, although bin Barka and the Communists belonged to the same leftist political field, on the ideological and political level a certain distance was determined by the nationalist question, distant views of Arabism and different relations towards the Third-World.⁸⁶

⁷⁹ De Poli B., *op. cit.*, in Filippi G.G., *op. cit.*, p. 55-70.

⁸⁰ Daoud Z., *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁸¹ Future secretary of the Socialist Union of the Popular Forces (USFP) and prime minister of Morocco between 1998 and 2002.

⁸² De Poli B., *op. cit.*, in Filippi G.G., *op. cit.*, p. 55-70.

⁸³ Daoud Z., *et al.*, p. 83-84.

⁸⁴ Saaf A., *Ben Barka et les communistes*, in Gallissot R., *et. al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 112-113.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

In 1943, bin Barka was the youngest signatory of the Manifest de l'Indépendance, the founding act of the Istiqlāl, after which he was imprisoned, in February 1944.⁸⁷

Once released, nine months later, he became administrative secretary of the IP and general secretary in 1949. In 1954, after leaving prison once again, bin Barka basically gained full control of the party.⁸⁸

At this point, al-Mahdī bin Barka was able to revitalize the party by defining its relations with the Liberation Army and by reaching the support of the population, thus making the Istiqlāl the principal social force in Morocco and the main representative of the country in the negotiations with France. Bin Barka himself became the most influent and important politician and he worked in order to prepare the IP for the Aix-les-Bains agreement in which he stood out affirming his leading role more and more.⁸⁹

Immediately after the independence, bin Barka believed it necessary to reaffirm the internal security of the country and to institutionalize the role of new forces that joined the Istiqlāl such as the trade union movements, the anti-French resistance and educated young people. Moreover, bin Barka sought to mobilize the masses in order to keep on the enthusiasm that accompanied the country towards the struggle against colonialism.⁹⁰

According to bin Barka and the progressive wing of the IP, it was necessary to implement socio-economic policies that would clash against the most conservative and reactionary classes who had enriched themselves by investing in the modern economic sector.⁹¹

Between 19 and 20 August 1956, the National Council of the Istiqlāl brought together the Council of the Resistance and the one of the UMT. Bin Barka, in agreement with the trade unionists and the Resistance forces, proposed a reorganization of the party in order to allow these two progressive forces to take control of the executive committee, dominated by traditionalist leaders considered too close to the monarchy. The ultimate purpose was to urgently organize elections and to establish modern democratic institutions by imposing the will of the people on the one of the Palace.⁹²

Indeed, bin Barka believed that the socio-economic problems of Morocco were mainly due to the conservatism of the Makhzen and he was fully aware that the King was too strong and too attached to its privileges to really take positions against “l'obscurantisme du passé”.⁹³

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁸⁸ De Poli B., *op. cit.*, in Filippi G.G., *op. cit.*, p. 55-70.

⁸⁹ Daoud Z., *et al.*, p. 135-139.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 156-157.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

Predictably, the response of the Makhzen did not take long to arrive. In 1957, political personalities close to traditionalist and anti-Istiqlāl circles formed a new political opposition party, the Mouvement Populaire (MP), created with the specific aim of countering the institutional dominance of the IP and its progressive leaders.⁹⁴

During the first years of independence, the relations between bin Barka and the monarchy increasingly exacerbated. The political personalities close to the King started to consider the future leader of the UNFP as the most dangerous anti-monarchist ideologue. Therefore, the Makhzen constantly tried to exclude the progressive members of the party, so as to limit their political action and to create divisions and mistrust among the leaders.

In 1958, the new executive led by Balāfrīġ was almost exclusively composed by members of the right wing of the Istiqlāl, while not a single person close to the unions was able to get any position of power. The strong, united and homogeneous government wanted by bin Barka proved to be a failure, as the predominance of the right wings was not accepted by the unions that ceased to support the Istiqlāl both materially and politically.⁹⁵

Bin Barka himself was in the middle of the two political factions of the IP. On one side there were the leftist members, close to the workers and to the unions, who required immediate and profound reforms. On the other side there was the aristocracy of the party which instead feared too radical reform processes. On January 25, 1959, al-Mahdī made his choice by withdrawing from the executive committee of the IP. He accused the party for its anti-national demagogy, he criticized its obstructionism towards a proper resolution of the crisis and he embarked on the organization of a new political force, the UNFP, thereby becoming its indisputable leader.⁹⁶

To sum up, bin Barka was one of the most original and influential leaders in the Moroccan political landscape of the 20th century. As a young man, he received a modern education that led him to be bilingual, to travel in Europe and to gain deep knowledge of the Western culture. His political thought did not refer to an actual doctrine but it was based on his personal experience and on a constant socio-political analysis both on the national and international level.⁹⁷ As bin Barka himself stated in the introduction of the *Option révolutionnaire*:

Aucune formation politique à vocation révolutionnaire ne peut vivre et se développer si, de temps en temps, elle ne se livre pas à une analyse globale et dynamique de la société [...]. Une telle analyse d'ensemble n'était pas une

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 185-187.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 200-2016.

⁹⁷ De Poli B., *op. cit.*, p. 503-504.

exigence formelle, elle était nécessitée par le nouveau départ que nous voulions donner à la lutte de libération nationale. Car le pragmatisme en politique n'est pas seulement la politique au jour le jour, ni la lutte pour la seule perspective du simple exercice du pouvoir : c'est aussi le fait d'agir à partir d'une analyse fragmentaire ou statique de la situation.⁹⁸

In this last phase of his life, bin Barka defined his political perspective “révolutionnaire” as he considered the democratization of Morocco inseparable from the full participation and popular control, in open conflict with the authoritarian rule of the King. Another central element was to combine indelibly the achievement of democracy with the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist fight:

Le problème constitutionnel n'est qu'une partie du problème démocratique, c'est-à-dire la participation de plus en plus large des masses populaires à la gestion publique. Il ne peut être séparée de la lutte anti-impérialiste, car il ne suffit pas d'attaquer politiquement le régime du pouvoir absolu, mais le faut encore affaiblir économiquement ses alliés.⁹⁹

In any case, the struggle against capitalism and the European imperialism must not be conceived as a total rejection of the Western culture. On the contrary, the influence of the Western political thoughts on bin Barka is clear. Indeed, bin Barka's socialism, unlike Moroccan communism, developed in a very original way, as it accepted its European ideological roots and it adapted to the Moroccan socio-political context, arising from the nationalist cause and embracing the Arab nationalism and the Third World internationalism.¹⁰⁰

4.4 The UNFP and Ḥassan II: from the political fight to the abduction of bin Barka

In the political confrontation between the Monarchy and bin Barka's party, a crucial moment was May 20, 1960. On that date, Mūḥammad V called the prime minister ‘Abdallah Ibrāhīm, leading member of the UNFP, and dismissed him from his role, appointing himself first minister and nominating his son vice president while assuring him the *de facto* direction of the country.¹⁰¹

The dissolution of the Ibrāhīm government caused an irreversible rupture between the left and the Palace and it profoundly changed the balances of power. On May 23, during a public speech, the King emphasized the need to preserve the national unity, the security of the monarchy and, consequently, his will of “prendre les choses en main”¹⁰² and personally overseeing the affairs of the State. The militants of the UNFP firmly opposed to the Royal's decision and started to discuss about the necessity to choose between “la démocratie et le fascisme”¹⁰³, accusing the Palace to intentionally

⁹⁸ Ben Barka M., *Option Révolutionnaire*, in *Mehdi ben Barka : Ecrits Politiques 1957-1965*, Syllepse, Paris, 1999, p. 221

⁹⁹ Ben Barka M., *op.cit.*, p. 248.

¹⁰⁰ Saaf A., *op. cit.*, in Gallissot R., *et. al., op. cit.*, p. 111.

¹⁰¹ Majid M., *op. cit.*, p. 21.

¹⁰² Daoud Z., *et al.*, p. 252

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

hinder the formation of a modern, democratic and progressive State with the sole purpose to advantage:

Une minorité féodale, terrienne, mercantile ou religieuse qui, naguère partiellement unie aux forces populaires dans la lutte pour l'indépendance, entend maintenant opérer à son profit le transfère des privilèges politiques ou économiques attachés au régime du Protectorat, derrière le paravent du vocabulaire et de l'administration modernes, hérités de ce même Protectorat.¹⁰⁴

In December 1960, several members of the UNFP were arrested and imprisoned, accused of defamation of the King, conspiracy against the Crown and attempt on the life of Prince Ḥassan. Numerous protests and strikes followed and the militants of the party started to speak out more and more against the abuse of power of the Palace.¹⁰⁵

Nevertheless, despite the open conflict against the King, the success of the UNFP in the municipal elections in 1960 showed how, at least in this phase, the party continued to be a popular and influent force quietly rooted among the people.¹⁰⁶

In fact, while in the countryside the opposing political personalities did not have formal membership of a party, in the cities the electoral confrontation became a real fight between the main political competitors of the country. The Istiqlāl got almost the 40% of the polling stations, the MP, close to the monarchy, got the 7% while the UNFP got the 23% that, as noted by Waterbury, was a remarkable achievement for a one-year party. The UNFP obtained the absolute majority in the councils of Rabat, Casablanca, Kenitra, Tangeri, Safi, el-Jadida, Tétouan, Settat, Agadir, Marrakesh and in the Southern provinces. Moreover, the analysis of the results shows clearly that the party rooted among the workers, thanks to the UMT, as well as among the small shopkeepers and the rural immigrants within the cities.¹⁰⁷

After few months, at the begging of 1961, King Mūḥammad V suddenly died after an ear surgery. The new King Ḥassan II, who already ruled over the government, was immediately supported by the ruling classes and the situation for the UNFP deteriorated even more.¹⁰⁸

Bin Barka, exiled in Paris, sent a message to Ḥassan II expressing his devotion and sincere fidelity, affirming his will to establish a free and democratic Morocco in line with the ideals of the King and the popular aspirations. Somehow, a sort of new collaboration between all the political forces

¹⁰⁴ Daoud Z., *et al.*, p. 252-253

¹⁰⁵ A'boushi el-H., *The Socialist Union of Popular Forces Party in Morocco*, in Catusse M., Karam K., *Returning to political parties? Partisan Logic and Political Transformations in the Arab World*, Presses de l'Ifpo, The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, Beirut, 2010. Available online: <https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/1085#authors>

¹⁰⁶ Majid M., *op. cit.*, p. 29.

¹⁰⁷ Waterbury J., *op. cit.*, p. 248-249.

¹⁰⁸ Majid M., *op. cit.*, p. 31.

seemed to start. However, Ḥassan II and the UNFP were long away from reaching a real agreement. For instance, Bū‘abīd once stated on the newspaper *Le Monde* that the King “doit régner sans gouverner”. At the same time, Ḥassan II did not have any intentions of sharing the power with the other political forces¹⁰⁹. On the contrary, he used all his influence to get an exclusive control of the State through political oppression and by the Forces Armées Royales (FAR), the most powerful political tool in the hands of the King. Indeed, the power of the military forces allowed the Monarch to run over a weak and fragmented political context, standing out as the only guarantor of the unity and stability of the country.¹¹⁰

Furthermore, in these years, the UMT, started a gradual approach to the Royal power, surrendering more and more to the pressures of the King. Given that many members of the UMT were also members of the executive committee of the UNFP, the Palace aimed at isolating the UNFP by hindering any kind of alliance between the UMT and the leftists.¹¹¹

After his return to Morocco in 1962, on the 2nd UNFP congress, bin Barka insisted on the dual role of the party as the instrument of both the political fight and the syndicalist demands. As pointed out in the *Option révolutionnaire*:

Quant aux taches du parti [...] elles assurent l’interpénétration de la lutte politique et de la lutte syndicale [...] C’est le UNFP et tant qu’instrument de la Révolution, qui doit jouer le rôle dirigeant dans les luttes de toutes les couches sociales révolutionnaires. [...] cela signifie que seul le parti peut prétendre détenir la boussole politique, élaborer et déterminer la ligne d’action pour tout le mouvement révolutionnaire dans notre pays. Dans les autres organisations de masse, qui ont leurs buts définis dans le cadre de leurs fonctions particulières, nos cadres et nos militants se doivent de veiller à assurer l’intégration de leur lutte dans la perspective d’ensemble dessinée par le parti, l’organe politique par excellence.¹¹²

One year later, in the run-up to the general elections of May 1963, the Front pour la Défense des Institutions Constitutionnelles (FDIC), a new monarchical party, was created. The FDIC was led by the director of the Royal Cabinet and Minister of Interior and Agriculture, Aḥmad Riḍā Kadīra, and it aimed at limiting the institutional participation of the UNFP as far as possible.¹¹³

From this moment, bin Barka's anti-imperialist propaganda became increasingly radical and acquired the characteristics of a revolutionary project both at national and international level. The emphasis was on the working class, the main revolutionary force, as well as on the party, that

¹⁰⁹ Daoud Z., *et al.*, p. 256-257.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

¹¹¹ Waterbury J, *op. cit.*, p. 251-253.

¹¹² Ben Barka M., *op. cit.*, p. 261-262.

¹¹³ Buttin M., *Le « tournant » de 1962 à 1963*, in Gallissot R., *et. al.*, *op. cit.*, p.184.

acquired the character of a revolutionary tool as well. On May 5, a couple of weeks before the legislative elections, the UNFP published a Manifesto stating that:

L'UNFP est l'adversaire déclaré du régime féodal et personnel. L'un de nos objectifs les plus immédiats est d'y mettre fin. C'est la fierté de l'UNFP d'avoir acculé ce régime à se montrer à visage découvert. Il ne s'agit pas de l'améliorer, de l'amender ou de le cautionner, il s'agit de l'avoir. Pas de composition avec ce régime, pas d'union nationale autour de lui.¹¹⁴

However, despite all the efforts of the Palace which aimed at ensuring a strong majority to the FDIC, on May 17, 1963, the IP and UNFP got a fair number of polls. The FDIC won 69 out of 144 seats, while the Istiqlāl and bin Barka's party shared the 56% of the polls together. On top of that, bin Barka was elected in the constituency of Rabat with 90% of the votes.¹¹⁵

The Monarchy faced an unpredictable reality. In July 1963 Ḥassan II ordered a savage campaign of persecutions against hundreds of militants, candidates and leaders of the UNFP, who were arrested, imprisoned and tortured on suspicion of plotting against His Majesty.¹¹⁶

In the same month, the police raided bin Barka's house and confiscated everything: papers, books, photographs, cameras and tapes. On July 19, from Cairo, bin Barka denounced “le pouvoir féodal et personnel qui n'est qu'une dictature policière”.¹¹⁷ The same year he was exiled in Paris and sentenced to death.

It was the beginning of the years of lead: a climate of terror reigned in Morocco where the King tried to gag the parliament and to brutally repress any form of resistance and political opposition.¹¹⁸

After all these events, the King declared the state of emergency which lasted five years, from 1965 to 1970, and it let Ḥassan II to acquire even more power. Indeed, an irreversible phase of decline started for the UNFP. The party stopped its political activities, losing its support among the people and it gradually abandoned its revolutionary spirit.¹¹⁹

Until 1965, from Paris, bin Barka continued to denounce the reactionary regime of Ḥassan II, accusing him of serving neo-colonial interests. He condemned the permanent denial of freedom, the control of the press and the numerous persecutions and death sentences against political opponents.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ Daoud Z., *et al.*, p. 274-286.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

¹¹⁶ Buttin M., *op. cit.*, in Gallissot R., *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p.185.

¹¹⁷ Daoud Z., *et al.*, *op.cit.*, p. 290.

¹¹⁸ Lahbabi M., *op. cit.*, in Gallissot R., *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

¹¹⁹ A'boushi el-H., *op. cit.*, in Catusse M., *et. al.*, *op. cit.*, Available online: <https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/1085#authors>

¹²⁰ Daoud Z., *et al.*, p. 335-336.

The publication of the “Option révolutionnaire” in 1965 was the ultimate answer to the authoritarian rule of the Moroccan monarchy. This essay can be considered the ideological manifesto of bin Barka as it reflects the “tâches fondamentales et à long terme, de notre perspective révolutionnaire”¹²¹ and it formalized a revolutionary project aimed at overthrowing the Monarchy in order to establish a truly democratic republican system.

Moreover, bin Barka played a major role in the Third Worldist fight against Western imperialism in its post-independence phase. While Mūḥammad V and Ḥassan II kept strong relations with France, it was under the guidance of al-Mahdī bin Barka that a number of Moroccan activists of the UNFP embraced the pan-Arab and pan-African struggle against the Western powers. Indeed, the international efforts of bin Barka were shaped by the political changings in the developing world, as the leader of the UNFP started an intense diplomatic activity aimed at forging a series of international political alliances with the leaders of the rising Third World.

On November 1, 1954, the FLN officially declared war to France, receiving immediate support from bin Barka, whose party pledged to provide assistance to the Algerian people. For bin Barka, the Algerian fight for independence had always been of a primary importance as demonstrated by his speech at the 34th congress of the Italian Socialist party, in March 1961, when he argued: “La République algérienne est pour nous, avec la pureté de sa foi révolutionnaire, une réalité vivante (...) elle sera la clé d’un Maghreb libre, démocratique et prospère”.¹²² One year later, in April 1955, bin Barka attended the Bandung Conference in Indonesia, where he emerged as one of the main spokesmen of the non-alignment ideology and his political commitment became ever more emancipated from both the US and the USSR. In 1959, two weeks after the foundation of the UNFP, bin Barka flew to Stockholm where he was able to meet members of the Swedish Social-Democratic Party. After a brief sojourn in Moscow, he was invited by Mao Tsetung to China where he had the chance to study the Chinese rural development policies. On his way back to Morocco, bin Barka met Jawaharlal Nehru in India and he was received by al-Nāṣir in Egypt. Afterwards, he also visited Beirut, where he met Michel ‘Aflaq, leader of the Arab Socialist Ba‘ath Party.¹²³

Thanks to this intense international commitment that made him a globally recognized Third Worldist leader, bin Barka was appointed, in January 1960, as a member of the executive committee of the

¹²¹ Ben Barka M., *op. cit.*, p. 222.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 256.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 230-231.

Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO), founded in 1958, and mostly funded by Egypt, China and the USSR.¹²⁴

On May 6, 1965, on the occasion of the fourth congress of the AAPSO, bin Barka was appointed as president of the Preparatory Committee of the 1966 Tricontinental Conference, that was to take place in Havana, the Cuban capital.¹²⁵ The Tricontinental Conference was one of largest meeting of Third Worldist, anti-imperialist, and anti-capitalist forces around the globe. The Conference is widely considered as the outgrowth of the Afro-Asian solidarity that started at the Bandung Conference in 1955. Nevertheless, the Conference in Havana had explicitly more radical stances, as it pledged to challenge imperialism and capitalism through a violent revolutionary action. Bin Barka himself, during the preparatory work of the Tricontinental argued that this project was an attempt to:

Blend the two great currents of world revolution: that which was born in 1917 with the Russian Revolution, and that which represents the anti-imperialist and national liberation movements of today.¹²⁶

I argue that the organization of the Tricontinental and the publishing of the “Option révolutionnaire” represents two sides of the same coin. In fact, the main purpose of both the Conference in Havana and the last publication of bin Barka was to articulate the necessity of carrying out a global armed struggle against the colonial powers and their allies in the former colonies. Needless to say, this was a direct affront to both Hassan II and Western countries. Therefore, we can argue that bin Barka’s radical stances posed a danger not only to the Moroccan monarchy, but also to all those governments whose political and economic interests could have been threatened by the spread of strong international anti-capitalist forces.

Indeed, on October 29, 1965, before he could take part in the long-awaited Tricontinental, the socialist leader was kidnapped and murdered in Paris through a joint action between the Moroccan and French governments, probably with the technical and logistic support of the American and Israeli secret services.¹²⁷

Concerning the UNFP, with the separation from the UMT, the arrests and repressions of 1963 and with the death of its principal leader, the party was no longer able to make a real stand against the monarchy. Furthermore, the political oppressions and the imprisonments continued even after bin Barka’s death: in the second half of the 1960s the official press of the party was banned and, in 1969,

¹²⁴ Didar F., *Ben Barka, Curiel, la Tricontinentale et la Solidarité afro-asiatique*, in Gallissot R., Kergoat J., *Mehdi Ben Barka. De l'indépendance marocaine à la tricontinentale*, Casablanca, Eddif, 1997, 164-172.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

¹²⁶ “The 1966 Solidarity Conference of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America,” University of Coimbra, accessed May 25, 2020, <https://www.tricontinental50.net/tricontinental-conference/>

¹²⁷ Ben Barka B., *Mehdi ben Barka, mémoire vivante*, in Gallissot R., Kergoat J., *Mehdi Ben Barka. De l'indépendance marocaine à la tricontinentale*, Casablanca, Eddif, 1997, p. 343-349.

193 militants were arrested on charge of “atteinte à la sûreté de l’État”.¹²⁸ In the meantime, the UNFP abandoned its project of political and economic reforms, allowing the central power to grow stronger. Also, as suggested by Waterbury, the country probably lacked of the socio-cultural preconditions for a revolutionary party (after all, “le fellah marocain est toujours défenseur du trône”¹²⁹), and the UNFP gradually lost its supporters¹³⁰.

5. POLITICAL DISSENT DURING THE YEARS OF LEAD

5.1 The USFP and the “option démocratique”

As shown in the last pages, between the 1960s and the 1970s Morocco experienced a period of profound internal stress. These were the years of lead, a time of violent repression against any political opponents, specially the leftist parties, of intense workers' and students' protests and two military coup attempts in 1971 and 1972.¹³¹

Moreover, since the 1980s, for all the Arab countries a period of severe economic crisis began, determined by the end of the oil boom and by the accumulation of unsustainable foreign debts. In order to overcome the crisis, many countries intensified their diplomatic and economic relations with numerous foreign partners, notably with the United States.¹³²

In 1983, Morocco was the first Arab country that signed one of the so-called Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), signing seven agreements with the IMF between the 1980s and the early 1990s. The two financial institutions of Washington offered to the signatories countries the possibility to obtain new loans on condition that they accepted the SAPs, a set of economic reforms aimed at reducing the role of the state in the economy, at strengthening the free market and, last but not least, at allowing the US to play a strategic role in the region, by increasing its political and economic influences.¹³³

On July 22, 1970, in order to overcome the stalemate of its political activity, the UNFP allied with the Istiqlāl. The two parties founded the Kutla Wataniyya (lit. National Bloc), defining a shared framework of action and common goals. However, as A'boushi notes, although the Koutla allowed

¹²⁸ Vermeren P., *Histoire du Maroc depuis l'indépendance*, Paris, Ed. La Découverte, 2002. Kindle Edition.

¹²⁹ It is the thesis of Rémy Leveau, according to which the alliance between the monarchy and the rural elites would be the most powerful resource for the stability of the monarchical power. (Cf. Leveau R., *Le Fellah marocain, défenseur du trône*, Paris, Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1985.)

¹³⁰ Waterbury J., *op. cit.*, p. 259.

¹³¹ Saaf A., “Changement et continuité dans le système politique marocain”, in *LE MAROC AU PRÉSENT : D'une époque à l'autre, une société en mutation*, Dupret B., Rhani Z., Boutaleb A., Ferrié J-N., Centre Jacques-Berque, Fondation du Roi Abdul-Aziz Al Saoud pour les Études Islamiques et les Sciences Humaines, Casablanca, 2015. Available online : <https://books.openedition.org/cjb/1084?lang=it#bodyftn3>

¹³² Paciello M. C., *Introduzione all'economia del mondo arabo*, La Sapienza Orientale – Manuali, Roma, 2010, p. 97.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 98-99

UNFP to come out of its deadlock, the members within the party divided in distinct currents defined by different attitudes towards the unions, political prisoners, the monarchy and, finally, for a general lack of a clear ideological vision.¹³⁴

This situation led, in 1972, to the splitting of the UNFP into two distinct political forces. While the Casablanca faction kept the original name, the Rabat splinter group, headed by ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Bū‘abīd was officially named Union Socialistes des Forces Populaires (USFP) at the Extraordinary party convention in 1975.¹³⁵

The marginalization and political repression of the early 1960s forced the Moroccan socialism to reshape its relations with the King and its own ideology. The issue of “léganisme”, introduced by the Extraordinary convention in 1975, determined the switch from the “option révolutionnaire” to the “option démocratique”, by requiring the compliance with the law and the acceptance of an institutional context inextricably linked to the monarchy. Inevitably, due to the political persecutions and their will to survive as political forces, the opposition parties slowly subjected to the royal authority.¹³⁶

From an ideological point of view, the USFP was explicitly inspired by scientific socialism. It laid great care on the needs of the labours and condemned the growing inequalities between social classes. However, it never aspired to organize the working class into an actual political party. The revolutionary aspirations and the Third World internationalism were abandoned in favour of reformist projects aimed at defending the institutions from the widespread corruption.¹³⁷

The official website of the UNFP, in reference to the Rapport Idéologique of the 1975 Extraordinary Convention, reads as follow:

Les différentes publications du parti, notamment le rapport idéologique issu du congrès exceptionnel de 1975, ont affirmé l’identité socialiste du parti ainsi que le choix de la sociale démocratie comme référence du parti et horizon de son combat politique et social pour atteindre la démocratie et la justice sociale¹³⁸.

Indeed, during the 1970s, by accepting the constitutional monarchy of Ḥassan II and regaining a certain electoral consensus, the USFP was able to participate again in the “democratic process”.

¹³⁴ A'boushi El-H., *op. cit.*, in Catusse M., Karam K., *op. cit.*, Available online:

<https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/1085?lang=it#authors>

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* Available online: <https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/1085?lang=it#authors>

¹³⁶ Khatibi A. *L’alternance et les partis politiques*, 2^{ème} édition, Editions Eddif, Casablanca, 2000, p. 53-54

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 55-56.

¹³⁸ “Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires : Principes et Objectifs”, Official website USFP, accessed October 15, 2019, <http://www.usfp.ma/fr/principes-et-objectifs/>

However, by rejecting the co-optation attempts and by standing against a manipulative and agenda-driven regime, the USFP became the principal opposition force in the Moroccan Parliament.¹³⁹

After the 1977 elections, King Hassan invited the USFP and the IP to join the monarchist parties and the pro-monarchical independents and to form the new government together. However, the USFP refused the offer and decided to remain within the oppositions, a decision that it renewed after the 1984 parliamentary elections.¹⁴⁰

With the support of the majority of parliament, the King proposed two constitutional amendments. However, since these constitutional changes did not provide an actual democratic government, the members of the opposition, namely the USFP and the PPS, opposed to the amendments and boycotted the referendums. Due to their positions, considered excessively radical, the newspapers of the two parties were censored. In response to the King's decision, the USFP publicly protested by withdrawing its members from the parliament.¹⁴¹

As Storm states:

This was an action the King could not ignore, and on 9 October 1981, Hassan II addressed parliament in a speech directed particularly at the USFP, but also at other socialists. In his speech, King Hassan declared that he could not allow an opposition which did not respect the monarchy, which did not respect the laws adopted by the majority and which excluded itself from the Muslim community. According to Hassan II, this kind of actions or positions were unconstitutional, and it was therefore his duty as the Commander of the Faithful, the protector of the Moroccan state, its territory and the Muslim religion, to make clear, like his father had done previously, that under no circumstances could this kind of opposition be allowed.¹⁴²

In spite of these events, the institutional landscape and the relations of powers between the King and the USFP did not change and the socialist members eventually returned to the parliament.¹⁴³

Moreover, in June 1981 a general strike broke out due to the increase of the prices of staple food commodities. This strike was followed by a fierce repression in Casablanca, during which hundreds of citizens were killed. Plus, numerous militants of the USFP and the CDT, a syndicate close to the party, were arrested, and the headquarters of both the union and the party were shut down along with the USFP press organ.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ A'boushi El-H., *op. cit.*, in Catusse M., Karam K., *op. cit.*, Available online:

<https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/1085?lang=it#authors>

¹⁴⁰ Storm L., *op. cit.*, p. 40-42.

¹⁴¹ Santucci J-C, *Maroc: chronique politique*, in *Annuaire de L'Afrique du Nord*, vol. xx/1981, Paris: Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, 1982, p. 582.

¹⁴² Storm L., *op. cit.*, p. 44.

¹⁴³ Santucci J-C, *Maroc: chronique politique*, in *Annuaire de L'Afrique du Nord*, vol. xx/1981, Paris: Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, 1985, p. 226.

¹⁴⁴ www.usfp.ma/ تاريخ-الحزب/: Tārīk al-Ittiḥād al-Iṣtirākī li-l-Quwāt al-Ša'biyya

Furthermore, during the 1980s, the USFP objected to the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programs imposed by the IMF, opposing to an extreme privatization of the public sector and to an uncontrolled liberalisation of the market.¹⁴⁵

In sum, at least up to the 1990s, the relationship between the USFP and the monarchy was often the cause of conflicts, struggles and mutual disagreements. However, the political dissent from the 1970s onwards was exercised within the institutional monarchical framework without almost never overcoming “the limits of dissidence allowed by the Monarchy”¹⁴⁶ and without really questioning the royal authority.

As underlined by El Maslouhi:

Les parlementaires USFP exerçaient une certaine forme d’opposition pacifique, de dialogue à distance avec le pouvoir royal, au moment où leurs chevilles ouvrières – syndicat (CDT) et mouvement étudiant (UNEM) – prenaient le chemin de la mobilisation protestataire.¹⁴⁷

This political aspect should not be underestimated. Even though the USFP probably did not experience a deep process of co-optation before the 1990s, the institutionalization of the party itself represents a first key step in its evolution from main opposition party to major ruling force in 1998.

In any case, as underlined by A'boushi, political contrasts within the party emerged very soon. Specifically, the political and institutional participation was a decisive cause of divisions. In fact, since the foundation of the party, a large part of the militants opposed the political and institutional participation by denouncing the fake democratic system designed to handle and control the various political forces.¹⁴⁸

On May 3, 1983, following a dispute between the USFP political office and the USFP administrative committee, a new political force split up, the Parti de l'Avant-garde Démocratique et Socialiste (PADS), which I will discuss in more details in the next chapters.

However, between the 1970s and 1990s, the USFP was allowed to participate in the institutional life of the country as main opposition force, by getting rid of the opposing currents and by restoring its relations with the monarchy. Moreover, it was able to increase its electoral support by rooting again

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Szmolka I., “Party system fragmentation in Morocco”, *The Journal of North African Studies*, Taylor & Francis Group, 2010, p. 17-20.

¹⁴⁷ El Maslouhi A., “La gauche marocaine, défenseure du trône. Sur les métamorphoses d’une opposition institutionnelle”, in *L’Année du Maghreb*, V | 2009, 37-58.

¹⁴⁸ A'boushi El-H., *op. cit.*, in Catusse M., Karam K., *op. cit.*, Available online: <https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/1085?lang=it#authors>

among the masses. Indeed, in the legislative elections of 1984, whilst remaining opposition party, the USFP managed to obtain the 36% of the votes¹⁴⁹.

5.2 The PPS and the far-left movements

With respect to the Moroccan Communist Party, the party founded by ‘Alī Ya‘tah in 1945 was banned several times between the end of the protectorate and the first years of independence. The PCM officially reappeared in 1968 under the name of Parti de la Libération et du Socialisme (PLS) and it was banned again the following year for having claimed its connections with the international communist movement too openly.¹⁵⁰

In 1970, a split among the PLS led to the foundation of the Marxist-Leninist organization Ilā al-Amām (En Avant). This far-left movement, founded by Abrahām Serfātī, leading militant of the communist party, remained illegal and continued its political actions clandestinely facing violent repressions by the regime.¹⁵¹

On May 24, 1974, the outbreak of a national campaign in support of the annexation of the Sahara under Spanish control, ‘Alī Ya‘tah wrote to Ḥassan II expressing his support for the reclaim of the colonized territories. On August 27, 1974, the King allowed the communist militants to re-establish the party under the name of Parti du Progrès et du Socialisme (PPS), which became the most important Moroccan socialist party alongside the USFP.¹⁵²

However, according to Majid, the PPS had an extremely contradictory structure since its foundation. While maintaining relations with the international communist movement and striving to maintain an electoral base between workers and peasants, the party quickly abandoned any kind of revolutionary perspective, opting for a reformist, monarchical and chauvinist political strategy.¹⁵³

Moreover, in the early 1970s, various strikes and student struggles led to the creation of few Marxist-Leninist movements. Among the most relevant, the abovementioned Ilā al-Amām and the 23 March Movement became the actual leaders of the communist students.¹⁵⁴

Following the widespread protests of February 1970, fearing the influence that the socialist parties exerted on the student organizations, the King harshly repressed the protesters, using both violence and the manipulation of some leaders of the UNEM and member of the UNFP and PLS.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., Available online: <https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/1085?lang=it#authors>

¹⁵⁰ Majid M., *op. cit.*, p. 76.

¹⁵¹ Vermeren P., *op. cit.*, Kindle Edition.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, Kindle Edition.

¹⁵³ Majid M., *op. cit.*, p. 78.

¹⁵⁴ Vermeren P., *op. cit.*, Kindle Edition.

¹⁵⁵ Majid M., *op. cit.*, p. 41.

Starting from that moment, due to the intense torture and imprisonment campaigns, the militants of the Marxist-Leninist movements were forced to operate clandestinely. However, the status of illegal movements did not prevent them to carry out their fights.¹⁵⁶

Between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, once they were released from prison, some of these militants engaged again in the political activities: sometimes illegally, other times in human rights associations or even in proper political parties.

For instance, the Organisation de l'Action Démocratique Populaire (OADP) was a political leftist party founded in 1983 by Mūḥammad bin Sa'īd 'Ayt Iddar, that involved numerous former militants of the 23 March Movement. After a first stage of open and radical opposition to the monarchy (for instance, by supporting the self-determination of the Western Sahara), the party was officially legalized and it managed to become part of the institutional framework of the country as an opposition force. As I will show in the next chapter, the contrast against the monarchy surely emerged in 1996 when the OADP did not endorse the new constitution promulgated by King Ḥassan II. On that occasion, a large part of the members left the party in order to create the Parti Social-Démocrate (PSD), thereby approaching the monarchy and joining the new government.¹⁵⁷

6. CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, I would like to comment some crucial elements that emerged in this first chapter and that will undoubtedly help us to better understand the contemporary Moroccan political framework.

First of all, I showed that the European right-left categories can certainly be used in order to describe the Moroccan political scene and its actors. Moreover, I considered how these two categories were somehow inherited from the French protectorate and how they kept spreading in the aftermath of the independence. After 1956, some prominent intellectuals and political figures, *in primis* bin Barka, were able to create new political forces strongly linked to Western ideologies and adapted to the Moroccan socio-political context.

Furthermore, in the specific case of Morocco, beside adopting the classical socialist stances of the European parties, the UNFP was the main political group that opposed to the King. It promoted institutional democratization and socio-economic reforms and it was basically the only political force that fought the monarchical institution and the strongly corrupt system of power around it, the Makhzen.

¹⁵⁶ Majid M., *op. cit.*, p. 42-43.

¹⁵⁷ Vairel F., *Politique et mouvements sociaux au Maroc. La révolution désamorcée?*, Les Presses de Sciences Po, 2014, Kindle Edition.

Starting from the end of the 1960s, the socialist party abandoned its revolutionary positions, becoming part of the institutional framework tolerated by Hassan II. However, it maintained its role as main opposition party, continuing to counteract the monarchy whenever the exercise of power of the King was being too despotic.

As I will discuss in the next chapter, in the late 1980s, different political forces started to suffer deep internal splits as some members began to reconsider the power struggles and their relationships with the regime. Especially, and that is quintessential, the moderate parliamentarians inside the USFP, took into consideration a gradual approach and cooperation with the monarchy.

Even though this current remained outnumbered for a few years, a progressive ideological change and new political tactics were emerging. During the 1980s, the USFP, revolutionary party under bin Barka and reformist force in the 1970s, was slowly abandoning its stances of radical opponent of the regime opting for a more compromise and collaborative solution.¹⁵⁸

As we shall see in the next pages, these changes brought the USFP to become, in 1998, the principal ruling force in the so-called “gouvernement de l’alternance”.

¹⁵⁸ Storm L., *op. cit.*, p. 52.

CHAPTER TWO

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1980s, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the triumph of liberalism, profound changes were brought in the European political landscape. In particular, 1989 is now considered as a watershed for European socialism and for the political action of the European leftists, in terms of both communist and socialist parties.

By the end of the World War II, the socialist parties were a growing and dynamic forces, as they had a pivotal role in the European political processes. The USSR, thanks to its victory in the world conflict and to its military power, dominated in the Eastern Europe while in the rest of the European countries the socialist parties profoundly changed the boundaries of the political life. Indeed, they were asking for basic social rights and they were trying to give voice to all the marginalized and unrepresented groups; they reformed the parties structure and they tried to extend the role of the State in order to fulfil their extensive economic and social welfare agenda.

Nonetheless, despite the great contribution of socialist parties in promoting and spreading social democratic principles such as welfare, educational provision and state intervention in the economy, even prior the 1990s most leftist parties went from being radical reformers to defenders of the status quo.¹⁵⁹

Definitely, after the collapse of the USSR, the legacy of the communist rule became a real burden for the politics of the European left, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. Hence, in many countries, communist parties took the socialist label while the non-communist leftists started to call themselves social democrats.

The political upheavals, together with the main economic transformations, paved the way to a capitalistic restoration process that had serious social repercussions worldwide. In Europe, the anti-capitalist forces saw their influence totally crushed by the new liberal and capitalist agenda: it became increasingly difficult for them to organize and lead social struggles, and the leftist parties experienced a phase of profound ideological disorientation that affected their evolution up to the present day.¹⁶⁰

During the 1990s, the role and the political activities of the leftist movements and parties changed dramatically. For instance, as claimed by Musto, Tony Blair¹⁶¹'s "Third Way" is a notable example

¹⁵⁹ Lemke C., Marks, G., *The crisis of socialism in Europe*, Duke University Press, 1992, p. 1-21

¹⁶⁰ Musto M., "The Post-1989 Radical Left in Europe", *Results and Prospects, Socialism and Democracy*, Vol, 31 n. 2, 2017, p. 1-32

¹⁶¹ Tony Blair was Labour Party leader in 1994 and UK prime minister between 1997 and 2007

of the ideological and political shift experienced by the Socialist International, since it implied a “supine acceptance of the neoliberal mantra masked by vacuous exaltation of the new”¹⁶² that was welcomed and supported by numerous European socialist parties, as in Germany, Portugal and Italy.

These governments carried out a set of measures and economic reforms aimed at liberalizing and opening the market to foreign investors, privatizations policies, attacks on welfare, salary and public expenditure cuts and further precariousness in labour relations.

This metamorphosis of the European social democracy took place due to an uncritical adhesion to liberalism and its principles and it showed that the events of 1989 involved not only the communist camp, but also all the socialist forces. In fact, the leftist parties renounced to any demand for radical reforms thereby losing all their main characteristics through which they emerged after World War II.

The economy started to dominate over the political sphere while the economic system and the neoliberal agenda were no longer questioned by the leftist movements that instead started to conceive them as unsusceptible to any change.

In recent years, the political and economic crisis, along with the austerity measures imposed by the European Commission and the lack of strong political forces capable of representing workers and subaltern classes gave rise to various populist, xenophobic and far-right forces while they very rarely led to the emergence of a new left truly alternative to the neoliberal system.

Nevertheless, the next paragraphs will show that the crisis of European socialism was never confined to the EU countries. The global crisis of Marxism and the lack of a strong reference point for the leftist forces spread to the Middle East as well. The American and European political and economic influence in the region undermined the socialist experiences of the Arab countries and it weakened the leftist parties that abandoned a dogmatic Marxism drifting towards liberalism, thereby accepting the new economic system in place.¹⁶³

2. RISE AND FALL OF SOCIALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The circulation and strengthening of Marxist ideas in the Middle East date back to the late Ottoman era and it was clearly part of a global process of diffusion of the communist ideology which had considerable local repercussions.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Musto M., *op. cit.*, p. 3

¹⁶³ Haugbolle S., Sing, M., “New approaches to Arab left histories”, *The Arab Studies Journal* Vol. 24, 2016 n. 1 p. 90-97

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

In particular, socialist thought spread in the Arab world in the early 1900s, following the publication of al-Ištirākīyya (Socialism) the first work in Arabic on the subject authored by the Egyptian Salāma Mūsā.¹⁶⁵

After World War I, several parties and leftist movements emerged in Iran, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq and they were regularly repressed by local governments with the support of Britain and France. However, various leftist forces reorganized after World War II. In this phase, the regimes and political elites sought to monopolize access to resources and means of producing wealth and aimed at attracting foreign investors and military powers in order to repress any form of socialism, communism or “any element calling for democracy and land reform, including liberal, left-of-centre and other reformist groups and movements”.¹⁶⁶

Between the two world conflicts, two variants of the left spread, a Stalinist component, close to the Soviet Union, and a populist nationalist one.¹⁶⁷

In the east, Stalinism influenced the Syrian and Lebanese Communist Parties while a group of Palestinian and Syrian Lebanese intellectuals inspired by the British New Left of the late 1950s declared themselves against Moscow and opposed to the Arab socialism of al-Nāšir and the Ba'ath Party. This anti-USSR current was called the New Arab Left and led the formation of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and to the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Communist Party-Political Bureau in Syria, and the Organization for Communist Action in Lebanon.¹⁶⁸

However, the most successful current of socialism in the Middle East was the so-called "Arab socialism" (al-Ištirākīyya al-‘arabīyya), the result of the fusion of pan-Arabism ideas and the socialist doctrine. The Arab socialism rejected the atheist and internationalist character of the European socialism, enhancing Arab cultural characteristics.¹⁶⁹

The term “Arab socialism” was coined by Michel ‘Aflaq to distinguish the new ideology from Marxist socialism. In 1947, in Damascus, Michel ‘Aflaq, together with Zaki Arsūzī and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Bītār founded the Ba'ath party, the highest expression of Arab socialism.

¹⁶⁵ Minganti P., *I movimenti politici arabi*, Ubaldini Editore, Roma, 1971, p. 86-113

¹⁶⁶ Halperin S., “The post-cold war political topography of the Middle East: prospects for democracy”, *Third World Quarterly*, 26:7, 2005.

¹⁶⁷ Achcar G., “L’evoluzione de la gauche arabe au XXe siècle : crise, marginalisation et perspectives” in Table Ronde – La gauche et les révolutions arabes, *Contretemps Revue de Critique Communiste*, 2012. Available online : <http://www.contretemps.eu/table-ronde-la-gauche-et-les-revolutions-arabes/?-gauche-revolutions-arabes>

¹⁶⁸ Haugbolle S. *et al.*, *op. cit.*

¹⁶⁹ Minganti P., *op. cit.*

Arab socialism was perceived as the necessary consequence of Arab unity and national independence and as the only socio-economic model capable of overcoming the colonial rule. For these reasons, it focused on both revolt and emancipation from European exploitation.

Furthermore, although Arab socialism embraced the economic and social programs of Marxist socialism, it highlighted the pivotal role of the traditional Arab values and practices such as private property and inheritance law. Ba'athist socialism also refused materialistic atheism and any form of class struggle, as it considered it a factor of useless internal division and conflict.¹⁷⁰

Nevertheless, after the collapse of the USSR and with the outbreak of the first Gulf War, the left in the Arab region experienced a phase of deep shock. The 1990s were a period of sharp decline for all the socialist groups whose crisis cleared the way to the Islamist and fundamentalist movements that started to occupy the social and political vacuum left by the leftists.¹⁷¹

By the mid-1990s, numerous Marxist intellectuals and political activists left their political parties to become “free-floating intellectuals”¹⁷² and most of them experienced a decades-long ideological disorientation brought by the new economic order and increasing US interests in the region.

Indeed, even before the end of the Cold War, since the Camp David agreements, the US started to play a much greater role in the Middle East. After 1989 and after the first Gulf War (1990-1991) the US became the only power that enforced its political hegemony and capitalist imperialism in the region as its influence became crucial in almost all the Arab countries, from North Africa to the Gulf.¹⁷³

Several researchers, such as Sing, pointed out that Arab communists and socialists never formed a single and homogenous force. Moreover, they somehow started to gradually adopt a liberal vocabulary beginning from the end of the 1960s. Certainly, after the end of the Cold War the situation could only get worse as it became necessary for Marxist politicians and thinkers to look further out for potential political allies, among them liberals and Islamists.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Achcar G., *op. cit.*

¹⁷² Haugbolle S. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 95

¹⁷³ Mercuri M., Torelli S., *La primavera araba: origini ed effetti delle rivolte che stanno cambiando il Medio Oriente*, Vita e Pensiero Editore, 2012, p. 23-24.

¹⁷⁴ Sing M., *Arab Post-Marxists after Disillusionment: Between Liberal Newspeak and Revolution Reloaded*, in *Arab Liberal Thought after 1967: Old dilemmas, new perceptions*, ed. Hatina M., Schumann C., New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 155-175.

Sing claims that as early as in the 1970s, between liberal ideas and Marxist doctrine numerous confluences started to emerge. Therefore, according to the author, the rapprochement between liberals and socialists after 1989 was quite predictable.

Referring to the Middle East, Sing identifies two post-Marxist strands in the political and philosophical field after 1989. A first current, closer to the principles of classical Marxist doctrine, and another one more liberal, open to collaborate with other political forces and thereby emptied from its radical and reformist stances.¹⁷⁵

The next pages show that this was exactly the case of the USFP in Morocco. By accepting to lead the new government in 1998, the USFP became the strongest party in the country as well as the leader of its coalition, the Koutla.

However, at the beginning of the 1990s, the USFP militants were already severely divided due to an internal disagreement within the party itself: the so-called radicals claimed their duty to totally break with the existing authoritarian political system while the opposed wing of the moderates supported the need to collaborate with other political forces, including the monarchy. What is interesting it is that only in 1993, when Ḥassan II asked the USFP to join the government, the non-rupturists wing, including ‘Abd al-Rāḥmān al-Yūsūfi, leader of the party, supported the King's offer by sustaining the possibility to change the political regime from within.

Though, the radical wing proved to be stronger than the non-rupturist one and the party decided not to cooperate with the monarchy and the other loyalist forces.¹⁷⁶ However, just five years later, the moderate wing, willing to compromise with the regime, strengthened and gained control of the party, considering that the USFP not only joined the new government, but it led it through the person of al-Yūsūfi as prime minister of the country.¹⁷⁷

3. THE MOROCCAN LEFTIST IN THE 1990s

3.1 The 1993 and 1996 constitutions

The 1990s were a period of major reform programs and significant political openness for Morocco, at least compared to the years of lead.¹⁷⁸ At international level, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the polarization between US capitalist liberalism and Soviet communism, Morocco's international allies, notably the US and France, pushed the country towards a process of political

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ Santucci J.C., *Maroc : chronique intérieure 1993*, in *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord*, vol. xxxii/1993, Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, Paris, 1994, p. 515.

¹⁷⁷ Storm L., *op. cit.*, p. 121.

¹⁷⁸ ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Bakū, “Dawr al-mu’assasa al-malikiyya fī ‘ihlāl al-tawāzun al-siyāsī fī al-maḡrib”, (‘Uṭrūḥha li-niil al-duktūrāh fī al-qānūn al-‘aam, kulliyya al-huqūq), jāmi‘a Muhammad al-Khāmis, al-Ribāt, 2001-2002, p. 371

reform, economic openness and further democratization. It is remarkable that the US and EU concerns for human rights respect in the country arose after having consciously supported the constant repression against the political rivals, especially the socialist militants, in the previous decades.¹⁷⁹

At the beginning of the Gulf War (1990-1991), Morocco adopted a pro-Western position. Nonetheless, the regime's stances sparked a large upswell of public discontent against the military intervention in Iraq which led to an important popular demonstration in Rabat in February 1991.¹⁸⁰

The protest was supported by the islamist movements that were still out of monarchical control. Indeed, during the 1990s the islamists managed to intercept a generalized dissatisfaction and they started to acquire considerable socio-political significance.¹⁸¹

The Moroccan regime was facing a potential political challenge that probably pushed it to pursue a further process of facade-liberalization of the political system by opening up to the oppositions and by attempting to bring the leftists within the government.¹⁸²

Furthermore, at the beginning of the decade, another major event in the Moroccan political landscape was undoubtedly the establishment of the Koutla alliance, officially formed in spring 1992. The Koutla consisted of the Istiqlāl, the USFP, the PPS, the OADP, the Confédération Démocratique du Travail (CDT) and the Union Générale des Travailleurs du Maroc (UGTM). Nonetheless, the two main parties were the Istiqlāl and the USFP which, in the early 1990s, still played a subordinate role.¹⁸³

Storm identifies two fundamental reasons behind the forming of the Koutla. Firstly, there was probably a certain willingness to pursue both institutional and constitutional democratization processes. In the second place, following the 1983 municipal elections and the 1984 parliamentary elections, it became clear that the leftist parties had been outwitted, as the number of centre and centre-right parties had grown substantially, isolating the oppositions by preventing them to get into the parliament.¹⁸⁴

The reform process launched by the King formally began with the proposal for a new constitution in 1992. However, despite the 1992 changes included some of the claims and demands of the Koutla,

¹⁷⁹ Tawfīq 'abd al-Sādiq, ḥaraka 20 fibrāyir bi-l-maḡrib: dirāsa fi siyāqāt al-taḥarruk wa buniyya al-ḥaraka, fi al-mustaqbal al-'arabī, al-sana 41, al-'adad 464, 'āb 201

¹⁸⁰ Zoubir Y. H., "Reactions in the Maghreb to the Gulf Crisis and War", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 15, N. 1, Winter 1993, p. 83-103.

¹⁸¹ Storm L., *op. cit.*, p. 75.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Storm L., *op. cit.*, p. 55-57.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

the opposition members were largely dissatisfied, especially for the problem of the independence of the governments and their actual power. As a result, most of the Koutla parties pushed their members to boycott the constitutional referendum.¹⁸⁵

However, and this is possibly the most relevant political aspect, the boycott was not unanimous and the Koutla faced a serious problem of internal divisions that emerged not only among allies but within the parties as well. For instance, the leadership of the PPS immediately suggested its supporters to participate in the constitutional referendum by supporting the new constitution; indeed, they voted together with the loyalist parties and they approached the monarchical positions.¹⁸⁶

With respect to the internal divisions of the parties, the USFP suffered from deep internal fractures that led the party to split into two wings, a radical and uncompromising one, that included the grassroots, and another moderate wing represented by the older generation that was now willing to collaborate with the monarchy. This division emerged clearly during the 1992 constitutional referendum as the moderate fringe of the USFP opposed the official directive of the party and advised its supporters to take part in the referendum.¹⁸⁷

In June 1993, few months after the approval of the new constitution, new presidential elections took place. As a reaction to the Koutla, the so-called administrative parties set up their own coalition, known as Wifaq (Entente) composed of three parties: the Constitutional Union (UC), the Popular Movement (MP) and the *Partie De la Démocratie Nationale* (PDN). In the wake of the vote, the pro-monarchical party UC won the elections by getting the majority of seats and becoming the major party in the Parliament.¹⁸⁸

However, the remarkable performances of the USFP and *Istiqlāl* led King Ḥassan II to engage in dialogue with the opposition parties asking the Koutla to join the new government. Nevertheless, both parties rejected his proposal. The reason behind their refusal was substantially linked to the lack of independence of the governments that were totally subordinated to the power of the King, who controlled all the key “ministries of sovereignty”.¹⁸⁹

Within the Koutla there were strong contrasts between members as to whether or not accepting the governmental participation. A group of militants and opposition forces opposed the Koutla's

¹⁸⁵ García B., *Marruecos Político: Cuarenta años de procesos electorales (1960–2000)*, Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, Madrid, 2000, p. 169

¹⁸⁶ جنان سعدون عبد و سميرة عبد الرزاق العاني، المراجعة الدستورية لعامي 1992 و 1996 ودور حزب التقدم والاشتراكية فيها، جامعة بغداد، ٢٠١٨، ص ١١-١

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Storm L., *op. cit.*, p. 68

¹⁸⁹ Daadaoui M., “Rituals of Power and Political Parties in Morocco: Limited Elections as Positional Strategies”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 46:2, 195-219, DOI, 2010, p. 195-2019

involvement in the government with the other political parties, a choice that, from their perspective, would have necessarily led to the emergence of an undemocratic rule. On the contrary, a number of politicians, especially members of the USFP, believed that the Koutla should have participated in the formation of the new government with the specific purpose of playing a role in the implementation of democratization processes.¹⁹⁰

Concerning the position of the USFP leader, ‘Abd al-Rāḥmān al-Yūsūfi resigned as party leader few days after the election results. However, the reasons behind his resignation are not totally clear. According to some scholars, such as Layachi, al-Yūsūfi’s resignation reflected the dissatisfaction with the regime, which intervened to manipulate the elections and the result of the ballot box. According to Layachi, al-Yūsūfi considered a compromise with the King a wrong strategy that would not have led to a real fulfilment of democratic demands.¹⁹¹

However, I believe that such approach fails to address the actual causes behind al-Yūsūfi’s decision. García, for instance, claims that the socialist leader resigned from the leadership and voluntarily self-exiled in France due to a disappointment with his own party. Al-Yūsūfi stood up against the radical wing that dominated the USFP, as he believed that compromising with the regime was the best strategy for achieving democracy. Finally, I maintain that the events of 1998 prove García right. In fact, just five years later, the USFP led by al-Yūsūfi opted for a strategy of complete cooperation with the monarchy, leading the new government after the 1997 elections.¹⁹²

Even before 1993, the USFP and the Istiqlāl came forward to the King with a series of requests relating in particular to the role and powers of the government in the political life. Considering these claims a *condictio sine qua non* to operate democratically and independently, the two opposing parties refused to participate in any government before their demands were truly satisfied. Among these requests there was the possibility to form a strong, homogeneous and united government as well as the right, for the Koutla-affiliated prime minister, to appoint the key ministers, including the Interior Minister, the Minister of Justice the Minister of Religious Affairs and also the Minister of Foreign Affairs.¹⁹³

Since these requests were not met in 1993, the USFP and the Istiqlāl refused to participate in the government. However, as mentioned above, only five years later both the parties accepted to join the government despite the totally unaltered reality. Therefore, as Storm points out, it is not surprising

¹⁹⁰ Storm L., *op. cit.*, p. 69

¹⁹¹ Layachi A., *State, Society and Democracy in Morocco: The limits of associative life*, The Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, Washington DC, 1999, p. 86

¹⁹² Garcia B., *op. cit.*, p. 194

¹⁹³ Layachi A., *op. cit.*

that several political commentators supported the idea that, by leading the new government in 1998, the USFP and the Istiqlāl “had abandoned their principles and were eager to get their hands on the political power”.¹⁹⁴

In summer 1996, the King drafted the text of a new constitution. Once again, the Koutla had to make the difficult decision on whether to approve the new constitution since many of their requests were not considered. After some deliberations, the Koutla concluded that, even though the new text did not guarantee the independence and effective power of the government, the alliance would have supported the new constitution, considering it a certain improvement compared to the past one.¹⁹⁵

However, the OADP, a member of Koutla, did not support the new constitution promulgated by King Hassan II. On that occasion, most of the members left the party and founded a new force, the Parti Social-Démocrate (PSD), thus approaching the positions of the monarchy and its loyal parties.¹⁹⁶

From the political developments around the approval of the 1993 and 1996 constitution we can draw some conclusions. First of all, a political party is not necessarily a homogeneous, cohesive and coherent entity. Different factions and opinions can arise and the balance of power among the members can actually change pretty quickly. In the second place, since the beginning of the decade numerous socialist members, in the PPS and in the OADP as much as in the USFP, started to be coopted by the regime, meaning that they were no longer seeking for a radical mutation of the political system but they were more than willing to accept the terms and conditions imposed by the monarchy in order to gain real institutional power.

How far these stances were actually shared by all the members, including the local activists outside the Parliament, or just an expression of the desires of the leadership it is hard to say. Nevertheless, it is beyond any doubt that in few years the decision-makers within the party, with the actual power of driving the internal forces, had been totally coopted by the King and they were now ready to head a government.

4. THE AL-YŪSŪFI GOVERNMENT

4.1 The outcome of the 1997 elections

As far as the opposition-monarchy relations are concerned, the main pivotal moment were surely the 1997 elections. These were held on November 14, 1997 and the Koutla won 102 of the 359 seats in the Assembly of Representatives. Indeed, the outcome was a victory for the USFP that alone won 57

¹⁹⁴ Storm L., *op. cit.*, p. 70

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73

¹⁹⁶ Garcia B., *op. cit.*, p. 2010-2011

seats, thereby becoming the largest party in the Lower House as well as the strongest party within the coalition.¹⁹⁷

After weeks of speculations, in the early February 1998, King Ḥassan II finally made public that the next government would be led by ‘Abd al-Rāḥmān al-Yūsūfi, leader of the USFP.¹⁹⁸ By appointing al-Yūsūfi as prime minister, Ḥassan II broke the tradition and chose to base the new government on traditional opposition parties, thereby starting the so-called alternance. Storm underlines various reasons that might have made the appointment of a socialist Premier a win-win situation for the King: for instance, pushing the Koutla to join the government was likely to be an attempt of weakening the opposition parties, making them co-responsible for the regime's actions. I consider the fact that Ḥassan II had already invited the parties to join the government after the elections of 1977, 1984 and 1993 as a clear evidence of this point.¹⁹⁹

In fact, the notion of alternance became common starting from the early 1990s, during the debate that eventually led to the adoption of the 1993 and the 1996 constitution.²⁰⁰ King Ḥassan was a major supporter of the concept, which he introduced in an attempt to co-opt the re-emerging Koutla. In other words, the alternance was used to describe the King's determination to the formation of a government based on any possible coalition of political parties in the parliament, including the leftists and the opposition.²⁰¹ To some degree, the parliamentary elections of 1997 were expected to lead to the creation of such a government in order to demonstrate the King's sincere commitment to the alternance-practice. By pushing the Koutla to lead the government, Ḥassan II gave voters and international observers the impression of having been the key figure behind the process of democratization initiated by the alternance.

As far as the USFP is concerned, among the main factors behind the reinforcement of the non-rupturist wing after the 1993 elections there certainly was the changing context at a domestic and international level. As aforementioned, during the 1990s, following the first Gulf War and an international greater emphasis on democracy and human rights, King Ḥassan II started a series of reforms mainly concerning the respect of fundamental rights in Morocco and the status of basic civil liberties. While the monarch announced a new phase of increased democratic openness, what his programs were really missing was an actual structural reform of the overall political system. In fact, the King always prevented the implementation of a real democratization process that would ensure

¹⁹⁷ Joffé G., “The Moroccan political system after the elections”, *Mediterranean Politics*, 3:3, 1998, p. 106-125,

¹⁹⁸ Mossadeq F., “Abderrahmane El Youssoufi: Le parcours politique”, *L’Economiste*, 5 February 1998, available online <https://leconomiste.com/article/abderrahmane-el-youssoufi-le-parcours-politique>

¹⁹⁹ Storm L., *op. cit.*, p. 117

²⁰⁰ Tredano A., *L’Alternance : Du Consensus aux Urnes*, El Maarif El Jadida, Rabat, 2000, p. 8

²⁰¹ García B., *op. cit.*, p. 203

the preservation and enforcement of two major fundamental democratic principles, free and fair elections and an independent government.²⁰²

Notwithstanding the fact that the choice of taking part in the government was probably taken exclusively by the leadership of the party, as the USFP actually lacked of real internal democracy, it is conceivable that a certain part of the militants were aiming at joining the government in order to genuinely be part of the political change.

However, the leading role that the King offered to the USFP should not be overlooked. Indeed, by playing the role of major ruling party and head of the alternance government, the Socialist Union would have overshadowed and subjected the Istiqlāl, both within the Koutla and in the actual ministries. In sum, the possibility to gain real institutional power, especially within its own alliance, as well as the chance to rule over the other parties seem to be few of the main motives for which the USFP agreed to join and lead the alternance government. After all, as Storm states, “it did not seem to matter to the USFP that in the first government formed after the 1997 parliamentary elections, key ministers would continue to be appointed by the King, and several of them would continue to be reserved for loyalist technocrats sourced from outside of parliament – in short, the main reason why the party declined government participation in 1993 continued to exist, yet, this time around the party did not seem to mind; USFP priorities had changed”.²⁰³

For the leader of the USFP and new prime minister, ‘Abd al-Rāḥmān al-Yūsūfi was born in Tangier in 1924. He studied law in France between the 1940s and the 1950s and he was part of the Moroccan national movement during the French protectorate. In 1959, three years after independence, he joined the bin Barka-led UNFP. During the 1960s, following the repressions and arrests faced by the USFP militants, al-Yūsūfi fled to France and returned to his homeland only after 1980. Twelve years later, in 1992, following the death of ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Bū‘abīd, he became secretary-general of the USFP.²⁰⁴

4.2 The King’s strategy

As Joffe points out, the King made sure that while the newspapers and the international actors welcomed the “gouvernement de l’alternance” as evidence of an authentic democratization process, the regime could ensure a way more substantial continuity of the political practices.²⁰⁵

Indeed, Ḥassan II maintained his prerogative to appoint the ministers of Justice, Religious Affairs, and Interior. In addition to this, the Koutla also renounced the Foreign Affairs portfolio as the price

²⁰² Storm L., *op. cit.*, p. 118-121

²⁰³ Storm L., *op. cit.*, p. 122

²⁰⁴ Joffé G., *op. cit.* p. 106-125

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

for obtaining the governmental power. Continuity was maintained for all these four ministries were headed by ministers of previous governments. This means that the alternance government did not only consist of members of the opposition, but the loyalist parties joined the government as well. The RNI collected six portfolios, both the MNP and FFD obtained two ministries while the PSD obtained only one. Hence, the political and socio-economic interests of the Moroccan elites were preserved, as the new government was never truly able to carry out any radical reform.²⁰⁶

Nowadays, there seems to be a general consensus on what are considered the main reasons behind the choice of Ḥassan II to push the USFP to participate in the government. Firstly, by accepting a leading role in the government the USFP would be part of the system and therefore share responsibilities for the acts committed by the regime. In the second place, the party would have to moderate its positions and to give up its fundamental demands, thereby becoming more easily manageable by the King. Thirdly, for the influence of the other centre-right and monarchical parties, the USFP would have necessarily moved towards the centre, losing its socialist stances.²⁰⁷

Likewise, Ḥassan II warned the leaders of the USFP that if they refused to take part in the government, the offer would be given to the Wifaq members. Therefore, there would have been no participation of the Koutla in the new government and the USFP would have been the solely responsible for the failure of the alternance and the much-trumpeted democratization process.²⁰⁸

A further reason for King Ḥassan to invite the Koutla members to join the government was to weaken the alliance by pitting the two main parties, the USFP and the Istiqlāl, against each other. Firstly, following al-Yūsūfi's acceptance to lead the government, the Istiqlāl had no choice but to follow the ally despite publicly questioning the poll outcome and asking for the elections to be hold again. Obviously, there was no possibility that the Istiqlāl would let the USFP become Koutla's only representative in the new alliance government. Additionally, King Ḥassan gave most of the governing posts to the USFP, thirteen out of forty-one compared to the six of the Istiqlāl, something that seemed natural since the USFP was the largest party in the House of Representatives. However, the decision deeply hurt the pride of the members of Istiqlāl who was largely considered the dominant party within the Koutla.²⁰⁹

By enhancing the role of the USFP, both within the alliance and the government, the King achieved another of his goals: indeed, the Monarch provided the right conditions which made it possible to

²⁰⁶ Joffé G., *op. cit.* p. 106-125

²⁰⁷ Storm L., *op. cit.*, p. 119

²⁰⁸ Tredano A., *op. cit.*, p. 65

²⁰⁹ García B., *op. cit.*, p. 245

create an unstable and weak government, constantly undermined by the intra-governmental rivalry between the two parties.

Indeed, one of the main strategic move of the Palace was to make the USFP-led government, supposedly the most independent and democratic one in the history of Morocco, weak and unable to achieve its headline targets. As Storm points out, “If it [the government] was to perform as badly - or perhaps even worse than previous governments - then how could further democratization in the direction of parliamentary democracy be in the interest of the population?”²¹⁰

To sum up, ensuring the fragility of the USFP government by including a large number of different parties and through an unequal distribution of the ministerial offices, King Ḥassan achieved his major victory. On one hand, he publicly fulfilled his promise to form an alternance government led by his main political opponent, popularizing the illusion of a democratic and liberal monarchy; on the other hand, he protected the future of that very monarchy, making parliamentary democracy seems like an unrealistic option.

4.3 A weak government

Nowadays, given the abovementioned political context and due to the precautions taken by Ḥassan II, there is a general agreement about considering that the USFP-led government achieved few and negative results, far removed from what the Moroccan people were expecting.

According to Tredano, the Youssoufi government tried to pass new laws aimed at enhancing transparency of the public and private sector, a new legislation on the microcredit and new labour code. Nonetheless, despite some efforts to improve the economy and the situation of marginalized and poor social groups, such as women and unemployed people, the measures taken and the results obtained were wholly inadequate.²¹¹

One clear example that highlights the weakness and the little credibility of the government was the failed attempt to amend the Moudawwana, the personal status code. In the spring of 2000, Sayyid Sa‘ādī former Minister of Family, presented the “plan d’intégration de la femme dans le développement”, a revision of the family law aimed at reducing the gender inequalities within the country. Unsurprisingly, the most conservative members of the government accused the leftists of “dévoyer la société marocaine”²¹². “Le pays est au bord de l’implosion”²¹³ *TelQuel* reports, as a

²¹⁰ Storm L., *op. cit.*, p. 12

²¹¹ Tredano A., *op. cit.*, p. 102-103

²¹² “Histoire. Il était une fois l’alternance”, in *Telquel*, 19 Février 2013, available online https://telquel.ma/2013/02/19/Histoire-Il-etait-une-fois-l-alternance_557_6280

²¹³ *Ibid.*

protest broke out in Casablanca gathering nearly a million of demonstrators. Following the rising discontent within the people as well as in the government, Prime Minister al-Yūsūfi stood back from the positions of Minister Sa‘ādī, who was left alone facing the mounting anger. Interviewed by *TelQuel* the former minister described the previous developments as “le premier complot intelligent du régime contre le gouvernement de l’alternance”.²¹⁴

Moreover, since the 2000s, al-Yūsūfi’s government action started to take the form of an authoritarian and despotic rule. For instance, the prime minister suppressed numerous social movements and protest rallies against the government going as far as to ban three independent newspapers, *Le Journal*, *Assahifa* and *Demain*.²¹⁵

At the same time, the economic policies pursued by the government at the beginning of the 2000s are also generally considered as a complete failure.

Starting from the 1980s, and even more intensely after the end of the Cold War, Morocco pursued a series of structural reforms in order to reduce the role of the state in the economy and aimed at strengthening the free market and the private sector. The European Union launched its Euro-Mediterranean partnership (EMP) program in 1995 while the US started to show a growing interest for Morocco after 9/11. All these measures clearly had a direct impact on the socio-economic conditions of the population, especially regarding the rural-urban relationship.²¹⁶

After his coronation, Muḥammad VI’s also announced the beginning of a new era of political and socio-economic change.

From 1999 and 2003, Muḥammad VI released numerous victims of political persecution imprisoned during the years of lead. At the same time, exiled political dissidents were granted to come back to Morocco, as was the case of Abrahām Serfātī or al-Mahdi bin Barka’s family.²¹⁷

Within this context of cosmetic political improvements, the new King carried out a further series of neoliberal reforms that were particularly intensified between the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium. Even though the rhetoric behind these reforms emphasized human development, social inclusion, poverty reduction and civic participation,²¹⁸ in the last decades Morocco experienced a serious deterioration of its socio-economic conditions. The minimizing of the

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ Zemni S., Bogaert K., “Trade, security and neoliberal politics: whither Arab reform? Evidence from the Moroccan case”, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 14:1, 2009, p. 91-107

²¹⁷ Daadaoui M., *op. cit.*, p. 195-219

²¹⁸ Kreitmeyr N., “Neoliberal co-optation and authoritarian renewal: social entrepreneurship networks in Jordan and Morocco”, *Globalizations*, 2018, p. 1-11

role of the state in the economic dynamics resulted in a deep dependency on the free market and it negatively impacted the social security of the poorest population. The state subsidies and the regulation of the food commodity prices were drastically reduced along with public spending for healthcare and education. Furthermore, the WB and IMF required the adaptation of new legislations aimed at reaching a greater flexibility of labour. For instance, employment in the public sector was severely cut and minimum wage and other social benefits were reduced with the only purpose of making Morocco more competitive thanks to the availability of cheap labour force.²¹⁹

Unemployment, poverty and marginalisation increased dramatically leading to a deterioration of the living condition both in the urban and rural areas.²²⁰

Between 1985 and the end of the 1990s, unemployment increased from 11.5% to 15% reaching the peak of 23% in 1995. After a slight economic recovery after 2000, the government maintained that poverty decreased to 14% in 2005. However, the official figures were considered unreliable and even the World Bank reported that poverty levels in 2005 were at the same level of those in 2000. Furthermore, despite GNP growth of 4.5% between 2000 and 2004, the job opportunities were never sufficient enough to make a real difference in the poverty or unemployment levels.²²¹

Lastly, there is one final political consideration. As stated by Daadaoui, the liberal approach of the economic policies of Morocco was, and still is, only apparently liberal. Indeed, the state policy kept a technocratic nature as the Makhzen and all the governments that occurred always preserved clear patrimonial modes of authority.²²²

The economic liberalisation and the privatization policies turned into the perfect means to preserve the old clientelist dynamics within the state for the benefit of the elites close to the monarchy. Even though the King's intervention and manipulation of the economic dynamics might appear more indirect and discontinuous, the Makhzen always ensured the maintenance of the status quo and the preservation of the elites loyal to the monarchy.

The latest investigations on Morocco's economic dynamics revealed that beside the fact of not being minimally able to achieve a real democratization of the institutions, the al-Yūsūfi-led government was not capable to regulate and manage the economic policies either, as it always followed the guidelines and the will of the King. Without any doubt, even in the economic affairs the results

²¹⁹ Cohen S., *Searching for a different future. The rise of a global middle class in Morocco*, Durnham, Duke University Press, 2004, p. 78-80

²²⁰ Zemni S. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 91-107

²²¹ El-Said H., Harrigan J., "Economic Reform, Social Welfare, and Instability: Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia, 1983–2004", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 68, n. 1, winter 2014, p. 100-121

²²² Daadaoui M., *op. cit.*, p. 195-219

obtained by the USFP government were far removed from the expectations placed in the most important socialist party in the country.²²³

Clearly, as stated by Storm, evaluating political performances in an authoritarian context such as the Moroccan one is not a simple task. As discussed above, beside to the government's will to implement its program there are a series of other factors that might affect its results. Concerning the case of Morocco, the political system is always manoeuvred and controlled by the monarch. Therefore, the political parties are not just in competition against each other, but they are constantly involved in power struggles against the King.²²⁴

As far as the USFP government is concerned, declaring the switchover from an executive monarchy to a parliamentary democracy as the first priority during the electoral campaign, led to a tough opposition from the Makhzen. For this reason, neither Hassan II nor Muhammad VI ever really supported the government, as they were well determined to manipulate its members and hinder its action as far as possible.

As stated in the previous chapter, another distinctive issue of the Moroccan political landscape is the disproportionate number of political parties. Starting from the 1980s, the number of the Moroccan parties increased exponentially, reaching 25 parties in the 2002 presidential elections. This excessive political plurality was facilitated and encouraged by the monarchy with the specific purpose of weakening the parliament.

Indeed, due to the number of political forces running for the elections, none of them really stands a chance of winning an overall majority in the Parliament in order to form a strong and steady government. Hence, over the decades, all Moroccan governments were always formed by a set of political figures coming from different and opposing parties, along with pro-monarchical technocrats close to the King and without any real party affiliation.

Therefore, in the absence of a single party or coalition and without any clear leadership, the Moroccan governments have always faced enormous difficulties in finding agreements on the very crucial issues that might pose a threat to the maintenance of the status quo.²²⁵

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ Storm L., *op. cit.*, p. 123

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 124-125

Indeed, the alternance government was no exception, as its program eventually reflected the interests of all parties and forces involved in the government, starting with the King. Therefore, since the very beginning, the USFP-led government proved to be “a disjointed, confused and weak institution”.²²⁶

4.4 The cooptation of the USFP

On the basis of the previous analyses, I find it necessary to consider one more point. Was the governmental participation of the USFP ever, at least in part, an attempt to carry out a real process of democratization of the institutions? Or, on the contrary, were the socialist militants already fully coopted by the monarchy? If so, did they ever plan to bring about a regime change?

Surely, all scholars agree that the main goal of the government, the switchover from an executive monarchy to a parliamentary democracy, never took place. However, some researchers, such as Storm, identify structural causes of the political system behind the USFP’s failure to rule. From this perspective, it was the excessive political plurality and the inability to form a strong and independent government that undermined the governmental action, at least more than the good or bad intentions of the socialists.²²⁷

Nevertheless, I believe that further considerations are necessary. First of all, as underlined in the first chapter, since the end of the 1980s, numerous members of the USFP moved to pro-monarchical positions and some of them eventually came out against a radical change of regime. Al-Yūsūfi himself supported the non-rupturist wing and, in 1993, he already claimed to be willing to compromise with the King.

Undoubtedly, the 1998 government showed the strengthening of the non-rupturist wing and its prevailing over the anti-monarchical militants. As stated above, during the 1990s the opposition parties handed to the King a series of demands related to the independence of the political parties and they refused to join the government in 1993 as they did not see it possible to form an homogeneous and united leadership, since the King would still appoint the Prime Minister and some other key ministries.

However, it is quite clear that, in 1998, all the Koutla’s parties agreed to put aside all the conditions and demands posed a few years earlier, as they decided to lead the new government within a regime that did not remotely change and that had no intention of changing at all.

²²⁶ Storm L., *op. cit.*, p. 126

²²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 127

As far as I am concerned, it is hardly believable that the members of the USFP could accept the conditions laid down by the monarchy believing that they could change the makhzenian regime from within. On the contrary, it is more likely that, after decades of parliamentary opposition, the socialist militants, or at least their leaderships, gave up trying to bring about a radical change of the political, economic and social system. They simply decided to rule as majority party within the regime, thereby abandoning any real socialist, leftist or even just reformist stances.

Concerning the formation of the alternance government, *TelQuel* described the meeting between Hassan II and ‘Abd al-Rāḥmān al-Yūsūfi as follows:

Cette rencontre entre les deux hommes reste l’un des plus grands mystères de l’alternance. [...] Ce 4 février 1998, Abderrahmane Youssoufi aurait ainsi été chargé de former un gouvernement, mais aussi et surtout, de veiller à préserver la stabilité du pays et à faciliter la transition dynastique. L’ancien opposant socialiste accepte la mission sans poser de conditions et sans consulter ses alliés de la Koutla, ni même ses camarades au sein du parti. ²²⁸

5. THE LEGACY OF THE ALTERNANCE GOVERNMENT

5.1 The crisis of the party

The participation of the USFP in the alternance government, which the party headed from 1998 to 2002, led its militants to a deep ideological and leadership crisis. The main symptoms of this crisis, which emerged in relation to the compromises reached with the monarchy, came out evidently after the end of the experience in government.

In 2003, following the results of the 2002 elections, ‘Abd al-Rāḥmān al-Yūsūfi handed his resignations as party leader sanctioning the beginning of numerous internal divisions. Furthermore, the disappointing outcomes of the USFP in the 2007 elections and the inability to carry out a proper analysis and self-criticism on the reasons behind the crisis, still determines the ideological metamorphosis of the USFP and its effective alignment with most pro-monarchist parties.²²⁹

This change, sometimes described as “sinistrisme”²³⁰, led to an ideological shift towards the centre and, consequently, to a full acceptance of the liberal economic system implemented by the monarchy.

In 2001, at the sixth convention of the USFP, the socialist militants had the chance to evaluate the action of the party within the context of the participation in government. Even though ‘Abd al-Rāḥmān al-Yūsūfi underlined once more the value of this participation in the history of the party, numerous opposition currents challenging the political choices of the party arose. These new factions

²²⁸ “Histoire. Il était une fois l’alternance”, in *Telquel*, 19 Février 2013, available online

<https://telquel.ma/2013/02/19/Histoire-Il-etait-une-fois-l-alternance> 557-6280

²²⁹ A’boushi el-H., *op. cit.*, Available online: <https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/1085#authors>

²³⁰ El Maslouhi A., *op. cit.*, p. 37-58

opposed to the line of the leadership, especially with regards to its ideological choices and its approaching to liberalism. The most notable of these movements was the one led by the First Secretary of the Confederation for Labour, Nuwibir al-Amawī, who founded a new political party under the name of Congrès National Ittihadī, that will be further investigated in the next chapter. On the same occasion, the USFP also lost the support of the Democratic Confederation of Labour that, after being brutally critical about the choices of the party, founded its movement led by Muḥammad al-Sassī, a former leading member of the Unionist Youth.²³¹

As El Maslouhi points out, analysing the popularity of the USFP media outlet, *Al-Ittihad Al-Ichtiraki*, is another way to assess the party crisis. In the early 2000s, the socialist newspaper decreased from 100.000 units sold par day between 1990 and 1997 to a mere 8000 in 2008.

The former socialist opposition also lost its close relationship with the politicized social movements, traditional electoral and social base of the Moroccan left. As shown by the break of relations with the most popular human rights defenders, such as the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH) and the Moroccan Forum for Truth and Equity (FVJ), the USFP gradually abandoned any position in defence of the marginalised groups, such as feminist activists and defenders of immigrants and unemployed people rights.²³²

Further disagreements among the socialist militants spread after the outcome of the 2002 legislative elections.

In the wake of the vote it appeared clear that the USFP, although it remained the strongest force in the parliament, registered a loss of popular support, getting 50 seats in the House of Representatives. Surprisingly, the Istiqlāl, led by ‘Abbās al-Fassī, increased its votes winning 48 seats. Last but not least, the Party of Justice and Development (PJD), the most important islamist force, became the third strongest political force in Morocco, obtaining 42 seats, compared to the 12 of the previous elections.²³³

Actually, the outcome of the elections did not evidently designate a winner, at least not a strong coalition that could band together in order to form a new government. Indeed, the relationship of the two main political parties, USFP and Istiqlāl, had deteriorated over the years of the alternance government, as proved by the merciless media battles fought through their respective party-based newspapers, *Libération* and *al Ittihad al Ichtiraki* (USFP) and *l’Opinion* and *al-Alam* (Istiqlāl).

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ Sater J.N., “Morocco after the Parliamentary Elections of 2002”, in *Mediterranean Politics*, 8:1, 2003, p. 135-142

The Istiqlāl did not want to join another coalition government led by a USFP prime minister going as far as to consider the establishment of a coalition with the PJD and the Berberist Mouvement Populaire, one of its major competitors after 1956. For its part, the USFP signed an agreement with one of the strongest monarchical parties, the National Rally of Independents (RNI). Hence, beside the fact that there was not an indisputable winner of the elections, also due to the proportional electoral system, the main political forces were not able to reach any compromise aimed at forming a coalition government. In these circumstances, the leaderships of the USFP, the Istiqlāl, the PJD and the RNI joined Muḥammad VI in a royal audience in order to find an ultimate resolution.²³⁴

Even though the USFP gained 50 seats confirming itself as the majority party in the House of Representative, on October 9, Muḥammad VI appointed a technocrat without any affiliation to the parties as Prime Minister. The choice of the King was clearly portrayed by many politicians and observers as a step backwards in the democratization process as well as to prove that the alternance was more an exception than the “establishment of a modus vivendi between democratic principles and executive monarchy”.²³⁵

Beside the will of creating a government loyal to the monarchy, another reason underlies the choice of the King. Indeed, during the al-Yūsūfi’s government, the USFP and the Istiqlāl surely showed a mutual hostility and proved their incapacity of carrying out their promises. Furthermore, since the monarchy proved its will to start the alternance in 1998 numerous politicians were now taking the transition to democracy for granted. Therefore, by pushing both parties to join the 2002 government and by giving them the same number of government posts, the King once again managed to pit the USFP and the IP one against the other, thereby furtherly weakening the Koutla coalition.²³⁶

However, the dissatisfaction within the USFP after the appointment of Idrīs Ğittū led to the resignations of al-Yūsūfi on October 27, 2003. As pointed out by A’boushi, his departure underlined the numerous struggles between the elites within the party. In fact, in the aftermath of the 2007 elections, the USFP experienced the same crisis once more.²³⁷

5.2 The USFP in the last decade

On September 7, 2007, new parliamentary elections took place. While thirty-three political parties and thirteen independent electoral lists run in the elections five of them remarkably emerged during the electoral campaign. At the forefront there were the USFP and the Istiqlāl followed by two

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 137

²³⁶ Storm L., *op. cit.*, p. 130

²³⁷ A’boushi el-H., *op. cit.*, available online: <https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/1085#authors>

monarchical parties, the Popular Movement and the National Rally of Independents, and by the Justice and Development Party (PJD), the main islamist opposition party at the time.²³⁸

During the previous months, the street polls and the larger part of political observers foretold a huge rise of the militants of the PJD within the parliament, which already won 42 seats after the 2002 elections. Still, the outcome of the 2007 elections saw the Istiqlāl gaining the title of majority party. While the PJD got the second place, the USFP was stuck in third position, with barely 36 seats.²³⁹

Nonetheless, despite the failure of the PJD in achieving the results announced by the polls, in 2007, the islamist party took control of Rabat, Salé and Casablanca. Moreover, it notably increased its voters base in Tanger and Meknès. In other words, the islamists rooted in the major economic and intellectual centres of the country getting the support of both well-educated citizens and of those living in the bidonvilles on the edges of urban centres, where the poorest, illiterate and most marginalized people are concentrated.²⁴⁰ In short, the islamist managed to detect a widespread social malaise among all these social groups that were more and more disappointed by the action of the USFP militants that were gradually losing their natural electoral base.

Furthermore, previous researches on the ambiguous relationship between the PJD and the USFP help us to underline once again how the latter changed its attitude towards the monarchy. For instance, Pellicer *et al.* maintain that, starting from 2007, the islamist militants tried to cooperate with the socialists, both at national and local level. In the aftermath of the 2007 elections, the leaderships of the PJD, very much aware of the King's interference in the electoral processes, declared that they would welcome an alliance with the USFP.²⁴¹ In contrast, the national leaders of the Socialist Union always rejected any form of cooperation with the islamists, stating the impossibility to overcome their ideological differences.²⁴²

Nevertheless, on the occasion of the 2009 municipal elections, the local militants of the USFP adopted a different approach, as they eventually started some kind of alliance at local level.

Considering all of this evidence, the authors indicate the motives behind the different attitude of the USFP members and the islamist militants towards the possibility of cooperating. Interestingly, it

²³⁸ Hamzawy A., "The 2007 Moroccan Parliamentary Elections Results and Implications", *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, Washington DC, 2007, p. 1-6.

²³⁹ Ben-Layashi S., *Morocco's 2007 elections: a social reading*, in *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 11, No. 4, December 2007, p. 72-78

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ Pellicer M., Wegner E., "Left-Islamist Opposition Cooperation in Morocco", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 38:3, 2011, p. 303-322

²⁴² *Ibid.*

seems that the PJD looked at the alliance with the USFP as a way to circumvent the political repression, seeking protection from the regime “by allying itself to a legalised political party”.²⁴³

On the other hand, it is clear that the cooptation of the USFP, the close relations between the King and the leaderships and their subordination to any stance or diktat of the monarch prevented any form of national cooperation between the socialists and islamists. Hence, the authors affirm that the main explanation of the USFP’s reluctance to ally with the PJD was precisely its cooptation at the hands of the regime. This, according to Pellicer *et al.*, explains the different attitude within the socialist militants, as it seems that the co-optation into the government did not benefit the local activists as much as the national leadership and the PMs, furtherly inflaming the internal clashes within the party.²⁴⁴

Another dramatic aspect of the 2007 elections was the low voter turnout. As underlined by Hamzawy, the official figures reported a turnout of 37%, compared to the 51% of 2002 and to the 58% of 1997.²⁴⁵

Hamzawy argues that the lower turnout in 2007 basically came as the result of the bad political performances of the major governmental parties in the last ten years, notably the USFP. As abovementioned, the parties of the Koutla, led by the socialists, failed in enacting their ambitious political agenda, especially with regard to the socio-economic issues of the country. Moreover, as Hamzawy affirms, the alternance government and the following administrations were marked by corruption practices, manipulation, use of repression and forms of governance quite similar to those of the previous rulers. Furthermore, the USFP was totally unable to manage the power distribution between the King, the cabinet and the legislature.²⁴⁶

This time, the USFP won 38 seats, thereby becoming the fourth largest party in the country in terms of votes cast. Due to the bad result that downgraded the party after almost ten years, the internal struggle of the USFP deepened even more. Especially, numerous critics were addressed to the leadership of the party, which was held responsible for mismanaging the election campaign. These further internal clashes led to the resignation of the first secretary Muḥammad al-Yāzījī.

Another occasion when the ongoing crisis of the USFP clearly emerged was the eight convention of the party held between the 13 and 15 of June 2008. Instead of being an opportunity for dialogue, confrontation and self-criticism, the convention only voted the financial and conduct reports and it stopped working as it had to vote for the organizational decree. Finally, the convention was also

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 312

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ Hamzawy A., *op. cit.*, p. 1-6

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*

unable to elect a new leadership and the political bureau and the national council ran the party for the next six months.²⁴⁷

Through the analysis of some documents issued by the departments of the party, A'boushi points out a number of different reasons behind the crisis of the USFP. Beside the ones discussed above, another element that seems to be quintessential is a lack of internal democracy. In theory, the organization and the decision-making processes within the party were based on democratic principles, such as division of powers, rotation of responsibilities and change of the leaderships. Nonetheless, it was emphasized that the party actually faced authoritarian practices in the decision-making procedures, the organizational departments failed to comply with a real separation of powers and this internal lack of democracy eventually resulted in rejecting and pushing aside all forms of ideological differences within the party. As it will be discussed in the next chapter, this situation led to multiple internal divisions and to the emergence and establishment of new leftist political parties that diverged from the USFP occasionally taking up radical positions and generally offering fresh political alternatives.²⁴⁸

The crisis and relentless political decline of the USFP was reconfirmed at the 2011 legislative elections. The context of significant political changes that followed the outbreak of protests in numerous Arab countries, the so-called Arab springs, led to a new reform processes that included the approval of a new constitution and changes to the Law of Political Parties. On November 2011, Muḥammad VI named 'Abdallah Ibn Kīrān, leader of the PJD, prime minister of the country, as the islamists got the 22.8% of the votes thereby winning the 27.1% of the parliamentary seats.²⁴⁹

The appointment of Ibn Kīrān proved that the PJD's members definitely accepted the predominant role of the King as they agreed to lead the country by cooperating with the monarchy, thereby assuming moderate stances aligned with the positions of the regime.²⁵⁰

Nonetheless, in order to obtain the required majority to form a real government, Ibn Kīrān asked to the Koutla's parties, Istiqlāl , USFP and PPS, to join the government. While the Istiqlāl and the PPS immediately accepted the offer, the USFP refused to take any part in the government thereby deciding to move into opposition. Beside the ideological clash and the tactical manoeuvring, Szmolka argues that, at the time, the USFP was challenged by further internal frictions and, also due to its bad outcome

²⁴⁷ A'boushi el-H., *op. cit.*, available online: <https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/1085#authors>

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ Szmolka I., "Inter- and intra-party relations in the formation of the Benkirane coalition governments in Morocco", *The Journal of North African Studies*, 20:4, 2015, p. 654-674

²⁵⁰ Garcia L. B., De Larramendi M. H., "The 2016 parliamentary elections in Morocco: context and interpretations", Elcano Royal Institute, Madrid, 2017, p. 1-10

in the elections, decided not to join the government in order to focus on the reorganization of the party, thus confirming its growing to political irrelevance.²⁵¹

After the 2016 elections, held on October 7, the PJD was reconfirmed as major party of Morocco, prevailing over the PAM, the King's party, a supposed liberal, secular party that declared itself the main alternative to the conservative islamists.

Initially, Ibn Kīrān was appointed again head of the government, however, after five months of unsuccessful attempts to form a government, the King dismissed the islamist leader and nominated Prime Minister another PJD prominent figure, Sa'ad al-dīn al-'Uṭmānī.

However, even though al-'Uṭmānī was able to form a new government, its party got a secondary, subordinate position compared to the ones of the so-called monarchical parties, notably the NRI and the UC, that obtained the ministries of the economy and development. On this occasion, after numerous negotiations, the leaders of the USFP decided to join the government within a wider coalition.²⁵²

Nevertheless, as it became apparent in the last pages, the political action of the USFP, its presence and relevance within the institutions and its role in civic society, decreased inexorably since the end of the alternance government. The socialists faced the inevitable political marginalization of their own party.

Today, at least on a theoretical level, the party still declares itself a leftist force. On the official website of the USFP it is stated that the party holds a socialist identity, and the establishment of socialism and democracy are considerate its ultimate goals. In the heart of a democratic system lies the establishment of a parliamentary monarchy alongside the accomplishment of social justice, a rule of law and the respect for pluralism, without any discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, religion or gender. Moreover, the USFP pays a great deal of attention to the political and economic cooperation among the Maghreb countries and it gives full support to all the Arab countries and liberation movements around the globe that are still struggling against colonial occupation and tyranny. Therefore, the USFP recognises the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital. In its claim to fight against neoliberalism, technocrats and conservative politicians, the party pledges to “adhérer aux combats des forces démocratiques de gauche et des associations de la société civile contre la face hideuse de la mondialisation, et pour la justice, l'équité,

²⁵¹ Szmolka I., *op. cit.*, 654-6

²⁵² Desrues T., “Authoritarian resilience and democratic representation in Morocco: Royal interference and political parties' leaderships since the 2016 elections”, *Mediterranean Politics*, 2018, p. 1-8

et le droit à un environnement équilibré, ainsi que la paix mondiale et la tolérance entre les peuples.”²⁵³

Nevertheless, after several years of cooperation with the regime, it is quite clear that the USFP moved toward more centrist positions, and today its leadership would not dare to question the political and financial interests of the monarchy. In other terms, even though the agenda of the party still contains a number of leftist demands, their achievement remains conditional on the priorities of the regime.

At the same time, an in-depth study of the overall political landscape of Morocco, as well as an investigation of the relations and alliances between parties, cannot exclude an analyse of the Socialist Union, that has today 20 seats in the Moroccan parliament.

Nonetheless, as I declared in the introduction of the thesis, the following pages will be entirely dedicated to all those new (and minor) parties that represent today the new Moroccan left and that fulfil the role of main opposition forces, both within and outside the institutions.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The main purpose of the current chapter was to examine the development of the Moroccan left between the 1990s and the early 2000s.

In the second place, another goal of this study was to place the Moroccan context within a wider international framework. Indeed, starting from the end of the 1980s, faced with the spread of a domineering financial capitalism, the leftists from all over the world were forced to initiate a time of challenging changeover that in some cases is still going forward. In order to survive the global economic and political changes the traditional left had to integrate into the neoliberal system and to reshape its stances and claims, thereby shifting towards socio-liberal positions.

As aforementioned, the crisis of socialism and communism was never confined to the European countries but it became widespread after the fall of the Berlin wall. Such situation resulted in a profound ideological disorientation that severely affected the internal and external relations of the leftists. Firstly, the arise of different opinions and views concerning the future of the parties provoked a major reset of the internal structures and balances of powers within the members, making it very hard to form strong and credible socialist parties that could speak with one single voice.

With regard to the external relations with other political forces, by losing their main revolutionary and anti-imperialist demands, the leftists have long struggled to give a voice to new needs and

²⁵³ “Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires : Principes et Objectifs”, Official website USFP, accessed January 30, 2019, <http://www.usfp.ma/fr/principes-et-objectifs/>

requests of the people while preserving their privileged relationship with the civil society and oppressed groups. Thus, hardly ever the socialists were able to successfully keep their electoral base that, on the contrary, relied more and more on the centre-right parties apparently capable of giving clear and straight answers to a good part of the population's issues. Today, it is increasingly common to see how the most conservative and ultra-right parties are trying to win the trust of the traditional leftist voters by focusing their election campaigns on the problems of the poorest and most vulnerable people through a strong nationalist and populist propaganda.

From the 1980s until today, both in Europe and in the Middle Eastern countries, the leftist parties faced a series of numerous internal splits headed by dissenting members that sometimes founded their own movements trying to keep more radical positions. At the same time, the main leftist parties found themselves emptied of their traditional members while the party leaderships often sought to hold government positions, as they tried to compromise with the neo-liberal agenda moving towards liberal stances.

In regards to the case of Morocco, in addition to the international crisis of the left, it is necessary to consider the authoritarian local context and the manipulative actions pursued by the monarchy in order to accomplish its objectives and to hold on to power.

Starting from the 1980s and more effectively from the 1990s, the King relentlessly attempted to push the socialist opposing parties to take part into governments. The reasons behind this strategy have been widely discussed. By turning the opposition forces into ruling parties, the monarch was aiming at undermining the relations among the members, by encouraging internal clashes and divisions, as well as he were trying to tone down the most radical positions of the parties, right through the isolation of the uncompromising militants.

An articulated reconstruction of the political negotiations and the power games between the King and the decision-makers within the USFP is hard to make. In the first place, I consider the co-optation of a party as a decades-long and intricate process. Over the decades, the monarchy exerted both a direct and indirect influence over the parties in order to gradually subjugate an increasing number of opponents to the wishes and orders of the King.

Concerning the USFP and the PPS, the leftist parties in the Koutla, this process probably started in the 1980s. From the 1990s, the internal struggles within the parties related to different views and approaches towards the constitutional reforms proved that the efforts made by Hassan II started to achieve some results.

After forty years of opposition, well aware of the impossibility to keep revolutionary or even just radical reformist positions, the Moroccan socialists eventually decided to cooperate with the King and to lead the government under the wing of the monarchy. It is likely that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the lack of strong, international allies played a certain role in the ideological shift of the party. Indeed, the fight against communism was not just a priority of the Moroccan monarchy but it was part of the US and EU agenda as well.

Nevertheless, it is beyond any doubt that the former socialist parties of Morocco did in fact accept the political authoritarian regime and the liberal economic system. Even though they claimed their will of changing the system from within, they never really improved the socio-economic condition of the country as they could do nothing but following the diktats of the King.

It was also emphasized that the decisions taken by the parties, especially those that do not really experience any internal democracy, quite often reflect the will of the leaderships while the more critical members frequently paid the price of the cooptation, by being isolated or even pushed out of the party.

Another aspect that appeared to be quintessential is that the ideological metamorphosis of the leftists and their compromising attitude toward the regime never paid back in terms of popular support. The inability to implement their programmes and the ongoing struggles within the government and against the monarchy resulted in an unstoppable loss of votes of the Moroccan people. As it was showed by the bad performances of the USFP in the elections of the last two decades, we can argue that the party never overcame the crisis experienced during and after the alternance government. Furthermore, the Socialist Union of Popular Forces is nowadays widely considered a loyalist and governmental party, without any role of opposition against the regime or neither the intention of bringing about a real change of the system.

To sum up, the “makhzenisation” of the USFP led to the political weakening of the party and the loss of credibility of its members. Nowadays, the representatives of the leftist parties of the Koutla no longer represent any real socialist stance and their ideological emptiness determines their political irrelevance.

However, the political vacuum left by the former leftist-opposition parties in Morocco paved the way to the rise and development of new political movements that are today viewed as the new real leftists of the country.

The most prominent of these forces is considered to be the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique (FGD), an alliance of three socialist political parties. These three groups, namely the Parti Socialiste

Unifié (PSU), the Parti de l'Avant-garde Démocratique et Socialiste (PADS) and the Congrès National Ittihadi (CNI), were respectively founded between 1989 and 2005 splitting from USFP or, in the case of the PSU, from what was left of the OADP after its refusal to approve the 1996 constitution.

The parties of the FGD decided to converge in a first alliance on the occasion of the 2007 legislative elections and they have today 2 seats in the House of Representatives. Hence, the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique (FGD) constitutes a socialist opposition within the Parliament and within the institutions in general.

Currently, another minor yet significant opposition party is Annahj Addimocrati (Democratic Way). Founded by former militants of the Marxist-Leninist group Ilā al-Amām in 1995, Annahj Addimocrati was only legalized in 2004. So far, the party has not reached the institutions and it represents the strongest and most radical leftist force outside the parliament, with numerous relations with the civil society as well as with other communist parties in Europe.

The two following chapters are an attempt to analyse and reconstruct the historical evolution and the ideological profile of the abovementioned parties. As far as the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique is concerned, I will study the development of its three components, their history, the political background of their leaders, their ideology and shared vision of society. Nonetheless, since the FGD is now basically considered as a single political entity, I will mostly concentrate on the alliance and its headline targets in the role of major leftist opposition in the parliament.

For Annahj Addimocrati, I will attempt to trace the evolution of Abrahām Serfātī's organization up to the 1990s and I will therefore highlight the main stages that led to constitution of the party. Moreover, I will focus on the major motives behind its banishment in its first decade as well as on its political actions as an illegal organizations. Also, I will try to investigate its changing role since 2004, following its formal recognition as a proper political party.

Furthermore, for the all aforementioned parties I will study their relations with the ruling governments, their dealings with the other political forces, and, above all, their attitude towards the monarchy. I will try to comprehend their own idea of democracy, their opinions about the evolution and the crisis of the left and the solution they provide in order to overcome the main socio-economic issues of the country.

At the same time, I will investigate the internal structure of the parties, their international allies or references, their political agenda concerning education, justice, the economy the extensions of social and civic rights as well as their position about the role of religion in government and society.

Concluding, I would like to dwell on some methodological aspects related to the writing of the next chapter. Given that the political actions of the parties object of my study is mostly concentrated in the post-2002 period, there is a great paucity of academic literature referencing to the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique as well as to Annahj Addimocrati. The small size of scientific articles that I could find prompted me to use different kind of sources such as local newspapers, numerous interviews on YouTube as well as the vast amount of data available today on Facebook or other social medias. Unfortunately, while I had planned to carry out an on the ground research, I will be unable to travel to Morocco due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

CHAPTER THREE

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, the socialist forces in the Moroccan political landscape suffered from internal divisions that quite often resulted in the emergence of new leftist parties. This process of balkanization of the Moroccan left increased significantly starting from the 1990s and, in particular, in response to the disappointing USFP-led government. As noted, the attempt to unify the opposition forces in one stronger alliance, the Koutla, was doomed to fail. Indeed, from the beginning of the new millennium, it was not just the relation between the USFP and the Istiqlāl that was severely undermined, but the leftists themselves experienced a growing generalized dissatisfaction against their own government. Leadership, trade unionists and local militants ended up facing one of the worst crisis that the left ever experienced in the history of the country.

Nevertheless, as previously stated, the political vacuum left by the USFP paved the way to the rise of new leftist parties, alliances and political movements. The following pages attempt to trace the history of three political parties, namely the Parti de l'Avant-garde Démocratique et Socialiste (PADS), the Congrès National Ittihadi (CNI) and the Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU). I will dwell on their foundation processes, their main leaders and the political and social motives behind the choice of forming a new alliance. In fact, from 2014, these three parties merged in a single political entity, the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique (FGD), which today represents the main leftist and opposition force.

In order to reconstruct the developments and the main political stages of the new leftist alliance, I relied on media reports, interviews of the leadership of the parties and on few primary sources in Arabic, especially the Statute, the political document and the political programme of the FGD for the 2016 elections. These documents helped me retrace the milestones of the FGD history, taking into consideration the Moroccan socio-economic context in the first decade of the 2000s. Furthermore, they made me appreciate the ideological stances, the political ambitions and the results so far achieved by the new Moroccan left.

2. PARTI DE L'AVANT-GUARDE DÉMOCRATIQUE ET SOCIALISTE (PADS)

The Parti de l'Avant-Garde Démocratique et Socialiste (PADS) is one of the numerous political parties that, over the decades, split from the USFP. The party was co-founded by 'Abd al-Rāḥmān bin 'Amrū, first president of the notorious Association Marocaine des Droits Humains (AMDH) and,

in particular, by Aḥmad Binjellūn, brother of ‘Umar Binjellūn, one of the major leading personalities of the UNFP, brutally assassinated by islamist militants in 1975.²⁵⁴

Aḥmad Binjellūn was born in Fez in 1929 and he was among the greatest representatives of the Moroccan radical left during the years of lead, during which he was arrested and threatened with execution several times. Lawyer by profession, he founded the PADS in 1983 and he was secretary general of the party until 2008, when he resigned his commission on health grounds. Nonetheless, the political action of ‘Aḥmad Binjellūn was particularly intense as early as the 1960s, and it was profoundly affected by the assassination of al-Mahdī bin Barka. Furthermore, ‘Aḥmad Binjellūn was also part of a new generation of leftist militants, such as Muḥammad Binnūna and ‘Umar Daḥūn that, in the footsteps of the “Option Révolutionnaire” of bin Barka, established a radical and revolutionary wing of the USFP intended to be an armed force of mass mobilisation in view of a military confrontation with the regime.²⁵⁵

Concerning the PADS, even though the party was officially established in 1983 as an opposing and dividing current of the USFP, it was formally legalized only on October 6, 1993.²⁵⁶ During the years of lead, the political and social action of the PADS members was particularly focused on the protection of victims of political persecution, on human rights defence, on condemnation of the supremacy of the monarchy and on the will to radically transform the authoritarian rule. Furthermore, the history of the PADS is actually deeply linked to the one of the AMDH, created in 1979, with whom it shares the radical nature of its political action and the attention given to human rights. Indeed, at the time of the foundation of the party, a significant amount of the AMDH leaders merged in the rising party and, for its positions, the association was outlawed from 1984 to 1988. During the 1990s, the AMDH was largely headed by members of the PADS as well as by militants of *Annahj Addimocrati*.²⁵⁷ On April 18, 1993, the Ligue Démocratique des Droits des Femmes (LDDF) was founded as another human rights defender association strongly linked to the PADS.

Nevertheless, after being released from prison, the militants of the PADS gradually abandoned a strict Marxist-Leninist ideology as they adopted more moderate positions whilst remaining engaged in the human rights battles. Especially over the 1990s, a period of reform programs and partial political

²⁵⁴ El Bouzdaini W., “Hadj Boutala”, in *MarocHebdo*, 13/09/2018. Available online : <https://www.maroc-hebdo.press.ma/hadj-boutouala>

²⁵⁵ Bentahar M., “Ahmed Benjelloun nous a quitté. De ben Barka au PADS, Berguent en est fière”, in *Mediapart*, 16/03/2020. Available online : <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/m-bentahar/blog/030215/ahmed-benjelloun-nous-quitte-de-ben-barka-au-pads-berguent-en-est-fierte>

²⁵⁶ “8 Māi 1983 min al-’ittiḥād ’ilā ḥizb al-ṭalī ‘a, ḥizb al-ṭalī ‘a al-dimūqrāṭī al-’iṣtirākī”, in *al-ḥiwār al-mutamaddan – al-’adad 1849 – 09/032007*. Available online : <http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=90675&r=0>

²⁵⁷ Vermeren P., *Histoire du Maroc depuis l’indépendance*, Paris, Ed. La Découverte, 2002. Kindle Edition

openness, the members of the PADS were able to revive their positions also through a direct confrontation with the regime. Indeed, according to the leftist militants, the human rights situation in the country would have never improved without a deep changing in the political system. In other words, fighting for rights and freedoms of the Moroccan people would have necessarily required a political confrontation with the monarchy.²⁵⁸

During the 1990s and the first years of the 2000s, the PADS represented the so-called extra-parliamentary opposition, as it was part of all those forces that, in spite of being largely politically and socially active, refused to take part in any election. In particular, after 1996 and the increasingly evident cooptation of the USFP, the PADS started to become an ever more prominent force in the Moroccan political landscape. In its Statute, as well as in its official statements, the party always claimed scientific socialism to be its ideological foundation while, on the international level, the PADS kept referring to third world internationalism and global socialism.²⁵⁹

The political propaganda of the PADS members was always expressed in terms of class struggle, commitment to stop international capitalism and its allies and the fight against the Makhzenian regime. Particularly, from the second half of the 1990s, the PADS became the point of contact of numerous leftist intellectuals and movements, such as the *Choix de la Méthode Démocratique*, le *Mouvement pour la Démocratie e les Démocrates Indépendants*.²⁶⁰

However, the main watershed in the history of the PADS were probably the 2007 legislative elections. On that occasion, after three decades of extra-parliamentary opposition, the party finally decided to run for the elections. In an interview to Aḥmad Binjellūn realized by *al-Jazeera* in August 2007, the founder and former leader of the PADS declared that “Nothing changed in the country nor in our stances. We only changed our style” and again “Today, we believe we can do something within the Parliament [...] it is not a shame if people change their style or positions”.²⁶¹ On the same day, Binjellūn also emphasised that the fight against capitalism and any form of fraud remained the constitutive principles of the party. Moreover, he promised a real engagement for the implementation of a democratic constitution, for the independence of the judiciary and for the recognition of the Amazigh language as official language of the country, as actually happened in 2011.²⁶²

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ Khatibi A. *L'alternance et les partis politiques*, 2^{ème} édition, Editions Eddif, Casablanca, 2000, p. 85-93.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ Al-Ḥusn al-sarāt, “al-Ṭalī ‘a al-maḡribī yuṣārik bi-l-’intiḡabāt ba‘d inqitā‘ 30 ‘āmm^{an}”, in *al-Jazīrā Net*, 29/08/2007. Available online: <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews/2007/8/29/-الطليعة-المغرب-يشارك-بالانتخابات-بعد-انقطاع-30-عاما>

²⁶² *Ibid.*

'Aḥmad Binjellūn died in Rabat on February 1, 2015.²⁶³ One year later, 'Alī Būṭuāla, leftist militant and former member of the Marxist 23 March movement, was appointed as new secretary general of the PADS.²⁶⁴

3. CONGRÈS NATIONAL ITTIHADI (CNI)

The Congrès National Ittihad (CNI) is a Moroccan political party founded by a split from the USFP on the occasion of the 6th party congress in 2001. The history and the evolution of the party have always been strictly linked to the Confédération Démocratique du Travail (CDT), one of the major trade union in Morocco founded in the 1970s and traditionally affiliated to the USFP.

During the alternance government, the political action of the Socialist Union and its cooperation with the loyalist and conservative parties led to a growing dissatisfaction among the militants of the CDT, at the time headed by Nūbīr al-Amawī. The union condemned the increasingly liberal attitude of the party and the lack of consideration given to the working class. Hence, after numerous clashes between the leadership of the USFP and the members of the union, the relationship between the party and the CDT was eventually irreversibly damaged. According to various militants of the party, due to its participation in the government, the USFP ended up in a situation similar to the one of the Socialist International, that was considered more and more unconcerned about the labour class and its problems. Moreover, during the 1990s, different socialist parties, both in Morocco and in other countries, changed their attitudes towards the unionist movements by ceasing to support their social claims and demands. As a matter of fact, one of the main issues that should have been addressed during the 6th party congress was exactly the relation between the party and its union; though, things did not turn out as planned.²⁶⁵

Nūbīr al-Amawī and 'Abd al-Majīd Būzūba'a were the main leaders of the dissident groups and they boycotted the 6th congress of the USFP in March 2001, as they complained about some wrongdoings in the election of the members of congress. They also called for an extraordinary congress in order to find a proper solution, but their proposal was rejected by the leadership of the USFP. Būzūba'a

²⁶³ "Décès de l'homme politique socialiste Ahmed Benjelloun", in *TelQuel*, February 02, 2015, Available online: https://telquel.ma/2015/02/02/decès-lhomme-politique-socialiste-ahmed-benjelloun_1432771

²⁶⁴ Bentahar M., "Ahmed Benjelloun nous a quitté. De ben Barka au PADS, Berguent en est fière", in *Mediapart*, March, 16, 2020. Available online : <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/m-bentahar/blog/030215/ahmed-benjelloun-nous-quitte-de-ben-barka-au-pads-berguent-en-est-fièrè>

²⁶⁵ Rafīq al-Rāmī, "Ḥizb al-mu'tamar al-watanī al-'ittihādī: min 'aina 'ilā 'aina'", in *al-ḥiwār al-mutamaddan* – al-'adad 1500 – 25/03/2006. Available online: <http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=60482&r=0>

described the alternance government as “pire que tous ceux qui l’ont précédé”²⁶⁶ stating his willingness of “réaliser une coupure avec la culture de la falsification au Maroc”.²⁶⁷

Indeed, on October 2001, a breakaway group of the USFP headed by Nūbīr al-’Amawī and ‘Abd al-Majīd Būzūba‘a, secretary general of the CNI until 2006, left the party in order to establish a new political force, the Congrès National Ittihadi.²⁶⁸

Nevertheless, from an ideological point of view, the CNI was not really capable of standing out from the USFP as it did not offer to the voters a real political alternative.²⁶⁹ As mentioned above, the reasons behind the split of the CNI were more related to practical problems, such as the cooperation with the regime and the monarchical parties, the governmental action of the Koutla, and the discrepancy between the political agenda of the USFP and the actual policies carried out during the alternance government. Therefore, on the ideological level, the new party found it quite difficult to differentiate itself from the other socialists and the CNI immediately slipped into political irrelevance. In the following years, even though the party was able to maintain strong relations with the trade unionists, it did not succeed in building up a support base among the citizens. Furthermore, even if numerous USFP militants joined the CNI in 2001, only one year later, due to the forthcoming legislative elections, most of them reconsidered their positions and went back to the USFP. In the aftermath of the elections, the Congrès National Ittihadi won only one seat in the House of Parliament.²⁷⁰

Furthermore, only five years after the foundation of the party, its secretary general, ‘Abd al-Majīd Būzūba‘a, decided to further split the local political landscape by forming a new political force, the Socialist Party, that quit the CNI in 2006 thus weakening the party even more.²⁷¹ Ironically enough, in 2013 Būzūba‘a and his new party, probably aware of the insignificance of a new leftist force, decided to sign an union agreement with Idrīs Laškar, first secretary of the USFP, thereby returning to be part of the Socialist Union.²⁷²

²⁶⁶ “Maroc - Scission au sein du parti du Premier ministre, Abderrahmane Youssoufi”, in *L’Orient Le Jour*, 22/10/2001. Available online : [https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/354861/Maroc -
Scission au sein du parti du Premier ministre%252C Abderrahmane Youssoufi.html](https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/354861/Maroc-_Scission_au_sein_du_parti_du_Premier_ministre%252C_Abderrahmane_Youssoufi.html)

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ “Le Congrès Ittihadi : Le bateau ivre”, in *La Gazette du Maroc*, 20/03/2006. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/lagazette/9424>

²⁶⁹ Benabid M., “L’aile syndicale de l’USFP veut “mieux faire que Youssoufi”, in *L’Economiste*, 23/10/2001. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/leconomiste/38514>

²⁷⁰ Sater J.N., “Morocco after the Parliamentary Elections of 2002”, *Mediterranean Politics*, 8:1, 2003, p. 135-142

²⁷¹ “Abdelmajid Bouzoubaa élu secrétaire générale du Parti socialiste”, in *Aujourd’hui le Maroc*, 31/10/2006. Available online : <http://aujourdhui.ma/24-heures/abdelmajid-bouzoubaa-elu-secretaire-general-du-parti-socialiste-45036>

²⁷² Alaoui M. C., “Le come-back de la gauche”, in *Le360*, 22/05/2013. Available online : <https://fr.le360.ma/politique/le-come-back-de-la-gauche-648>

On October 20, 2019, on the occasion of its 9th congress, the CNI got the opportunity to establish the objectives and political priorities that should be pursued and achieved by any progressive force. The party underlined its commitment in mobilizing a social national front formed by unionists and civic society. Moreover, the CNI pledged to engage in fighting the islamist forces, as it considers any religious movement a threaten for democracy. On the economical level, the party seeks to reduce the rentier-supported system of the country, to carry out a fiscal reform, to tackle unemployment, and to combat economic monopolies in Morocco. Finally, the CNI reiterated the necessity of increasing investments in the healthcare and education sector.²⁷³

Nevertheless, starting from 2007, the CNI was officially part of a larger leftist alliance, the *Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique*, and its political action was significantly tied to those of other two political parties, namely the PADS and the PSU. For this reason, more detailed analysis and reconstructions of the history and activity of the party will be further developed in the next pages, as a part of a stronger and more significant political force.

4. PARTI SOCIALISTE UNIFIÉ (PSU)

4.1 History and founding acts of the party

The Organisation for Democratic and Popular Action (OADP) was a Moroccan leftist party founded at the end of the 1960s but formally legalized in 1983 after the return of its major leaders from exile in France. In terms of members and militants, the party was the political persecution of the far-left 23 March movement, a Marxist-Leninist organization with strong Arab-nationalist stances and politically close to the Communist Action Organization in Lebanon, to the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and to the Arab Revolutionary Workers Party of Syria.²⁷⁴

The members of this movement embraced revolutionary values and represented the radical left, compared to the reformists USFP and PPS. Furthermore, they maintained relations with other international actors such as the 1968 student strikes in France, different socialist groups in Europe, the Proletarian Revolution in China and the Palestinian nationalist movement.

During the years of lead, the leaders and the militants of the OADP suffered the harsh repression of the regime towards the political opponents. After the two attempted coups and the students and unions movements, Ḥassan II's regime suppressed any Marxist and radical leftist militants by imprisoning or exiling them outside the country. Nevertheless, their illegal status did not prevent them to carry on

²⁷³ Boulahya Z., "La fusion des trois partis de la FGD, parmi les thèmes du congrès du CNI", in *Medias24*, 18/10/2017. Available online : <https://www.medias24.com/MAROC/NATION/POLITIQUE/177427-La-fusion-des-trois-partis-de-la-FGD-parmi-les-themes-du-congres-du-Congres-national-ittihadi.html>

²⁷⁴ Ta'sīs munazzama al-'amal al-dimūqrāṭī al-ša'bī, fī al-mawqī' al-rasmī li-l-ḥizb al-'iştirākī al-muwaḥḥad. Available online : psu.ma/ تاريخ/تأسيس-منظمة-العمل-الديمقراطي-الشعبي/

their political battles, also through the foundation of their own newspaper, *Anwāl*, where the members of the party served as editorial committee.²⁷⁵

In 1986, on the occasion of the OADP first conference as a legal force, the members started to properly organise the party structure, beginning with the appointment of their formal leadership. As stated in the second chapter, after few years, the OADP joined the other opposition parties in the Koutla, officially becoming part of the Moroccan political landscape.

In 1996, during an internal struggle around the choice of whether approving or not the new constitution, the OADP suffered a deep and formal internal division. While a wing led by Muḥammad bin Sa‘īd opposed to the constitutional referendum, another splinter group headed by ‘Īssā al-Wardīgī and Muḥammad al-Ḥabīb Ṭālib founded its own party under the name of Democratic Socialist Party (PSD) in order to support the new constitution.

In the 1997 elections, the OADP won the 8% of the votes thereby getting four seats in the House of Representatives. Nonetheless, even though the party supported the alternance government led by al-Yūsūfī, it did not obtain any governmental position.

Between the second half of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, further disagreements within the members of the OADP gave birth to another internal split led by Muḥammad al-Marīnī, that eventually joined the USFP.²⁷⁶

In July 2002, decisively weakened by the aforementioned events, the Organisation for Democratic and Popular Action and other three leftist movements, namely the Mouvement pour la Démocratie, the Mouvement des Démocrates Indépendants and Potentialités Démocratiques de Gauche, decided to band together in order to found a new political party, the Parti de la Gauche Socialiste Unifié (PGSU).²⁷⁷

One of the founding documents of the Parti de la Gauche Socialiste Unifié clearly echoes the political developments in the years of the alternance government, namely the cooptation of the USFP and the crisis of the Moroccan left.

The foundation of the PGSU in Morocco falls within the general framework of the history of the attempts to unify the radical leftist forces, which expanded in the last thirty years since their first establishment in the mid-1960s and beginning of the 1970s. This foundation is the direct result of the unification process started in July 2000 between four components [...] and continued through a transition phase until July 2002, on the occasion of the

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ “La gauche se rassemble, l’USFP fait cavalier seul”, in *La Vie éco*, 18/06/2004. Available online : <https://www.lavieeco.com/politique/la-gauche-se-rassemble-lusfp-fait-cavalier-seul-5346/>

Constitutive Congress. [...] It appears that the strong willingness behind the foundation of the PGSU as the pivotal moment in the great project of unification of the Moroccan left is the historical answer to the failure of the Moroccan political regime that over the decades kept working for the balkanization and atomization of the political landscape in the country, in order to empty it from its actual contents and to maintain control over any possibility of change.²⁷⁸

In 2001, at the sixth convention of the USFP, the Democratic Confederation of Labour headed by Muḥammad al-Sāssī split from the party and founded its own leftist movement, the Fidélité à la Démocratie movement. In 2005, the PGSU engaged a dialogue with Muḥammad al-Sāssī, as they decided to join forces in a new political party, the Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU), headed by a new leader, Muḥammad Mujāhid. In the 2005 foundation conference of the PSU, the rising force was defined as

a leftist party independent in its choices and administration from the state apparatus and from every centre of economic influence inside and outside Morocco. The party adopts the socialist choice with all its jurisprudence and liberal, democratic and humanitarian stances. Moreover, it relies on the mobilization and on the mass struggle in order to defend its social and democratic project and political program. It defends the national interest, the labour rights and all those victims of persistent injustices, as well as it defends the values of modernity, of citizenship, of scientific and rational progress.²⁷⁹

4.2 The leaders

4.2.1 Muḥammad bin Sa‘īd Ayt Īddar and Muḥammad Mujāhid

Muḥammad bin Sa‘īd Ayt Īddar was born in 1925 in the Moroccan region of Souss-Massa. After graduating from the University of Marrakesh, he joined the protests against French protectorate. He was imprisoned in 1951 while the following year he was sentenced to house arrest in his native village. Until independence, he never stopped fighting against colonialism and he played a major role in the armed combat of the Ifni war in 1958.²⁸⁰

In the aftermath of the independence, he supported the foundation of the UNFP as he joined Bu‘abūd, bin Barka and Ibrāhīm in their political project outside the Istiqlāl. After the downfall of the Ibrāhīm government and the regime’s repression of the UNFP militants, Muḥammad bin Sa‘īd Ayt Īddar and other leaders decided to carry out an armed attack against the King on July 16, 1963. On that occasion, numerous members of the UNFP were arrested while bin Sa‘īd managed to flee to Algeria.

²⁷⁸ Al-Wiḥda al-indimājiyyā al-tāniyya : al-ḥizb al-’ištirākī al-muwaḥḥad, fī al-mawqī‘ al-rasmī li-l-ḥizb al-’ištirākī al-muwaḥḥad. Available online: psu.ma/تاريخ/تأسيس-منظمة-العمل-الديمقراطي-الشعبي/

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ Bin Sa‘īd ‘Ayt ‘Īddar...al-Rāfiḍ li-dasātīr al-Ḥassan al-tānī wa Muḥammad al-Sādis, fī al-mawqī‘ al-rasmī li-l-ḥizb al-’ištirākī al-muwaḥḥad. Available online: psu.ma/تاريخ/تأسيس-منظمة-العمل-الديمقراطي-الشعبي/

Sentenced to death for assassination attempt on the monarch, he self-exiled in France until 1980, when he could return to Morocco after the King's choice to grant him amnesty. During the 1980s, even though the USFP pushed bin Sa'īd to join the party, he rejected the offer while he decided to turn the 23 March movement into an actual party, the abovementioned Organisation for Democratic and Popular Action (OADP).

The bin Sa'īd-led OADP joined the Koutla in 1992 but it left the coalition four years later, after the disagreements around the 1996 constitution, and it never took a part in the alternance government.

As stated above, Muḥammad bin Sa'īd Ayt Īddar stepped down as head of the party in 2002 just before the official foundation of the PSU that was thereby led by Muḥammad Mujāhid.

Mujāhid's political background is not much different from the one of bin Sa'īd. He was born in a tiny village close to Tétouane and he studied at the medical school of Meknès and Rabat. Marxist militant in the years of lead, Mujāhid was arrested in 1984 and in 1986. He joined the far-left group Mouvement des Démocrates Indépendants and he became part of the General Secretariat of the PGSU in 2001.²⁸¹

4.2.2 Nabīla Munīb

Nabīla Munīb was born in Casablanca in 1960. Her father was the consul of Morocco in Oran, Algeria, where she actually spent part of her youth and where she completed her baccalaureate. After high school, she started her university studies at the University Mohammad V in Rabat and she moved to Montpellier, in France, in order to get a PhD in endocrinology. Once back in Morocco, she worked as a researcher and professor at the medicine faculty of the University Hassan II in Casablanca.²⁸²

Her political engagement started during her study period in France, where she joined the French section of the democratic students of the OADP, thereby approaching the political action of Muḥammad bin Sa'īd Ayt Īddar and its party.

In Morocco, beside working at university, she was active in the Syndicat National de l'Enseignement, in the OADP and in the Organisation de la Défense des Libertés d'Information et d'Expression (OLIE), taking anti-globalization stances, fighting for women rights defence and for the diffusion of a greater political consciousness in the rural and marginalized areas.

²⁸¹ Muḥammad Mujāhid, fi al-mawqī' al-rasmī li-l-ḥizb al-'iştirākī al-muwaḥḥad. Available online: psu.ma/تاريخ/تأسيس-منظمة-العمل-الديمقراطي-الشعبي/

²⁸² Al-Salāwī L., "Nabīla Munīb... 'awwal ra'īma yasāriyya fi al-maḡrib... ṣawt al-ḥurriyya wa al-'adāla al-'ijtimā'iyya", in *Jarīda Tanja*, 15/09/2016. Available online: <https://www.lejournaldetangernews.com/news.php?extend.4501>

On January 16, 2012, Nabīla Munīb succeeded Muḥammad Mujāhid, as she was officially elected head of the PSU, becoming the very first Moroccan woman leader of a political party. From the beginning of her political action, the new Secretary of the PSU underlined the necessity of unifying the Moroccan left by creating a new leftist front in the national political landscape.²⁸³

In fact, according to Nabīla Munīb:

The voice of the left is hardly heard in the framework of responses for social demands. Today, we do not have any orthodox ideology to follow since there is an ongoing renewal on the ideological level. The left needs an honest elite and a connection between politics and morality. The party and the left developed a project to build a harmonious, just and democratic society that respects rights and freedoms and in which citizenship and social justice are achieved.²⁸⁴

4.3 Being leftist today

With the purpose of fully understand Nabīla Munīb and the PSU's vision of the Moroccan society and the role played today by the leftist parties in the country, I believe that the analysis of an article published by Markaz Muḥammad bin Sa'īd 'Ayt Īdir lil-Abḥāth wa-al-Dirāsāt in *Majallat al-Rabī'* journal in 2016 might be quite helpful.²⁸⁵

In the article, Nabīla Munīb answers few questions related to the meaning of being leftist today in Morocco. In doing so, she offers her analysis of the crisis situation lived by the left in the last years and she reflects on the opportunities and responsibilities the leftists need to assume in order to overcome the deep socio-economic crisis that Morocco is experiencing.

Firstly, Nabīla Munīb appears more than aware of the global nature of the crisis of the left today. Indeed, there were some crucial events that, according to her view, resulted in the decline of the leftist parties both in the international and domestic context. In particular, after the acceptance of an extreme and ungoverned capitalism, the left lost its original identity and turned into social liberalism. For Munīb, these developments led people to believe there is no real possibility in pursuing a leftist political project and therefore the left is often conceived as dead or simply unable to be truly leftist.

Individualism and materialism subordinated some of the core principles of the left, such as solidarity, and the negative sides of neoliberalism resulted in the drastically low turnouts and political mobilization of the last years. Moreover, the high unemployment rates, especially among young

²⁸³ "Nabila Mounib – Secrétaire générale du PSU", in *Challenge.ma*, 6/03/2015. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/challenge/75498>

²⁸⁴ Al-Salāwī L., *op. cit.*, Available online: <https://www.lejournaldetangernews.com/news.php?extend.4501>

²⁸⁵ Mounib N., "Être de gauche aujourd'hui au Maroc", in *Majallat al-Rabī'*, Issue 4, Markaz Muḥammad Binsa'īd Āyit Īdir lil-Abḥāth wa-al-Dirāsāt, 2016, pp. 139-148

people, the uneven development of certain regions and the unequal distribution of wealth led to a deep social crisis that calls for a strong political engagement and the establishment of a new left.

Munīb accuses the international agencies, notably the IMF and the WB, to implement specific socio-economic conditions to subject nations through the increase of their foreign debt and through the growing inequalities within the countries. This uncontrolled capitalism threatens social and economic cohesion and it happens to be the very reason behind the increasingly widespread social movements that continue to mobilize in the Arab countries and worldwide.

Generally speaking, being leftist today means fighting against political and economic interventionism and struggling effectively against market forces that enable the predominance of imperialism and capitalism, which had dire consequences for the Moroccan society. Especially, Munīb points out that international terrorism, migration fluxes, wars and conflicts, climate migrants and global warming are all caused by the dominating economic system that governments really need to start managing and controlling.

In sum, the PSU leader recognizes the international scope and the economic nature of the social issues that the whole world is living and she is conscious that the Moroccan leftist will not just have to deal with internal matters but with international questions as well. Undoubtedly, regional, transregional and global processes develop in a constant interaction, therefore the necessity to provide a new political project capable of facing any kind of challenge.

Concerning the domestic context, Nabīla Munīb provides a serious reconstruction of the political developments between the years of lead the end of the alternance government. She argues that the harsh repression exerted by the regime and the constant violations of basic civil rights contributed in giving the “coup de grace”²⁸⁶ to the Moroccan leftist parties. According to her view, for several years the USFP was able to make a real stand against the monarchy, also thanks to the popular support of both illiterate masses and educated and politicized elites. Nonetheless, since the “machine infernale du regime makhzénien”²⁸⁷ would have never accepted a real division of powers and also due to the opportunism of a large part of the leftist leaders that abandoned their original principles and values, the project of the USFP was dramatically doomed to fail. Munīb argues that both the approval of the 1996 constitution and the acceptance to take part in the 1998 government were missed opportunities to initiate a real democratization process in Morocco. As a result, the left ended up losing any popularity or credibility and due to its balkanization and to the entire cooptation of its leadership it

²⁸⁶ Mounib N., *op. cit.*, p., 145

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

seems unlikely that the former leftist parties could play a role in the rise and development of a new leftist project.

However, it appears that the main political priority of any leftist party truly willing to improve the socio-economic conditions of Morocco has to be the switch from a constitutional to a parliamentary monarchy, thereby assuring a real implementation of democratic reforms.

It is quite interesting to notice that Munīb identifies three major obstacles that prevent the resolution of the main issues of the country. In the first place there is the monarchy. Indeed, the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a narrow circle of people, notably the monarch and the all Makhzen, has always been the leading cause of the socio-economic inequalities and political troubles faced by Morocco. Furthermore, the tremendous power that the King can exert will never permit the establishment of a rule of law within democratic institutions.

Second, Nabīla Munīb underlines the pivotal role played by the aforementioned international agencies and the austerity regime imposed by their diktats. However, once again, the relations between international actors and domestic autocratic rule as well as their mutual economic interests cannot be overlooked. Indeed, the achievement of economic improvements can only be accomplished after deep changings in the political despotic system.

Lastly, Munīb seems to be particularly hostile towards the islamist parties. As it was discussed in the second chapter, the PJD won consecutively the 2011 and 2016 elections and still today it is the major political force in Morocco.

According to the PSU leader, the rising inequalities, the uneven distribution of wealth and the resulting feelings of frustration and humiliation paved the way to the spread of religious fundamentalism that manipulates religion for non-religious purposes and it benefits from the weakness of the left in order to present itself as a new, alternative project that proposes the return “aux sources”²⁸⁸ as the only way to solve social problems. Nevertheless, Munīb points out that the islamist totally embraced an unfettered globalisation and the so-called dictatorship of markets which exacerbates social inequalities. Therefore, she finds highly unlikely that the islamist might have the real answer to the issues of Morocco. Furthermore, as suggested in chapter two, by accepting to lead the government in 2011, the PJD is now working alongside the regime thus following the directions of the King.

²⁸⁸ Mounib N., *op. cit.*, p., 140

Hence, Munīb stresses the issue of the relation between state and religion, underlying her will to separate as much as possible the confessional dimension to the political one.

By responding to the question of what the meaning of being leftist is, Munīb makes an interesting reflection by pointing out the main ideological stances and concrete political actions that the left must take on board.

First of all, being leftist today in Morocco means keeping the fundamental principles of the orthodox left as well as being able of sizing the opportunities that arise in order to lead the emergence of a new left. The overriding priority for any leftist force is to push for the implementation of a real representative democracy. In other words, the left must keep fighting for constitutional and political reforms with the aim of switching to a parliamentary monarchy. The democratization of the state and its society represents the only political tool through which social justice and equal distribution of wealth could be accomplished.

According to Munīb, solely and exclusively from a profound change of the political system a new plan for economic development can be formulated. This latter will have to focus on social justice, social development and protection of human dignity. In this regard, particular attention is given to the right of quality public education. Munīb stresses the necessity to protect public schools and universities as well as the need to encourage scientific research. In addition to education, access to adequate housing and providing access to work are two other essential priorities.

Being leftist is mostly about taking the side of all victims of inequalities, poors, marginalized and underprivileged people and also being able to find the right solutions to overcome the social crisis. In Munīb's view, promoting a cultural revolution and enforcing freedoms and human dignity are the only ways to convince people that the only political response possible is a leftist one, capable of giving voice to the fresh social movements that are arising.

Furthermore, Nabīla Munīb argues that the Moroccan left will also need to develop a strong international agenda. Indeed, humanity is facing enormous challenges that, according to Munīb, can only be overcome with the efforts of all the leftist global forces. High on the list, there are the question of peace and security in the world, the nuclear disarmament, the fight against climate change and the development of renewable energies. In addition to the fight against overproduction, overconsumption and exploitation of resources. Summing up, social justice, equal distribution of wealth, struggle against poverty, inequalities and discriminations appear to be worldwide challenges which can only be resolved through the cooperation of progressive forces.

Returning to the domestic priorities, the PSU aims at pursuing the appropriate reforms in order to establish a state based on justice and integrity. In this respect, a reform of the justice system aimed at ensuring the independence of the judiciary are the principle yet challenging tasks that a serious government should face. The leftist agenda also questions the rentier system, the commonplace corruption, the abuse of power and authority and the impunity of all those close to the monarchy.

A further point that appears to be quintessential are also the gender equality and women's rights issues. Indeed, Nabīla Munīb severely criticizes the Moroccan patriarchal system in which sexism and the lack of an egalitarian culture are sadly common.

Concerning the major economic reforms required by the country, the PSU restates its commitment to find alternatives to the market economy in order to claim Moroccan national sovereignty, to fight unemployment and prevent the privatization of key services such as education and healthcare.

In conclusion, the leader of the PSU underlines that, for all the aforementioned reasons, a new leftist political project must emerge. The spread of populist and extremist movements, the predominance of market logic and private system and the limitless power of the makhzenian regime require a new leftist force, strong, united and able to overcome its balkanization and the ideological metamorphosis of some of its members.

In the first decade of the 2000s, the PADS, CNI and PSU realised the need to build a new leftist alliance rethinking the ideological framework of the left and taking into consideration the political and social upheavals of the last years.

According to Nabīla Munīb, the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique is nothing less than the concretization of this project. In her view, the FGD is a fresh political force that claims a parliamentary democracy and a real separation of powers and their independence. Today, the primary aim of the three leftist forces constituting the FGD is to offer a third way between the religious fundamentalisms and the fundamentalism of the authoritarian regime.

The leftist project behind the FGD seeks to establish a new political force able to meet the demands of all popular and social movements that are protesting against the increasing living costs, the minimizing of the role of the state, the uneven concentration of powers, inequalities and unemployment. Therefore, the program of the new left is principally based around real democracy, modernity and social justice.

Nevertheless, Munīb argues that none of this would be possible without a real democratic debate within the leftist forces in order to analyse and critic the path of the Moroccan left with the ultimate goal of overcoming the crisis of progressive and democratic movements.

In this regard, Munīb states that the FGD must be capable of fighting internal divisions within the parties as well as being inclusive of all democratic political forces such as trade unionist, civil society, intellectuals, feminists, younger people and Amazigh movements. Indeed, it appears quintessential to establish a close link between political action, social fight and cultural revolution by creating new balances of power that might encourage a real global democratic change.

Concluding, the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique seeks somehow to move forward the negative experience of the governmental left and the dire consequences of its political action. In doing so, the new leftist must engage against financial globalisation and it must safeguard the values of empowerment, solidarity and ethic, recreating the close relations between the political and the unionist action.

5. FÉDÉRATION DE LA GAUCHE DÉMOCRATIQUE (FGD)

5.1 The 2007 elections

Even though the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique (FGD) was officially founded in 2014, the history of the new leftist alliance dates back to the 2007 elections. Indeed, the FGD arose as an electoral alliance between the PADS, the PSU and the CNI. On March 18, 2007, the three parties established four commissions in order to define common status and electoral rolls, a shared electoral program and to organize political mobilization and propaganda. One month later, on April 22, a large demonstration was arranged in Casablanca and a formal announcement of the foundation of the alliance, under the name of Alliance de la Gauche Démocratique (AGD), was made.²⁸⁹

On the occasion, Muḥammad al-Sāssī, one of the major leaders of the PSU, declared that the union of the three parties was the result of a long and patient process that relied on the willingness of creating a new, strong leftist force capable of being truly competitive in the local political landscape. According to al-Sāssī, the joint political program drawn up for the 2007 elections was based on four pivotal points: firstly, the main aim of the AGD was to apply the greatest political pressure in order to adopt a new and genuinely democratic constitution. Secondly, it was imperative to take a different approach towards the social issues of the country, through a deep fight against marginalization, unemployment and poverty. In this regard, the leftist parties pledged to raise the guaranteed minimum

²⁸⁹ Herradi J. E., “Législatives 2007 : Le PSU veut jouer les trouble-fête”, in *L’Economiste*, 27/04/2007. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/leconomiste/77926>

wage to 3000 DH, to provide financial support to unemployed people and to implement recruitment policies. The necessary funds for fulfilling these objectives, al-Sāssī stated, would have been found by a reorganization of the tax system, through, for instance, the implementation of a new inheritance tax and a higher taxation of wealthiest individuals. Thirdly, the AGD found it necessary to develop a global plan aimed at raising moral standards in the socio-economic system. By collaborating with civic society, the leftists' purpose was to put an end to the embezzlement and waste of public money. It appeared quintessential to protect the economic competitiveness of Morocco and to stop the so-called "makhzen économique"²⁹⁰, in order to overcome the favours-and-privileges system by implementing a constant and efficient control. Finally, the alliance sought a better management of the relations with other countries to best handle the negative effects of globalization in order to preserve the domestic economic balance. In this view, the AGD highlighted the importance of reviewing free trade agreements, of protecting food safety in the country, of establishing a fund to boost national economy and the need to make every effort for "l'édification d'une mondialisation à visage humain".²⁹¹

Predictably, the Confédération Démocratique du Travail (CDT), under the direction of Nūbīr al-Amawī, endorsed the leftist alliance as it invited the labour class to vote for the PADS, the PSU and the CNI. The national council of the CDT agreed that a real democratic change could have been achieved only with the support of the working class, since its main role is to fight against financial and political lobbies, which are responsible for the corruption and interference in the electoral processes. Indeed, for the leadership of the union, the candidacy of the AGD was an historical opportunity for "rompre avec toutes les expériences et les pratiques électorales corrompues qui ont entravé le développement du Maroc".²⁹²

Nevertheless, the 2007 elections were not a real success for the new leftist parties. As described in the second chapter, the Istiqlāl and the PJD figured in the first places, followed by few monarchical parties. Instead, the PADS-CNI-PSU alliance won only 5 seats, positioning itself as thirteenth party of the country.²⁹³

However, what matter more around the role of the PSU, PADS and CNI in 2007 was not their performances or the number of seats obtained but rather their decision, for the very first time, to build

²⁹⁰ Hamrouch M., Mohamed Sassi: "L'USFP considère le PSU comme son ennemi juré", in *Agadirnet*, 15/06/2007. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/agadirnet/3780>

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² "La CDT appelle à voter pour l'alliance de la gauche", in *Aujourd'hui le Maroc*, 28/08/2007. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourd'hui/135388>

²⁹³ Storm L., "Testing Morocco: the parliamentary elections of September 2007", *The Journal of North African Studies*, 13:1, 2008, p. 37-54

a leftist and anti-capitalist front that might represent an alternative to the USFP, the PPS and, in general, to the disappointing governmental left. In other words, even though the electoral alliance of 2007 was mostly driven by the opportunity to achieve better performances in the legislative elections, it undoubtedly laid groundwork for a stronger and more decisive alliance, that attempted to play an increasingly important role in the following years.

5.2 The political and economic environment behind the foundation of the FGD

By reading Moroccan newspapers, in which I could find numerous testimonies of members of the PADS, PSU and CNI between 2007 and 2014, in addition to the analysis of the official political document of the FGD, I identified three major motives behind the formation of the leftist alliance in 2014. First of all, there is undoubtedly the failure of the alternance government and the profound crisis of socialism both at a domestic and a global level. In the second place, there is the worsening of the socio-economic crisis experienced by Morocco in the first decade of the 2000s and the overwhelming power of the monarchy. Lastly, and this aspect is strictly connected to the previous one, there are the Moroccan Arab spring, the 20 February Movement and the disappointing and unjust response of the King to the crisis.

Here, I will not dwell any longer on the first point, since it has already been widely discussed in the previous chapter. Nonetheless, it might be interesting to highlight that the unsuccessful experience of the al-Yūsūfi government, and the international crisis of socialism after the dissolution of the USSR, are specifically mentioned in the political document of the FGD as two of the main reasons behind the foundation of the leftist alliance:

This important decision [the foundation of the FGD] translates the awareness, the ambition and the determination as it responds to the objective necessity, within the framework of an unified organization of leftist militant forces, to unify and mobilize the efforts and the energies of the masses of our people. Furthermore, this project is part of the global process of re-foundation of the socialist movement after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc and it is constituted by a new breakthrough that places the leftist movements in the world in a different context in terms of intellectual references, organizational forms and connections with the new social movements, in order to face the failure of the neo-liberal model and to elaborate theories, programs and policies for socialism in the 21st century.²⁹⁴ [...] The thesis of democratic transition, that was established by two prominent events, the alternance government in 1998 and the transfer of power from the former King to the new one [...] eventually turned into a desperate attempt to improve the assimilation in the regime through the governmental collaboration without

²⁹⁴ Translated from Arabic: Faydrāliyya al-Yasār al-dimūqrāṭiyya, al-waraqā al-siyāsiyya, p. 1. Available online: <http://www.fgd.ma/fr/la-fgd/>

guarantees or any possibility of change. Therefore, it ended up being a catastrophic failure and it made it easier for the conservative and reactionary powers to cut off the democratic forces from the political field.²⁹⁵

As it was previously mentioned, after 2002 the political situation actually got even worse. The democratic transition turned out to be a simple illusion and the King strengthened his power through the establishment of new loyalist parties and the reinforcement of its international allies. He was able to consolidate his relations with the United States and the European Union, both in the economic and security sectors. Beside the signing of free trade agreements with the US in 2004, Morocco was part of the EU Frontex for Border Surveillance and it joined the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership in 2006. At the same time, the monarchy in Morocco never stopped controlling the independent press and the freedom of speech on issues relating to the King, the Sahara question and the religious matters. Moreover, deep socio-economic inequalities persisted in the country, especially the literacy rate and the uneven development between rural and urban areas, the unsolved problem in the Sahara and, on the political level, the distrust of the voting public in the political system, that resulted in severely low turnouts. Furthermore, starting from the 2000s, the country witnessed widespread protest movements that were gradually carrying out new forms of popular mobilization. As stated by Bennafla *et al.*, the 20FM was nothing but the highest point of a long series of social demonstrations that intensified between 2003 and 2005 in a wide range of actions, such as parades, sits-in and rallies. In other words, during the first decade of the 21st century, occasional and long-lasting protests broke out in the country both in big cities and in rural areas, such as mountain and desert regions. Most of the time, the demonstrators claimed material requirements like access to basic services and the use of local resources and they expressed a severe aversion and dissatisfaction towards the political power.²⁹⁶

In fact, as it was rightly emphasised by Paciello, in both the so-called Arab springs and the mobilizations that took place in the decade before, the socio-economic and political claims were always interrelated. The further implementation of neoliberal reforms after 2000 resulted in an increasing casualization of labour market and in a diversification of labour interests. In fact, the public policies aimed at attracting foreign investments were concentrated in the coastal and urban areas, while free trade zones, development projects and infrastructure investments were focused in Casablanca, Rabat and Tangier that became the main commercial centres. However, beside the creation of insecure, temporary and unlawful employments in the urban and coastal areas, the

²⁹⁵ Translated from Arabic: Faydrāliyya al-Yasār al-dimūqrāṭiyya, al-waraqā al-siyāsiyya, p. 3. Available online: <http://www.fgd.ma/fr/la-fgd/>

²⁹⁶ Bennafla K., Seniguer H., “Le Maroc à l’épreuve du printemps arabe : une contestation désamorcée?”, *Outre-Terre* 2011/3 (n° 29), p. 143-158

neoliberal reforms caused a severe downturn in all those marginalised areas regularly exploited for their natural resources and then severely marginalized in the investment and development projects. In Morocco, the uneven development between urban and rural environments led to the emerge of protests that clearly reflected the political and economic issues of the areas, as well as the crisis and negative view of the political parties and trade unions.²⁹⁷

Indeed, Paciello states, there is no hierarchy between the economic demands and the rejection of a certain political system, as the latter is always at the basis of the economic policies carried out. Before 2011, the social protests in the poorest regions of Morocco, despite being totally spontaneous and fragmented, led to the rising of a major political awareness that turned out to be quintessential in the following years.²⁹⁸

Indeed, on the heels of the wave of protest movements across the Arab world in 2011, on February 20, tens of thousands of Moroccans took to the streets in numerous cities joining the rising 20 February Movement. Although this movement lacked of a real structural organization and clear leadership, the protesters put forth a wide range of demands, questioning the power of the monarchy by calling for political changes. These protests represented the exacerbated culmination of the political and economic demands of the previous years, advocating for an equal distribution of wealth, condemning corruption, clientelism, high unemployment and widespread abuse of authority. As pointed out by Arieff, someone even called for a switch of the political system into a parliamentary monarchy, with a major redefinition of the powers of the King.²⁹⁹

Indeed, the protesters went so far as to question the very pillars of the Moroccan political system, namely the absolute power of the King and his sacredness, as they demanded the abolition of the 19th and 23th articles of the 1996 constitution.³⁰⁰ As pointed out by Bennafla K. *et al.*, “C’est la première fois qu’un mouvement de protestation populaire ose remettre en cause le statut du roi et prendre pour cible les attributs extra-légaux qui marquent son « irresponsabilité » sur les plans juridique et politique”.³⁰¹

²⁹⁷ Paciello M. C., “Le mobilitazioni legate al lavoro nel contesto delle riforme neoliberali: un primo tentativo di sistematizzare la letteratura su Egitto, Marocco e Tunisia”, *STUDI MAGHREBINI*, vol. XVI, 2019.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ Arieff A., “Morocco: Current Issues”, Congressional Research Service, December 20, 2011, p. 1-26

³⁰⁰ “Le Roi, Amir Al Mouminine, représentant suprême de la nation, symbole de son unité, garant de la pérennité et de la continuité de l’État, veille au respect de l’Islam et de la Constitution. Il est le protecteur des droits et libertés des citoyens, groupes sociaux et collectivités. Il garantit l’indépendance de la nation et l’intégrité territoriale du royaume dans ses frontières authentiques” (Art. 19). “La personne du Roi est inviolable et sacrée” (Art. 23). Source : Moroccan Constitution of September 13, 1996.

³⁰¹ Bennafla K., *op. cit.*, p. 147

Furthermore, on the economic level, the 20FM called for an end to the “Makhzen économique”³⁰², making both economical and moral demands: the royal family needed to stop to interfere with economy and to be part of corruption practices that represent an obstacle to the free trade and open market, to the investments and to the modernization of an economy that needs transparency, fair competition, and the end of dependence on foreign remittances.³⁰³

As far as the monarchy was concerned, by using all his media power, the King was able to conduct a campaign of discrediting against the organizers of the protests, alleged to be “enemies of territorial integrity”³⁰⁴. Even though the monarchy tried to avoid any armed clash in the big urban centres like Rabat or Casablanca, in other peripheral contexts, such as al-Hoceima, on the day of 20 February, several protesters were killed by security forces.

It was on March 9, 2011, that the monarch gave a speech to the nation, announcing a series of new political reforms. For instance, the King pledged to strengthen transparency in the public sector, to enhance decentralization of power, to reform the justice sector and to improve freedom of expression. However, the main innovation that was proclaimed was the emanation of a new constitution that was eventually harshly rejected by the leftist parties.³⁰⁵

Interestingly enough, the political document of the FGD opens by addressing the issue of the 20 February Movement and its stances as well as the position of the parties regarding the 2011 constitution:

The 20FM constituted, without any doubt, the strongest political and social Moroccan movement in the 21st century. It is an expansion of the traditional resistance of our people against injustice, corruption and tyranny over the decades and it started by a bold initiative of young Moroccans in interaction and responsiveness with the Arab region and the Maghreb [...]. An objective evaluation of the social and political movement triggered and led by the 20FM and in which all the components of the democratic left effectively contributed, shows that, one more time, the political regime was able to get around the majority of demands of the Moroccan people concerning freedom, democracy, social justice [...]. The incapacity of the 20FM of achieving its objectives and offering the conditions for its sustainability, cumulation and development is due to numerous internal and external reasons [...].³⁰⁶

Thereafter, the FGD identifies some major motives behind the failure of the 20FM. First of all, there is the strategy of the regime and its experience in dealing with social movements. In 2011, the

³⁰² Bennafla K., *op. cit.*, p. 146

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ Molina I. F., “The Monarchy vs. the 20 February Movement: Who Holds the Reins of Political Change in Morocco?”, *Mediterranean Politics*, 16:3, 2011, p. 435-441

³⁰⁵ Arieff A., *op. cit.*

³⁰⁶ Translated from Arabic: Faydrāliyya al-Yasār al-dimūqrāṭiyya, al-waraqā al-siyāsiyya, p. 3-4. Available online: <http://www.fgd.ma/fr/la-fgd/>

manipulations of the monarchy translated in the announcement of the constitutional revision (*al-murāja‘a al-dustūriyya*) and the formation of a specific consultative committee tasked with the study of the amendments. Nevertheless, after three months, it was quite clear that the constitutional referendum would have been held without real political reforms and, once again, the King was able to mobilize all the conservative forces in order to preserve the authoritarian nature of the regime. In addition to the loyalist parties, the FGD denounces as well the “complicity of some forces considered part of the democratic fold”³⁰⁷, the cooperation of some Islamist parties and it underlines how the monarchy exerted its influence on organizations in civil society, mosques and media outlets.

With the 2011 constitutions, the King remains “inviolable”³⁰⁸ and it is claimed that respect is due to him (art. 46). Moreover, the King must appoint a prime minister who belongs to the party that wins the elections and therefore gets the majority of seats in the parliament. After that, although on the advice of the prime minister, the monarch appoints all the ministers and the members of the government (art. 47).³⁰⁹

Finally, the executive power is shared by the government and the monarchy. Furthermore, and this detail is highly important, even though the head of the government presides the Government Council without the involvement of the King, the monarch keeps chairing the Council of Ministers, that seems to be of greater importance. In fact, while the Government Council has power on overall policies like State administration, international affairs and financial acts, it is the Council of Ministers, headed by the King himself, that has real authority, since it controls any constitutional revision, it makes decisions regarding the army, it can declare war as well as the martial law or amnesty.³¹⁰

In other words, Muḥammad VI was capable of deceiving the protesters giving the appearance of implementing democracy by limiting the powers of the monarchy while, in reality, the King knew how to keep his power and influence in the real decision-making bodies.

As a consequence of its dissatisfaction, in 2011, the PSU refused to join the consultative commission named by the King and aimed at revising the constitution.³¹¹

Shortly afterwards, Nabīla Munīb, followed as well by the PASD and CNI, called for a boycott of the constitutional referendum, since it did not meet the requests of the protesters that were supported and

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p. 4

³⁰⁸ Moroccan 2011 Constitution (art. 46)

³⁰⁹ Moroccan 2011 Constitution (art. 47)

³¹⁰ Madani M., Maghraoui D., Zerbouni S., “The 2011 Moroccan Constitution: A critical Analysis”, International IDEA resources on Constitution Building, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2012, p. 18-32

³¹¹ Ait Akdim Y., “Au Maroc, Nabila Mounib veut incarner une troisième voie”, *Le Monde Afrique*, September 27, 2016. Available online : https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2016/09/27/au-maroc-nabila-mounib-veut-incarner-une-troisieme-voie_5004182_3212.html

shared by the leftists. Moreover, even though the three parties participated in the 2007 elections, they boycotted the 2011 ones, protesting against the insufficient power given to the parliament and therefore not taking any part in the electoral process.

On the occasion, Nabīla Munīb accused the regime of disregarding the requests of the 20FM stating that “La seule façon de concilier monarchie et démocratie est d’adopter une monarchie parlementaire. C’était la revendication centrale du mouvement du 20-Février, qui a été étouffé dans l’œuf”.³¹²

Furthermore, even if the FGD identifies some weaknesses in the 20FM itself, such as the absence of a unique leadership and the lack of a single and shared message that could combine the interests of all popular classes the alliance severely criticises the political action of the leftist forces as well. Once more, they had not been capable of forming a common and unified front in order to support the protesters and fight against the Makhzen and the fundamentalist non-democratic forces. For the umpteenth time, this failure impeded a real democratic switchover and a regime change, since the 2011 constitution eventually represented nothing more than another authoritarian upgrade of the Moroccan monarchy. For this reasons, according to the political document of the alliance, the Moroccan left must learn some lessons and work very hard in order to offer again the political conditions for its revitalization and to clarify its leftist political line.³¹³

To sum up, the political events of the first decade of the 21st century in Morocco appear to be of central importance in the development of a new, larger leftist force in the country. The deteriorating of the socio-economic conditions of the citizens, along with an insufferable authoritarian regime and the complete absence of a leftist opposition force, paved the way to the emerge of a new political entity which attempts to overcome this political crisis that affects the whole society.

Over the following years, the parties of the alliance continued opposing to the Makhzen and to the increasingly strong PJD, that, as discussed in the last chapter, won the 2011 elections thereby becoming the major political force in the country.

In this scenario, three years later, the PSU, PADS and CNI heralded their switch from simple electoral alliance to a more formal union which aims at attracting all progressive leftist parties in Morocco. On January 30, 2014, the announcement of the foundation of the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique (Faydrāliyya al-yasār al-dimūqrāṭī) was officially made.³¹⁴

³¹² *Ibid.*

³¹³ Faydrāliyya al-yasār al-dimūqrāṭīyya, al-waraqā al-siyāsiyya, p. 6. Available online: <http://www.fgd.ma/fr/la-fgd/>

³¹⁴ Al-mawqī‘ al-rasmī li-l-Faydrāliyya al-yasār al-dimūqrāṭīyya: <http://www.fgd.ma/fr/la-fgd/>

5.3 The Statute of the FGD

Concurrently with the foundation of the alliance, the three parties signed the two firsts formal documents of the FGD, the Statute and the political document.

The first section (*al-bāb al-awwal*) of the Official Statute (articles 1-4), specifies the parties involved, namely the PSU (*al-ḥizb al-iştirākī al-muwahḥad*), the PADS (*ḥizb al-ṭalī‘a al-dimuqrāṭī al-iştirākī*) and the CNI (*ḥizb al-mu’tamar al-watanī al-ittiḥādī*) and it defines the name of the new rising union (*ittiḥād*), as *Faydrāliyya al-yasār al-dimuqrāṭī*, headquartered in Casablanca.

The second section (*al-bāb al-tānī*) is titled “Objectives and relations between the parties constituting the Fédération”³¹⁵ and it opens by stating that:

The Fédération aims at improving and strengthening the collective efforts of the constituting parties, at developing their joint activity, pooling their energies and mobilizing their potential towards the struggle for a socialist and democratic society. In order to achieve this goal, the Fédération works and fights for:

1. A profound reform of the political regime for transforming the executive monarchy into a fully-fledged parliamentary monarchy framed by a democratic constitution that guarantees to the Moroccan people the full exercise of their sovereignty through free and fairly elected representative bodies, from which a government is responsible for setting the general policy of the country and implementing it in all areas and that codifies the conditions for a democratic transfer of power, a true separation of powers, the independence of the judiciary, and the respect for public and individual freedoms and human rights.
2. Restructuring the national economy by adopting a new economic strategy based on the provision of the conditions for a real economic take-off that puts an end to the rentier economy and privileges, and that might raise the pace of sustainable development, integrate the informal economy in the organized economic cycle, create adequate employment opportunities and reduce the negative effects of liberal globalization, redistribute national wealth according to the rules of fairness and social justice and meet the needs of citizens in employment, housing, health, education, transportation, a healthy environment and other services necessary to live in freedom and dignity.
3. Completing the tasks of national liberation by establishing national sovereignty over our desert regions, liberating Ceuta and Melilla and the Chafarinas islands, unifying the Greater Morocco on democratic and progressive basis that guarantee to the people of the region the achievement of economic integration, social progress and the advancement of civilisation, and enter the era of the major regional groups to face the challenges of globalization and international competition. Supporting the struggle of Arab people for liberation and contributing to the democratization of political, financial and economic international institutions, and directing their support to the poor people and developing countries and eradicating poverty in the world.

³¹⁵ Translated from Arabic: *Faydrāliyya al-Yasār al-dimūqrāṭiyya, al-nizām al-’asāsī*, p. 3. Available online: <http://www.fgd.ma/fr/la-fgd/>

4. A reconsideration of public education through its deep reform to enable the country to have a unified and qualified national school to win the challenge of comprehensive development, and to build a Moroccan human being who is able not only to absorb and cope with the technological and scientific transformations that humanity knows, but also capable of creating and being creative and to positively contributing to human civilization, both intellectually and creatively. Education reform is the natural gateway for the advancement of the conditions of Moroccan youth, opening doors of hope for them in order to build their future, achieving their aspirations in work, production and social stability, and encouraging scientific research, intellectual creativity and society to benefit from their enormous energies in the country's sophistication and development.
5. Modernizing and supporting the national culture based on the multi-dimensional identity of our people (Arab - Amazigh - Islamic) which would allow us to renew our cultural heritage and open up to the diligence of founding a true, civilised enlightened renaissance, and to interrupt with the political employment of the Islamic religion by any party inside or outside the state.
6. The liberation of the public media from the stifling guardianship of the state, and its democratization into a modern and advanced media that reflects the pluralism of the Moroccan political, cultural and linguistic society, and that contributes to educating, sensitizing and qualifying citizens to enter in a knowledge-based society, and to assimilate the achievements of human civilization and scientific progress without an inferiority complex.

Right after, in article 6, the Statute specifies that each party maintains its legal personality, its internal system and functioning apparatus, its programs and activities with the exception of specific cases for which no component of the FGD is allowed to decide individually by opposing to the resolutions passed among the alliance. These cases (art. 7) are matters related to the constitution, the elections and the issue of the completion of national territorial integrity.³¹⁶

The rest of the Statute discusses the National executive bodies, it defines its members, objectives and tasks, such as drafting plans and programs, implementing decisions, managing the finance of the FGD and so on. It specifies the role of all national, regional and local bodies and, in general terms, it provides information related to more practical and administrative matters. Concerning the relations with other political forces (art. 14-15), every Moroccan party can join the Fédération as long as it proves to have a progressive and democratic approach and it ratifies the Statute of the alliance. Moreover, every member of the FGD is free to initiate projects, cooperation and coordination with other political parties outside the Fédération, provided that this does not contradict the objectives of the FGD. Nevertheless, no party can join any other political federation or alliance.

³¹⁶ Faydrāliyya al-Yasār al-dimūqrāṭiyya, al-nizām al-'asāsī, p. 4. Available online: <http://www.fgd.ma/fr/la-fgd/>

5.4 The political document

As stated above, the political document³¹⁷ of the party opens by shedding light on the political and social motives, both at national and international level, that led to the establishment of a new leftist force. The document specifically underlines that it will not be possible to fully understand the Moroccan and Arab domestic context without taking into consideration the international scenario of the last decades. In this view, the FGD interprets the popular uprisings of 2011 as the predictable effect of the authoritarian regimes and their efforts to cope with the political, economic and cultural transformations that the world experience after the end of the Cold War. The difficulties faced by the Arab nations in their transition to democracy appears to be due to the rule of totalitarian regimes and fundamentalist forces. Furthermore, according to the document, it was precisely the crisis of capitalist globalization, that coincided with the enfeeblement of the leftist forces, that led the conservative ones to forge alliances with the imperialist western powers and the domestic despotic regimes.

In this scenario, the document continues, in order to revitalize the democratic forces and the action of their militants, the FGD proposes an outline programme based on five core points: the switch from a makhzenian state (*al-dawla al-mahzaniyya*) to a democratic state, the provision of the conditions for a democratic transition, the resolution of the issue of national integrity, the implementation of economic progress and social justice, and, last but not least, the fight for free and fair elections.

Concerning the first three points, which are actually strictly connected, the FGD pledges to fight against the Makhzen, and by that it means to end to the absolute power of the King and the all system of political clout and economic interests around the Royal institution. From this perspective, the Makhzen is conceived as the tyrannical and oppressive regime that rule over Morocco, including all the loyalist elites that make even harder a genuine political change.

Fighting against the Makhzen means eradicating corruption and tyranny, implementing separations of powers and “inaugurating a new historical stage in the life of our country and our people in which freedom, dignity and social justice are embodied.”³¹⁸ Moreover, the FGD places their political commitment for democratization in a wider fight that roots in the post-independence period. The leftist forces see themselves as the inheritors of all those parties, movements and activists that struggled to limit the absolute powers of the monarch, sometimes laying down their lives for the cause.

³¹⁷ Faydrāliyya al-Yasār al-dimūqrāṭiyya, al-waraqā al-siyāsiyya. Available online: <http://www.fgd.ma/fr/la-fgd/>

³¹⁸ Translated from Arabic: Faydrāliyya al-Yasār al-dimūqrāṭiyya, al-nizām al-'asāsī, p. 8. Available online: <http://www.fgd.ma/fr/la-fgd/>

Furthermore, the political document describes the alternance government as the biggest failure of the leftist parties that eventually had two major negative impacts, namely the decline of the Moroccan left and, at the same time, a rise in popularity of the King, both in domestic and international contexts.

Summing up, the Fédération looks at parliamentary monarchy as the most appropriate solution to overcome the contradictions between the progressive, socialist and liberation forces and the reactionary and conservative ones. In this view, there cannot be a real democracy without the complete abolition of the Makhzenian system.

Nevertheless, the precondition for achieving democracy it appears to be the emergence of a strong democratic force with a firm and fair leadership that undertakes to fulfil the democratic transition and the fight against corruption and tyranny. For this reason, according to the Statute of the alliance, the FGD must work to assemble and unite all democratic forces within the same political framework.

The next phase, affirms the document, “will be the litmus test for all leftist forces to see if they assimilated the past lesson and, in particular, to see their ability to mobilize their principles, to overcome little expediencies in order to rehabilitate the mass struggle and to join action on the basis of the commitment to democratic principles and progressive values”.³¹⁹ Moreover, the FGD also underlines the importance of engaging a dialogue with the components of Moroccan society, the Amazigh democratic movement and also with the enlightened Islamic forces, in order to strengthen their connection to a modern democratic project.

Likewise, the leftist alliance believes that the issue of territorial unity cannot be overcome except by a change of course from past practices, above all the extreme centralisation of power in the hands of the King. The Makhzen is the only real political force that manage the issue of “recovery of the southern provinces”³²⁰ and its action did nothing but deepening social and regional imbalances and unfair distribution of national wealth. The completion of national sovereignty, over all parts of national territory, including Ceuta, Melilla and the Chafarinas islands, requires a new approach that might be able to preserve national sovereignty avoiding tensions and blackmailing and working with the aim of finding a negotiated political solution. In sum, any progress to find a final solution related to the question of national integrity or to any project of regionalisation depend on the country’s progress in building a real democracy. Indeed, without the implementation of profound constitutional reforms that limit the centralisation of authority any further discussion seems pointless.

³¹⁹ Translated from Arabic: Faydrāliyya al-Yasār al-dimūqrāṭiyya, al-nizām al-’asāsī, p. 9. Available online: <http://www.fgd.ma/fr/la-fgd/>

³²⁰ Translated from Arabic: Faydrāliyya al-Yasār al-dimūqrāṭiyya, al-nizām al-’asāsī, p. 10. Available online: <http://www.fgd.ma/fr/la-fgd/>

With regard to the economic sphere, the political document of the FGD reiterates what the alliance agreed on in its Statute. The Fédération is well aware of the economic and social problems faced by the citizens in all sectors without exception. Morocco performs quite badly in numerous fields from education to health, from technology to economic competitiveness, transparency and governance. Given the deteriorating living conditions of Moroccans, as well as the degradation of social services, productivity and public institutions, a serious governance has to face all these challenges, damming the negative repercussion of the liberal globalization and austerity policies by trying to implement any support policies for wider social groups.

Nevertheless, none of the previous preconditions will be ever accomplished if free and fair elections are not guaranteed. Thus, the FGD believes it necessary to deepen the debate among the component of the alliance on how to present a democratic voting system as the best alternative to corruption. Indeed, the regime is working relentlessly in order to plan and control the outcome of the elections, aiming at avoiding any kind of surprise and using this system to hide undemocratic and unpopular choices behind the mere illusion of democracy. In fact, the electoral process has always reflected clientelist practices aimed at serving the interests of notables and loyalist elites that use money, religion and all kind of extortion to influence voters that, over the years, abstained more and more in the electoral processes. “This, for the left, means establishing a new electoral culture, whose essence is the awareness of the citizens and their firm refusal to vote in exchange for something, whether material or not, and the audacity to expose and fight corruptors [...]. Free and fair elections represent a way to establish and consolidate it [real democracy], as there is no democracy without elections, but elections alone do not necessarily mean democracy³²¹”. Hence, the FGD proposes an independent body charged of overseeing all the electoral process with real powers. It intends to establish an electoral system that meets international standards of integrity, to address the problem of abstention ensuring openness and impartiality of the public media actively fighting all kind of corruption by punishing violators.

5.5 ‘Umar Balāfrīǧ and the Clarté, Ambition, Courage movement

Today, one of the main personalities within the Moroccan left is undoubtedly ‘Umar Balāfrīǧ, who was able to gain huge popularity thanks to his extensive use of the internet and social networks, notably Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Engineer by profession, Balāfrīǧ joined the Socialist Union of Popular Forces in 1997 and he left the party in 2010, since he believed that “ce parti n’avait

³²¹ Translated from Arabic: Faydrāliyya al-Yasār al-dimūqrāṭiyya, al-nizām al-’asāsī, p. 13. Available online: <http://www.fgd.ma/fr/la-fgd/>

plus l'ambition de transformer la société marocaine".³²² However, already in 2009, Balāfrīğ founded a new leftist political movement under the name of Clarté, Ambition, Courage (CAC). In a speech he gave at Stanford University, 'Umar Balāfrīğ explained that the name itself of his movement implies the major challenges that the Moroccan society must address. First, Morocco must clarify what kind of regime wants, how it plans to govern the economy as well as the position of the Islamist movements towards democracy and religion. Second, Morocco must find the ambition of being able to show people what advantages real democracy might bring to them. Finally, as all those living in authoritarian countries, Moroccans need to be courageous enough to pursue their political battles while the leftist forces need to have the courage to be patient and not to rush into quick coalition in order to create a real and strong political alternative.³²³

On the occasion of the foundation of the CAC, 'Umar Balāfrīğ affirmed that "Nous ne nous opposons nullement aux partis de gauche. Ce que nous demandons c'est le renouvellement du discours et la rénovation des partis socialistes. Nous avons constaté que plusieurs signataires de l'appel pour le peuple de gauche sont des non partisans qui sont des socialistes, mais qui ne se retrouvent pas dans les partis politiques de gauche".³²⁴ Indeed, one of the founding act of the movement was a letter signed by 650 leftist militants in which the members of the CAC pointed out how "La gauche marocaine et en particulier l'USFP a perdu la quasi-totalité de son influence au sein de la société"³²⁵ and therefore the need to build a new alternative to mould public opinion and to reach their consciousness. In other words, the Clarté, Ambition, Courage movement arose as another response to the crisis of socialism in Morocco aiming at restoring a new leftist front, but still as a political movement and not as a proper party.

Nevertheless, after the foundation of the FGD in 2014, a process of rapprochement between the leftist parties and 'Umar Balāfrīğ started. In fact, for the 2015 local and regional elections, the national council of the CAC agreed to run with the leftist alliance in numerous cities like Casablanca, Rabat, Agadir and Kenitra.³²⁶ In the same year, Balāfrīğ decided to form a more official alliance with the

³²² "Elections. Le mouvement de Omar Balafrej se présent avec la Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique", in *Medias24*, July 26, 2015. Available online : <https://www.medias24.com/NATION/POLITIQUE/156838-Elections.-Le-mouvement-de-Omar-Balafrej-se-presente-avec-la-Federation-de-la-Gauche-Democratique.html>

³²³ "Omar Balafrej, Morocco-Democratic Activism in a Semi-Authoritarian Country": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sVxEIBjf8RU&t=109s>

³²⁴ Aswab M., "Le réveil de la gauche a-t-il sonné?", in *Aujourd'hui le Maroc*, 13/05/2010. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourd'hui/75857>

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ Bennamate N., "Omar Balarej rejoint les camarades de Nabila Mounib pour les élections", in *TelQuel*, June 11, 2015. Available online : https://telquel.ma/2015/06/11/omar-balafrej-rejoint-camarades-nabila-mounib-pour-elections_1451604

FGD by joining the PSU in view of the upcoming 2016 legislative elections, after which he was one of the two FGD members elected as parliamentarians.

5.6 The 2016 elections

In November 2014, in Casablanca, the leaders of the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique announced their intention of running for the next elections in October 2016. Actually, the decision surprised many observers after the harsh boycott of both the elections and constitution in 2011.³²⁷ “Il y a un temps pour la contestation, un autre pour la participation [...]. Il est vrai que le Maroc continue de faire du surplace, mais nous ne contribuerons pas à faire avancer les choses en restant en dehors des institutions” argued Nabīla Munīb to justify the choice of the FGD. The main target for the 2016 elections was to offer a “third way” between the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM), the major monarchical party, and the PJD, the islamists. Although these two parties were commonly described by the press in contrast and competing with one another, in the FGD’s view they represented the very same problem, namely the undemocratic fundamentalism, whether it monarchical or religious.³²⁸

In September 2016, from Marrakesh, the election campaign of the FGD was formally launched by Nabīla Munīb under the slogan “With us, another Morocco is possible” (*ma'nā mağrib 'aḥar mumkin*).³²⁹ On the campaign trail, Munīb set as priority of the FGD the establishment of a parliamentary monarchy that respects separation of powers. Furthermore, the leader of the PSU, who actually emerged as undisputed leader of the FGD, expressed the desire of getting at least 20 seats in the House of Representatives so that they could form a parliamentary groups in the aftermath of the elections.³³⁰

5.7 The electoral program

The official electoral program³³¹ for the 2016 elections was presented on September 22, 2016 in Casablanca. From reading the document, it emerges clearly that the core elements of the program were the economic and social reforms, intended to create a strong and productive economy, the reform

³²⁷ Muḥammad Lağrūs, “Aḥzāb mağribiyya yasāriyya tuṣārik bi-l-'Intiḳabāt ba'd al-muqāta'a”, in *'arabī 21*, 16/11/2014. Available online: arabi21.com/story/789422-أحزاب-مغربية-يسارية-تشارك-بالانتخابات-بعد-المقاطعة

³²⁸ Massy P., “Morocco elections: The chance to change a kingdom?”, *Middle East Eye*, October 7, 2016, . Available online : <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/morocco-elections-chance-change-kingdom>

³²⁹ “La Fédération de la gauche démocratique lance sa campagne électorale depuis Marrakech”, in *Le360*, 24/09/2016. Available online: <https://fr.le360.ma/politique/la-federation-de-la-gauche-democratique-lance-sa-campagne-electorale-depuis-marrakech-88589>

³³⁰ El Ghouari T., “Législatives 2016 Les promesses du Front de gauche”, in *L'Economiste*, 23/09/2016. Available : <https://www.leconomiste.com/article/1002754-les-promesses-du-front-de-gauche>

³³¹ Faydrāliyya al-Yasār al-dimūqrāṭiyya : al-barnāmiġ al-'am li-l-'intiḳabāt al-taṣrī'iyya, 10/2018. Available online: <http://www.fgd.ma/fr/programme-electoral/>

of the financial system, the increase in funds for the public education and healthcare system, and to fight against unemployment.³³²

Given that an extensive analysis of the electoral program of the FGD for the 2016 elections would require an in-depth research per se, I selected some of the points I believed exhaustive to further appreciate the political and ideological positions of the leftist parties.

After a brief introduction, the very first section of the program is consecrated to the political reforms. Under heading “constitutional and political reforms”³³³, it is stated the will to implement a real constitutional revision that might include a real separation of powers, their balance and efficiency (point 1). Concerning human rights, it is confirmed the commitment to adapt the Moroccan legislation to the international treaties (point 5) and the undertaking to develop a foreign policy based on popular diplomacy (*al-diblūmasiyya al-sha‘biyya*) in order to serve the Moroccan interests, to preserve national territorial integrity and to safeguards its national causes (point 7). This, as explained at point 8, is also aimed at reinforcing the union of the greater Morocco and at improving the relations with Africa to ensure peace and development. Furthermore, the Fédération also pledges to subordinate all public financial institutions to parliamentary control and discussion (point 9). Right after, there a specific paragraph in which parliamentary reforms are summarized.³³⁴ In general, it is deemed necessary to increase the powers of the Parliament (point 1) in order to place the administration of public funds under the supervision of the government (point 3) and to properly empower the legislative authority of the Parliament (point 5). Then, there is also a short paragraph dedicated to the “reforms on religious matters”³³⁵. Among them, there is the development of a religious spirit of tolerance and the fight against any form of bigotry (point 2). Beside the revitalization of enlightened and rational side of the Islamic religion and the promotion of a culture of respect within society and institutions (point 3-4).

Reading right along, the second section of the program is focused on the “electoral reforms”³³⁶. As already stated above, the FGD aims at establishing a fair and free electoral system which is one of the basis of a real democracy. For this reason, it is necessary to entrust an independent national organ with the supervision of the elections (point 1), to automatically register in the public electoral rolls

³³² “La Fédération de la gauche démocratique lance sa campagne électorale depuis Marrakech”, in *Le360*, 24/09/2016. Available online: <https://fr.le360.ma/politique/la-federation-de-la-gauche-democratique-lance-sa-campagne-electorale-depuis-marrakech-88589>

³³³ *Faydrāliyya al-Yasār al-dimūqrāṭiyya : al-barnāmiġ al-‘am li-l-’intiġabāt al-tašrī‘iyya*, 10/2018, p. 6. Available online: <http://www.fgd.ma/fr/programme-electoral/>

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10

all adult citizens (point 2), to control any electoral activity properly (point 6), to adopt the appropriate measures to contrast any form of passive bravery (point 9).

As far as the justice is concerned³³⁷, the leftist alliance seeks to reform the judicial system in order to make it truly independent and democratic. For instance, it would be necessary to guarantee a fair election of the members of the Constitutional Court (point 4) and to include the civic society in the protection measures for the independence of justice to fight against corruption for the common good (point 6).

On page 13 of the electoral program there is the section dedicated to “rights and freedoms”³³⁸ which, combined with the following paragraph on “women rights”³³⁹, is one of the longest part of the entire document. The FGD emphasises once again that Morocco has to conform with international agreements related to human rights (point 1), to abolish death penalty and to assure a complete freedom of association (point 2). Moreover, new measures to check and to reduce violence and torture on detainees in prisons must be implemented (point 8). It is also necessary to review the penal code to ensure basic guarantees for a fair trial (point 9) and to review the training programs for police and guards prisons in order to improve their ways of dealing with detainees (point 11) and to improve the living conditions of prisoners (point 24). Fighting against impunity among the institutions and the citizens and adopting a national anti-impunity strategy and work for its implementation (point 13). Drafting a law for gender equality and to punish discrimination against women (point 23) and strengthening financial support for the benefit of women’s associations (point 22). Safeguarding the rights of people in disability by providing them with all facilities and services, especially education, health, sport activities (point 25) and by providing their family with all social assistance they need (point 26).

With regard to the economic reforms,³⁴⁰ the paragraph opens with a harsh critic of the failed measures implemented by the PJD government after 2011. The document compares the initial objectives of the government to the actual results, highlighting its poor performances and criticizing its liberal approach that translated in new privatization policies, free trade agreements and poor growth rates.

Then, the FGD lists the reforms deemed necessary in the economic field. First of all, Morocco must reconsider the role of the state as the strategic actor in the development of a mixed economy (point 1). Secondly, the leftists pledge to subject the macroeconomic equilibrium to the domestic one,

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21

focusing on the internal market to reduce social disparities (point 2). Moreover, the Moroccan economy shall be diversified either through the public, private and social-solidarity sectors (point 7). The first one must recover its original purpose by intervening in the economy and especially in strategic sectors like water and energy. With regards to the private sector, the government must ensure conditions of transparency and fair competitiveness in order to contribute in creating job opportunities and strengthening national production (point 1). The private sector shall as well contribute in providing services and basic infrastructures getting rid of corruption and speculation (point 2). Furthermore, the FGD points out that the next government will have to review the Free Trade Agreements signed in the past years and negotiating them again in order to preserve the interests of the country (point 3). Trades must be carried out according to social standards, giving everyone the chance to compete in the market. As already mentioned, the leftists seek to reform the financial system and the banking sector as well as monetary policies and interest rates, entrusting the State with the decision-making power in this regard.

These is also a section devoted to the “cultural reforms”³⁴¹ in which the FGD reminds how quintessential it is to spread a democratic culture side by side to the political changes. Hence, Morocco shall ensure the coexistence of all its cultural identities, notably Arab and Amazigh, within a framework of solidarity and mutual respect (point 2). Moreover, the institutions themselves shall be able to play a major part, especially by reinforcing the role of schools and public universities in order to spread a culture of tolerance and solidarity (point 3). In order to do so, the FGD pledged to invest the 1,5 of the GDP in the cultural sector (point 4).

Another crucial issue is the one of the healthcare system.³⁴² The alliance deplores that, due to the absence of real national health policies and investments in the last years, hospital facilities and the working conditions of the healthcare professionals are today in a dramatic situation. One of the main problems that are underlined is the lack of medical and paramedical professionals in certain regions of the country, especially in rural villages. Furthermore, according to the document, in 2012 the private sector benefited of the 80% of the expenses of the Caisse National de l’Assurance Maladie (CMAM) as well as the 82% of the Caisse Nationale de Sécurité Sociale, while the public sector only benefited from the 5% and 6% of the expenses of the two abovementioned institutions. Thus, states the document, the presence of the State in the public sector has fallen sharply in favour of the private one, that became a “financial lobby”³⁴³ that literally sells health to the citizens. Due to this tragic situation, the electoral program of the FGD focuses on the development of a strong, national

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38

³⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 41

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 42

healthcare system in order to guarantee the right to health for all (point 1-2). Hence, the need to increase the public funds allocated to the Ministry of Health in order to provide sufficient human resources and to meet the professional and material requirements to ensure the health of all citizens (point 2).

In conclusion, the FGD pays attention to the reforms required from the employment sector to improve living standards.³⁴⁴ In this regard, numerous problems must be addressed by the government: job vulnerability, growing unemployment, discrepancy in wages in the public and private sector, small number of people that benefit from social protection and so on. Therefore, the document proposes a series of measures to deal with these issues: creating an observatory to monitor the job market (point 1), establishing regional centres for jobs, training and education (point 2), working to guarantee the respect of labour law, especially in terms of minimum wage, legal working hours and right to organize and collective bargaining (point 13). The minimum wage shall be increased to 3000 dirham (point 15) and the level of pensions, including those for widows, shall be enhanced as well (point 17).

Then, the electoral program concludes with a section totally dedicated to the fight against corruption³⁴⁵ and, as it was already discussed, to the necessity to resort drastic measures among every sector, both public and private, within the institutions and among society.

5.8 The outcome of the elections

Despite a quite extensive media coverage, the support among intellectuals and academics³⁴⁶ and the sustained campaign carried out on social medias, the result of the elections did not meet the expectations of the alliance. On October 7, 2015, with a turnout of 43% and 30 political parties participating in the elections, the PJD gained again the majority of the votes, winning 125 seats. Right after, the PAM, the monarchical party, went from 47 seats won in 2011 to 102 places in 2016, reaching the second position. Indeed, the outcome of the elections determined a bipolarization of the votes between the PJD and the PAM that overcame by far all other parties.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 48

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 59

³⁴⁶ “Cent intellectuels, militants et politiques lance un appel à Nabila Mounib”, in *TelQuel*, 20 Septembre 2016.

Available online: https://telquel.ma/2016/09/20/cent-intellectuels-militants-et-politiques-lacent-un-appel-a-nabila-mounib-1514964/?utm_source=tq&utm_medium=normal_post

³⁴⁷ Badrane M., “La tendance devient une réalité : La bipolarisation se confirme”, in *Aujourd'hui le Maroc*, October 10, 2016. Available online : <http://aujourd'hui.ma/politique/la-tendance-devient-une-realite-la-bipolarisation-se-confirme>

With respect to the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique, the leftist alliance got the 2,83% of the votes, winning only two seats in the Parliament, one in the constituency of Rabat-Océan, gained by ‘Umar Balāfirīġ, and the other in Casablanca-Anfa, won by Muṣṭafā al-Šannāwī.³⁴⁸

The reactions on the result were mixed. Clearly, if we consider that Nabīla Munīb expressed her hope to gain at least 20 seats, the outcome of the elections appears quite disappointing. Moreover, during the campaign, some pools considered Munīb the third most popular choice for the position of prime minister, in open competition against ‘Abd al-’Ilālah Binkīrān and Iliyās al-‘Umārī, the leaders of PJD and PAM.³⁴⁹ As reported by *TelQuel*, according to Muṣṭafā al-Saḥimī, political analyst and law professor in Casablanca, even though the fact of having entered into the parliament is an important “reconnaissance institutionnelle”³⁵⁰, the achievements of the FGD cannot be considered as a real success, and he describes the significant attention given to the alliance during the campaign as a “bulle médiatique”³⁵¹ that did not turn into an actual electoral support. Another weakness of the alliance, stated al-Saḥimī, it was the focus on themes that are often far removed from the feelings of ordinary people, just like parliamentary democracy or an alternative economic system. ‘Imād Stītū, a Moroccan journalist, wrote in an article for *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs* that even though the FGD started its campaign with the aim of becoming a “third option” between the PJD and the PAM, this third way was entirely based on a new constitutional reform that, in the eyes of many, looked probably highly unlikely. Stītū also points out another interesting aspect of the FGD campaign. According to him, instead of exposing the PJD neoliberal stances, the alliance focused too much energies in fighting the islamists on the ideological level. Nabīla Munīb went so far as to accuse the PJD of dreaming of “establishing a caliphate”.³⁵² This rhetoric ended up exacerbating the PJD-PAM bipolarization since the monarchical party was the principal force attacking the islamists for their religious stances and it actually benefitted from the campaign of the FGD.

Nevertheless, the 2016 elections gave proof that the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique is gradually emerging as the new “leading left-wing power”³⁵³ as it won more votes than the USFP in numerous urban centres such as Casablanca, Tangiers and Oujda. This, Stītū argues, “suggests the

³⁴⁸ Oudrhiri K., “Faut-il se féliciter du score de la FGD aux législatives 2016”, in *TelQuel*, October 12, 2016. Available online : https://telquel.ma/2016/10/12/faut-il-se-feliciter-du-score-de-la-fgd-aux-legislatives-2016_1518598

³⁴⁹ Stitou I., “Why the Left Flopped in Morocco’s Elections”, in *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, November 23, 2016. Available online : <https://www.thecaireview.com/tahrir-forum/why-the-left-flopped-in-moroccos-elections/>

³⁵⁰ Oudrhiri K., *op. cit.*, Available online : https://telquel.ma/2016/10/12/faut-il-se-feliciter-du-score-de-la-fgd-aux-legislatives-2016_1518598

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

³⁵² Stitou I., *op. cit.*, Available online : <https://www.thecaireview.com/tahrir-forum/why-the-left-flopped-in-moroccos-elections/>

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

traditional left-wing voter base is turning towards the FGD and that a key segment of urban voters are (sic) looking for outsiders untainted by time in power”³⁵⁴.

In the aftermath of the elections, ‘Umar Balāfrīǧ claimed to be reasonably satisfied with the result, especially if compared with the past municipal elections, as the FGD votes doubled in numerous constituencies. Moreover, referring to the 2021 legislative elections, Balāfrīǧ is confident that the leftist alliance “peut devenir la première force politique du Maroc [...] mais il faudrait que l’on reste sur la même lignée que cette campagne. Que l’on soit surtout sur le terrain, comme le fait le PJD”.

If the FGD political strategy between 2016 and 2021 has effectively produced satisfying results cannot be confirmed yet, but further investigations on this matter would certainly allow a clearer understanding of how, in the last few years, the alliance sought to take root within the civic society in order to create and develop a sustainable democratic culture. This, I believe, is the fundamental prerequisite for any party that aims at bringing about a profound shift of the political system into a more democratic one.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I attempted to place the evolution of a new Moroccan left, mainly represented by the FGD, in the more extensive history of socialism and leftist forces in Morocco addressed in this thesis.

Indeed, it has been shown that the evolution of the three parties comprising the alliance root in the development of the traditional, radical left of the country. They were originally shaped by a Marxist-Leninist ideology, they had close ties with trade unionists, leftist social movements, human rights defence associations and some leading members were comrades of bin Barka, Bu‘abīd and the first generation of UNFP-Moroccan socialists in the aftermath of the independence. Therefore, given that a significant part of the leadership of the PADS, CNI and PSU suffered from political persecution, death sentences and forced exiles, the parties maintained great deal of attention on issues such as political oppression, infringement of human rights and abuse of power by the regime. Furthermore, all these forces still cling on to ideological stances linked to socialism, Third Worldism, class struggle and fight against international capitalism. While neither of them kept really extremist positions, such as armed combat against the monarchy or any military action to overthrow the regime, their members remain highly critical toward the role of the King in the exercise of power and, as it was stressed enough, they sought to profoundly change the monarchical institution itself.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

As stated, in the first decade of the 2000s several countries in the Arab region questioned the political systems in force and Morocco as well witnessed the spread of new popular mobilization across the country. With little success, the leftists tried to catalyse these emerging social forces by condemning the dramatic economic situation of Morocco, primarily attributable to the neoliberal agenda of the governmental forces and the collusion of the Makhzenian regime with global financial institutions. Moreover, the leftist parties joined the 20FM in their call for political and institutional reforms.

Today, the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique aims at filling the political vacuum left by the failure of the former socialist forces, by taking up all the positions deserted by the governmental left: implementation of democracy, switch from constitutional to parliamentary monarchy and the establishment of a real socialist government that might face the socio-economic problems of the country. Particularly, the FGD pledged to address the questions of unemployment, uneven development between rural and urban areas, the crisis of the national health care system and the high level of illiteracy that sicken the whole Moroccan society.

From a strictly political point of view, the FGD is well aware that a real implementation of democratic institutions can only be accomplished by a constitutional reform that might resize the powers of the King. This is the only way to stop the dense network of economic and political interests surrounding the Moroccan elites and the Makhzenian system. Only then, independent media, free elections, human rights respect and democratic institutions may be guaranteed.

Compared to the other leftist forces that have dominated the ranks of political opposition after the independence, the FGD happens to be far more concerned with the rising of Islamist forces and the role played by religion in the Moroccan society. Evidently, this reflects the unquestionable popularity of the PJD along with its Islamic orientation and its ascent to government.

Since the last decades, the struggle for democratization and the efforts to build up a real democratic culture have been facing two major problems, the authoritarian rule of the Moroccan monarchy, that is unlikely ever to revise its privileges, and the alarming spread of Islamism in the Moroccan society, which undermines the political leverage of the FGD from a strictly ideological perspective.

In my opinion, this probably represents the main obstacle that all progressive and democratic forces must overcome, not only in Morocco but on a global level. The emergence of populist and authoritarian forces, the crisis of western liberal democracies and the adverse effects of globalization, that resulted in the socio-economic crisis experienced by numerous countries, not least the Arab ones, oblige us to reconsider our relation with democracy and to anticipate the strains and limits that democratic systems will face.

A functioning democracy, in terms of political and institutional structures, shall be incessantly supported by the implementation of a democratic culture, meaning that the whole society must comprehend the benefits coming from democracy and all citizens must respect democratic principles and human rights as integral part of their own culture.

Surely, spreading a democratic culture in an authoritarian regime that draws its power from its undemocratic rule appears to be quite a daunting task, especially if the concerned society leans more and more over other ideological and cultural references: in the case of Morocco the widespread islamism.

This is the hardest yet central challenge that the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique and all reformist forces are meeting. Actually, as recent European political developments show, even in democratic countries it is vital that all political forces undertake to ensure the preservation of a democratic culture, as democracy is always taken for granted thus often underappreciated.

Once again, the Moroccan left is asked to carry out a double fight: a political and a cultural one. Since the first cannot exclude the other, the effort required is massive, now more than ever.

While the King was able to slightly open up the system, in terms of individual freedoms and cosmetic democratization, his power in the country remains undisputed and today it is even stronger due to huge financial and political linkages between the Moroccan monarchy and numerous other international powers, notably the Western countries, which actually play a significant role in the preservation of a regime that ensures their self-interests.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter of my thesis, I will dwell on another political party that is today considered as one of the main leftist opposition forces, alongside the FGD. Even though the history of Annahj Addimocrati is quite recent, as the party was founded in 1995 and formally recognized in 2004, its leadership and a significant part of its members have a long record of political militancy in radical Marxist-Leninist movements highly active during the 1970s, *Ilā al-Amām* in particular.

Embracing a strong socialist ideology, the main agenda of Annahj Addimocrati reflects the political and socio-economic crisis that Morocco is experiencing since the independence. Indeed, its members pledge to fight against the overwhelming power of the *Makhzen* for a more equal distribution of lands and wealth and to restrict the ever-increasing interference of financial foreign powers in the Moroccan domestic affairs. Instead, the long-term objective of the party is the establishment of a truly socialist system aimed at protecting the rights of the working classes.

Due to its extremely critical positions towards the regime, especially regarding the figure of the King and the unsolved Sahara question, Annahj Addimocrati has always refused to take part in any electoral processes, carrying out numerous boycott campaigns against both the local and the legislative elections in the country. Therefore, while maintaining positive relations with the PSU, PADS and CNI, Annahj Addimocrati did not join the other leftist parties in the foundation of the FGD in 2014.

Often violently repressed by the police, the radical Marxist party constitutes today the so-called extra parliamentary opposition, and it is not clear if this attitude will change in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, in the last years, an encouraging dialogue with the other leftist parties has been initiated. Following the crisis of the governmental left, the 2011 protests and the worsening of living conditions of the Moroccan people, the need of building a strong leftist front is ever more compelling. Despite the lack of a strong popular support and the countless attempts of the regime to restrict its freedom of action, Annahj Addimocrati is now receiving a wide media coverage and I believe it will play a pivotal role in the rebirth of the new Moroccan left.

2. ILĀ AL-AMĀM AND ABRAHĀM SERFĀTĪ

Annahj Addimocrati represents the development of *Ilā al-Amām* movement into an actual political party. The history of *Ilā al-Amām* roots in the second half of the 1960s. In the early years, its first members were influenced by the 1968 student protests and the organization emerged as one of the radical leftist movements in Morocco, which were gradually offering a revolutionary alternative to

the traditional socialist and communist parties.³⁵⁵ However, *Ilā al-Amām* was officially established on August 20, 1970, following a split among the PLS, the former communist party. This far-left movement, shaped by a Marxist-Leninist ideology, and headed by Abrahām Serfātī, leading militant of the PLS, was immediately outlawed by the King and it carried out its illegal actions clandestinely, suffering the severe repression of the regime.³⁵⁶ Soon, *Ilā al-Amām* became one of the most distinguished underground organization in Morocco, marked by its radical revolutionary stances and by its commitment in organizing a revolution against the Makhzen headed by workers and peasants.³⁵⁷

Concerning Abrahām Serfātī, the leader of *Ilā al-Amām* was born in 1926 in Casablanca from a Moroccan Jewish family. In 1944 he campaigned with the communist militants in Morocco before going to France where he studied at the Paris School of Mines. In 1949 he returned to Morocco and he joined the outlawed Moroccan Communist Party one year later. Indeed, already in the 1950s, he was arrested, tortured and exiled to France, where he stood up for the Moroccan cause until 1956.³⁵⁸ In 1968, he became one of the prominent members of the literary magazine *Souffles*, leftist bimonthly active from 1966 to 1972 in Rabat. *Souffles* played a major role in defining the ideology of the rising extreme-left groups, writing about political economy, social issues, the political action of the PLS and the student movements.³⁵⁹ After being arrested, tortured and released in 1972, Abrahām Serfātī continued his underground activities until 1977. That year, following a trial in Casablanca, he was condemned with 139 other militants on national security-related charges, especially for his support to the independence of Western Sahara. Abrahām Serfātī was jailed in the prison of Kenitra for 17 years. In 1991, in response to a mounting international pressure for his cause, he was released by King Ḥassan II. Nevertheless, he was eventually exiled with the absurd claim that he held Brazilian citizenship. He fled to Paris where he lived with his family until 2000. In fact, after the enthronement of Muḥammad VI he was allowed to re-enter the country with his Moroccan passport. Abrahām Serfātī continued his political engagement in support of international socialism, in defence of the Palestinian cause and for the self-determination of the Sahrawi people until November 18, 2010, when he died in Marrakech at the age of 84.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁵ al-Wajāni S., “Munazzama ilā al-amām al-mārksiyya al-lyinīniyya”, in *al-ḥiwār al-mutamaddan* – al-‘adad 3409 – 27/06/2011. Available online: <http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=264963&r=0>

³⁵⁶ Vermeren P., *op. cit.*, Kindle Edition

³⁵⁷ Koumiya G., “Post-68 student uprisings and the rise of the Moroccan Marxist-Leninist Movement”, in Verso Books website: <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3838-post-68-student-uprisings-and-the-rise-of-the-moroccan-marxist-leninist-movement>

³⁵⁸ Vermeren P., *op. cit.*, Kindle Edition

³⁵⁹ Koumiya G., *op. cit.*, <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3838-post-68-student-uprisings-and-the-rise-of-the-moroccan-marxist-leninist-movement>

³⁶⁰ “Mort d’Abraham Serfaty, opposant au roi Hassan II”, in *La Croix*, 19/11/2010. Available online : https://www.la-croix.com/Semaine-en-images/Mort-d-Abraham-Serfaty-opposant-au-roi-Hassan-II_-NG_-2010-11-19-559074

In one of the first political documents of Ilā al-Amām, the movement provides its vision of the Moroccan society, dividing it into three major classes: the comprador oligarchy, the liberal bourgeoisie and the working masses. While the first two groups included the ruling elites who took advantage of international capitalism and neo-colonial relations through their strong economic ties with the Palace and the western powers, it was up to the popular classes to rise against the monarchy and to bring the peasants and proletariat to power. Ilā al-Amām also developed strong Third Worldist stances, as it bounded the successful outcome of the Moroccan revolution to the establishment of socialism in all African countries.³⁶¹

Furthermore, Ilā al-Amām forged a close relation with another Marxist organization, the 23 March movement. Between the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, these two leftist groups started to take action together under the lead of the young members of the UNEM, the student union. However, the UNEM was soon outlawed by the King and its president, who as a member of Ilā al-Amām as well, went into exile after a death sentence. After a harsh political repression that translated into numerous executions, imprisonment and forced exiles, Ilā al-Amām renewed its strategy reconsidering the role of the students and enhancing the positions of popular masses within the organization.³⁶²

Starting from the second half of the 1970s, several tens of Marxist-Leninist militants were released from prison. Nonetheless, the police repression, the capillary control of the regime over the country and the banishment of any threatening movement prevented the former members of Ilā al-Amām to properly re-establish the insurgent groups. However, the newly released leftists were able to engage within rising human rights associations, such as the already cited AMDH, founded in 1979, that was mainly headed by militants of the PADS and Ilā al-Amām.³⁶³

It was again through the international pressure of human rights associations that, in 1994, Ḥassan II granted a general amnesty for more than 420 political prisoners. Among them, the greatest part consisted of Marxist-Leninist militants jailed between the 1970s and the 1980s.³⁶⁴ Indeed, it was

³⁶¹ Munazzama al-mārksiyya - al-lyinīniyya al-mağribiyya ilā al-amām: al-ḥat al-ṭawrī: 1970-1980 : al-waṭā'iq al-siyāsiyya - maqālat wa nuṣūṣ. Available online : <http://www.30aout.info/1> منشورات-المنظمة-الماركسية-اللينينية-المغربية-إلى-الأمام-من.html

³⁶² Koumiya G., *op. cit.*, <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3838-post-68-student-uprisings-and-the-rise-of-the-moroccan-marxist-leninist-movement>

³⁶³ Vairel F., *Politique et mouvements sociaux au Maroc. La révolution désamorcée?*, Les Presses de Sciences Po, 2014, Kindle Edition

³⁶⁴ Rollinde M., *Le mouvement marocain des droits de l'Homme, entre consensus national et engagement citoyen*, éditions Karthala, 2002, p. 452. Available online : <https://books.google.it/books?id=Orst5uqJTKEC&pg=PA452&lpg=PA452&dq=aministie+1994+maroc&source=bl&ots=xPvVz0NG70&sig=ACfU3U2U1ikMu20kZB9NUHAgJWAe1sWuwg&hl=it&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwisjr7IoqHpAhVp-SoKHaI3AKgQ6AEwAHoECAoQAQ#v=onepage&q=aministie%201994%20maroc&f=false>

probably the release of numerous former militants of *Ilā al-Amām* that led, the following year, to the establishment of a new political party, *Annahj Addimocrati*.

3. FOUNDATION OF THE PARTY AND THE EARLY YEARS

Annahj Addimocrati was officially founded on April 15, 1995, through the combined efforts of former leftist prisoners that spent the previous years in jail. Actually, according to *Muṣṭafā al-Barahmīh*, member of the party, the early leaders of *Annahj Addimocrati* came up with the idea of establishing a new radical-left force during their time in prison. Among them, the most prominent figures were *Muḥammad al-Musāwī*, ‘*Abd al-Ḥamīd ’Amīn*, ‘*Alī ’Ufqīr*, ‘*Abdallah al-Ḥarīf*, *Muṣṭafā al-Barahmīh* and ‘*Abd al-Mu’min al-Ṣabāri*.³⁶⁵ Even though the founders sought to establish a legitimate and lawfully party, due to its radical marxist stances, *Annahj Addimocrati* was not recognized by the government, that prevented its leaders to get all the documentation required for a formal and institutional recognition. Nevertheless, despite its non-official status, the party was able to create its own press organ and it eventually carried out an almost regular political activity.³⁶⁶ In 1997, some party members even took part in local elections, although as individual candidates without explicit affiliation with *Annahj*.³⁶⁷

As it was already discussed in the third chapter, the disappointing performances of the alternance government between 1998 and 2002 played a significant role in reshaping the new Moroccan left. Indeed, starting from the early 2000s, *Annahj Addimocrati* engaged in dialogue with other socialist forces, the future members of the FGD in particular. On December 1, 2001, for instance, the leaders of the OADP met ‘*Abdallah al-Ḥarīf*, first secretary general of *Annahj Addimocrati*, and *Aḥmad Binjallūn*, leader of the PADS. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the establishment of a unified leftist front.³⁶⁸ Again, after the creation of the GSU, in February 2002, *Muḥammad bin Sa’īd Ayt Īddar* and other leaders sent a message to *Aḥmad Binjallūn* and ‘*Abdallah al-Ḥarīf*, calling for the unification of a new democratic and socialist bloc.³⁶⁹ Nevertheless, major differences prevented the parties to band together for the 2002 elections, held on September 27. Concerning *Annahj Addimocrati*, the main disagreements emerged in respect to the Sahara question and to the choice of

³⁶⁵ *Lahaḍar Y.*, “*al-Nahj al-Dimuqrāfī...ḥizb maghribī iuqāti’ al-intiḥabāt mundu 23 sana*”, in *Hespress*, 17/04/2018. Available online : <https://www.hespress.com/politique/388187.html>

³⁶⁶ *El-Hassouni A.*, “*Annahj rentre dans le rang*”, in *Aujourd’hui le Maroc*, 19/07/2004. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourd'hui/17488>

³⁶⁷ *Jouahri N.*, “*Six ans d’exil pour Abraham Serfaty*”, in *MarocHabdo*, 27/12/1997. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/marochebdo/30338>

³⁶⁸ *B.H.*, “*Quel rôle pour la gauche d’aujourd’hui?*”, in *Aujourd’hui le Maroc*, 30/11/2011. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourd'hui/4542>

³⁶⁹ *A.K.*, “*La gauche radicale se restructure*”, in *Aujourd’hui le Maroc*, 07/01/2002. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourd'hui/6807>

whether participating in the elections or not. Either way, no kind of alliance among the leftist was forged before 2007.³⁷⁰

On February 10, 2002, with respect to the upcoming elections in the next September, the party published a press release in which elaborated its criticism of the Moroccan society and a first draft of its political program, although it would have not run in the elections.³⁷¹

First and foremost, Annahj Addimocrati spoke out against the international framework in which the elections were taking place. Indeed, according to the party, the Third Worldist countries were still experiencing new forms of neo-colonialism that translated into a further deterioration of democratic freedoms and into a limitation of the right of self-determination of the nations. Needless to say, the accusing finger pointed to the US and Israel that, thanks to the strategic assistance of their allied authoritarian regimes, were able to pursue their own strategic agendas. In particular, the US shifted from the fight against communism to the one against terrorism in order to preserve its control of oil resources and to exploit the local working classes to the full. For the domestic context, Annahj Addimocrati complained about the ongoing lack of solutions for the Sahara issue. For the leadership of the party, the only conceivable and fair resolution would have involved the complete self-determination of the Sahrawi people and their right to live peacefully and in total independence.

Another critic was addressed to the al-Yūsūfī government that, in the previous four years, played a significant role in the maintenance of the very same socio-cultural and economic dynamics of the past governments. For Annahj Addimocrati, the ever more intense privatisation policies, the subordination of the public good to corporate logic and private business interests, the inability to deal with unemployment, poverty and corruption proved the necessity of implement a new democratic constitution as a turning point for a genuine change. Particular attention was also paid to the official recognition of the Amazigh language, to the support of women's rights movements and to the liberation of Ceuta and Melilla from Spanish control.

At the end of the report, due to all these critical issues presented, Annahj Addimocrati firmly opposed to the 2002 elections, arguing that Morocco was once again missing the necessary preconditions to implement a real democratization process. Moreover, according to the party, the participation in the electoral process would have meant accepting the conditions of the Makhzen without the possibility to achieve any potential change.

³⁷⁰ B.H., *op. cit.*, Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourd'hui/4542>

³⁷¹ "al-intiḥabāt al-barlamāniyya li-ṣittinbr 2002 mawqifunā", manshūrāt al-nahj al-dīmuqrātīi, al-barīd al-markazī, 20001, Casablanca, September 2002, in *al-ḥiwār al-mutamaddan* – al-'adad 264 2/10/202. Available online: <http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=3247>

Nevertheless, despite its boycott of the parliamentary elections, Annahj Addimocrati presented its political program, highlighting its ideological references, its established objectives and political priorities.

First and foremost, the party defined itself as the development of both the Moroccan liberation movement and Marxist-Leninist movement, *Ilā al-Amām* in particular. Created on April 16, 1995, all party members had previous experience of militancy among trade unions, anti-global and anti-liberal groups, feminist associations, students and unemployed movements.

While the historical reference of Annahj Addimocrati relied on the Arab-Amazigh identity of the Moroccan people, its ideological framework rooted in Marxism, embracing the materialistic interpretation of history, the revolutionary approach, and the will to establish a socialist society. Beyond that, great deal of attention was also paid to the national liberation against neo-colonialism, to the Arab and African solidarity and to the global respect of human rights and freedoms. At the very same time, the Moroccan people was conceived as an African, Arab and Maghreb one. Hence, Morocco must strengthen its political and cultural relations with all other African and Arab states, along with its Maghreb neighbouring countries.

In sum, the overriding goal of the party was to fight side by side with other socialist revolutionary forces aiming at building up a truly socialist society in which the labour masses would share out the means of production and exchange. Furthermore, they would be in charge of managing and administrating public, socio-economic and cultural affairs in order to eradicate any form of inequality or exploitation.

As one can imagine, the leaders of the party made it clear that they were primarily addressing the proletarian classes, the hardworking peasants and all oppressed and marginalized groups. Hence, Annahj Addimocrati pledged to uphold their interests in face of the powerful ruling elites, the large landowners and the capitalist bourgeoisie.

In this regard, the party underlined the pressing need of an agrarian reform, which would mainly translate into the expropriation of the lands from the rich landowners and into the protection of water resources, today unfairly controlled by the Makhzenian mafia (*al-māfiā al-maḥzaniyya*). The development of a strong national industry and the downsize of the service sector were also regarded as deeply important.

Concerning the constitutional matters, Annahj Addimocrati refused all the constitutions that had been approved since 1962, which were essentially considered as the mere expression of the interests of the Makhzen. Therefore, the party did not just call for an amendment to the 1996 constitution, but for its

complete repeal. Then, an independent and popular constituent body would have been charged of the process of preparation of the new legitimate constitution. Among its priorities, the new text would have laid the foundations of an independent judiciary, consolidating the principle of separation of powers and empowering the prime minister with the appointment of its cabinet.

For the religious matters, while the party confirmed the responsibility of the governments to ensure freedom of worship to all Moroccan citizens it harshly condemned the political exploitation of the Islamic religion at the hands of the monarchy in order to guarantee its supremacy in the religious sphere. For such reason, Annahj Addimocrati demanded a clear and true separation between state and religion.

A quite interesting point of the program was the proposal of a different form of regionalism. This whole idea relied on the conviction that the country might be divided in provincial entities, such as the Rif, Souss, Ziyān and Zemmour, Errachidia and Ouarzazate, that shared economic integration, linguistic background and other historical and cultural common traits. While these regions might enjoy a stronger self-government, the constitution must set the limits of this autonomy in order to prevent any kind of secessionist movement.

Another crucial question taken into account was the Moroccan external indebtedness. Annahj Addimocrati argued that one-third of the overall state expenses were intended for paying off the foreign debt. Because of this debt level, outside powers are ever-more capable of meddling with the internal affairs of Morocco, which national interests are today subordinated to the financial markets. Welfare cuts, debt restructuring and other austerity policies seem to be, according to the party, the result of increasing great control of public affairs by international agencies.

Summing up the last sections of the program, the party paid close attention to numerous other social matters, such as the housing issue, with particular regard on the shantytowns and homeless people. Likewise, unemployment was a central question. Moreover, the country must adopt a new labour code based on modern and democratic principles, social and economic rights respect in accordance with the ILO conventions.³⁷²

As it was already shown, in the wake of the vote, despite registering a loss of support, the USFP confirmed itself the strongest party in the parliament. However, despite the signing of an agreement

³⁷² “al-intiḥabāt al-barlamāniyya li-ṣittinbr 2002 mawqifunā”, manshūrāt al-nahj al-dīmuqrātii, al-barīd al-markazī, 20001, Casablanca, September 2002, in *al-ḥiwār al-mutamaddan* – al-‘adad 264 2/10/202. Available online: <http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=3247>

between the monarchical National Rally of Independents (RNI) and the USFP, Muḥammad VI appointed Idrīs Ḡiṭṭū as Prime Minister.³⁷³

In turn, Annahj Addimocrati denounced the enfeeblement of the socialist forces that subdued to the King by accepting to take part in the government under the conditions of the central power.³⁷⁴ The outcome of the 2002 exacerbated this situation even more, as the USFP was now openly cooperating with a monarchical party under the lead of a technocrat close to the Palace.

In 2004, referring to the USFP and the PPS, the “governmental left”, ‘Abdallah al-Ḥarīf, secretary general of Annahj Addimocrati, argued that³⁷⁵:

[the USFP and the PPS] ont perdu beaucoup de leur crédibilité lors des dernières échéances électorales du fait des pratiques immorales et des alliances contre nature de la plupart de leurs candidats aux élections. Cette situation impose d'autant plus l'émergence d'un vrai pôle de gauche militant, engagé de façon conséquente dans la lutte pour la démocratie et la justice, que des forces anti-démocratiques exploitant la religion se renforcent et que le Makhzen cherche à perpétuer sa domination en cooptant des élites, en faisant des concessions qui ne remettent pas en cause son essence anti-démocratique, prédatrice et rétrograde.

On the other side, the discussions among the new leftist parties went on through the following years. On June 6, 2004, the GSU, the PADS, the CNI, the Fidélité à la Démocratie movement, headed by Muḥammad Sassī, and Annahj Addimocrati, met in Casablanca announcing the setting up of a new alliance, the Rassemblement de la Gauche Démocratique (RGD). However, the RGD was far from being a real and well-structured political alliance. It lacked of a clear shared program and it was never meant to run for the elections as a unified political group. According to the members of the parties involved, the main purpose of the RGD was to play a leading role in the implementation of a democratic transition in Morocco, standing up for individual freedoms, redistribution of wealth and defence of human rights.³⁷⁶

Furthermore, one month later, on July 16, 2004, Annahj Addimocrati held its very first national congress in Casablanca. After several months of negotiations with the Interior Minister, the party finally received the formal permission to organize the meeting, which eventually marked the long overdue recognition of Annahj Addimocrati by the institutions. On the occasion, Muṣṭafā al-Barahmīh stated that “La tenue du premier Congrès national d'Annahj Addimocrati n'est en rien une

³⁷³ Sater J.N., “Morocco after the Parliamentary Elections of 2002”, *Mediterranean Politics*, 8:1, 2003, p. 135-142

³⁷⁴ Présentation d'Annahj Addimocrati :

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120419063420/http://www.annahjaddimocrati.org/index.php/en/presentation-de-la-voie-democratique>

³⁷⁵ Jouhari N., “Le temps de la clarification”, in *MarocHebdo*, 11/06/2004. Available online :

<https://www.maghress.com/fr/marochebdo/60916>

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*; Daki A., “L'extrême gauche rassemble les nostalgiques”, in *Aujourd'hui le Maroc*, 08/06/2004. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourd'hui/15416>

rupture avec les positions et les idées politiques défendues par les militants du parti [...] Nous voulons maintenant élargir notre champ d'action".³⁷⁷ However, the party "S'engage à agir dans le respect total des lois en vigueur".³⁷⁸

Indeed, 2004 represented a crucial watershed for the history of Annahj Addimocrati. On one side, the party started to engage in dialogue with the other leftist forces, thereby gaining significant recognition among the other political actors. On the other side, Annahj was officially legalized by the government taking the field of the already fragmented local political area.

Nevertheless, decisive strategic differences between Annahj Addimocrati and the future members of the FGD soon emerged. In particular, a different attitude regarding the 2007 elections let the Marxist party to step back from the promise of a new leftist front.

4. THE 2007 ELECTIONS AND THE FIGHT AGAINST THE MAKHZEN

As investigated in the last chapter, on March 18, 2007, the PSU, the PADS and the CNI announced the foundation of a more formal alliance, the Alliance de la Gauche Démocratique (AGD) with the specific purpose of participating in the upcoming elections. Despite the disappointing result in terms of parliamentary seats obtained, the AGD shared a political program and relied on the objective of establishing a new long-lasting political force, that was meant to develop in the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique.³⁷⁹

Nonetheless, already in the previous year, Annahj Addimocrati had clarified its position regarding the participation in the future electoral process. On July 17, 2006, 'Abdallah al-Ḥarīf announced the decision of boycotting the 2007 elections, calling for a constitutional reform. Indeed, the meaning of this choice was to speak out against the electoral code in force and to put pressure on the government in order to change the system. However, the party found itself alone in this choice; some of the members in the constituency of al-Hoceima even decided to join the PADS and to take part in the elections.³⁸⁰

Indeed, in the end, Annahj Addimocrati turned out to be the only Moroccan party that decided to boycott the 2007 legislative elections undermining its relations with the other leftist forces.

³⁷⁷ El-Hassouni A., "Annahj rentre dans le rang", in *Aujourd'hui le Maroc*, 19/07/2004. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourd'hui/17488> ; Jouhari N., "Les habits neufs de la fauche radicale", in *MarocHebdo*, 23/07/2007. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/marochebdo/61513>

³⁷⁸ El-Hassouni A., "Annahj rentre dans le rang", in *Aujourd'hui le Maroc*, 19/07/2004. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourd'hui/17488>

³⁷⁹ Herradi J. E., "Législatives 2007 : Le PSU veut jouer les trouble-fête", in *L'Economiste*, 27/04/2007. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/leconomiste/77926>

³⁸⁰ Ridouane K., "2007, la gauche radicale divisée", in *L'Economiste*, 18/07/2006. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/leconomiste/72036>

Moreover, *ça va sans dire*, the radical choice of boycotting the elections increased the hostilities between the Palace and the party. During the electoral campaign, seven militants were caught handing out flyers trying to persuade the citizens to refrain from voting. In the following days, the people involved were investigated by the Court of First Instance of Ain Sbaâ, in Casablanca, accused of violating Article 90 of the electoral code which punishes with jail whoever attempts to incite other to abstain on the vote. In the meanwhile, ‘Abdallah al-Ḥarīf was questioned by the judicial police of Rabat. The process ended only two years later, on July 10, 2009, with the acquittal of all charges.³⁸¹

Nonetheless, the fight with the Makhzen was far from being over. For instance, on September 09, 2008, *Hespress* released an exclusive interview with ‘Abdallah al-Ḥarīf that caused a public scandal for his position towards the Sahara question. Firstly, the head of Annahj criticized the Moroccan judiciary for the process against Nādia Yāssīn, leader of the Islamist organization al-‘Adl wa al-Iḥsān. In fact, the movement had always stood out for its anti-monarchical stances and Yassine herself went as far as to call for the abolishment of the monarchy and the establishment of a republican system. According to al-Ḥarīf, Morocco was not to choose between a republic or a monarchy but between democracy and authoritarianism, regardless of the system of government. However, the leader of Annahj also stated that his party considered the process against Yāssīn as a “trail against freedom of opinion and expression”.³⁸²

In the same interview, the secretary of Annahj Addimocrati openly expressed his support for the right of self-determination of the Sahrawi people, embracing the positions of Muḥammad ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, former secretary general of the Polisario front and first President of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic from 1982 to 2016. Accusing the Moroccan and Algerian police forces of preventing a peaceful resolution of the conflict, al-Ḥarīf criticized as well the role played by France and the US. In fact, he argued that by supporting the stances of Morocco, the western powers are actually pursuing their imperialistic agenda without any interest in the cross-regional balance and peaceful cooperation among all Maghreb countries.³⁸³

The media coverage of such statements had a severe impact on Annahj Addimocrati. In fact, the pro-separatist propaganda of al-Ḥarīf led Muḥammad Aḥmad Bahī, member of the Consultative Royal Council for the Saharan affairs (CORCAS), to ask the Prime Minister ‘Abbās al-Fassī to dissolve the Marxist party. Interviewed by *Aujourd’hui le Maroc* on November 7, 2008, he argued that:

³⁸¹ Aswab M., “La justice acquitte les militants d’Annahj Addimocrati”, in *Aujourd’hui le Maroc*, 13/07/2009. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourd'hui/70037>

³⁸² “‘Abdallah al-Ḥarīf, Lasna jumhuuriyyīn wa lasna malkiyyīn”, in *Hespress*, 09/09/2008. Available online: <https://www.hespress.com/politique/8522.html>

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

La position du parti Annahj constitue une haute trahison envers la patrie. C'est un crime qui ne saurait rester impuni. Je demande à tous les acteurs de la société civile, à tous les dirigeants des partis politiques de porter plainte devant la justice pour obtenir la dissolution de ce parti. Il s'agit de faire respecter la Constitution du Royaume. Et la loi sur les partis politiques est aussi ferme que claire à ce sujet. Le parti Annahj viole les principes constitutionnels et la loi sur les partis qui exigent à toute formation politique nationale de respecter les fondamentaux de la nation, soit la Monarchie constitutionnelle, la religion musulmane et l'intégrité territoriale du pays [...] je voudrais m'adresser au Premier ministre Abbas El Fassi [...] pour lui demander de prendre une position franche et claire pour faire respecter la loi et la Constitution. Plus clairement, j'appelle le chef du gouvernement à intervenir pour dissoudre le parti Annahj.³⁸⁴

On his side, ‘Abdallah al-Ḥarīf, responded roughly to such accuses, considering the use of more extremist and radical actions in case the party was outlawed again:

Je ne peux pas prévoir ce qui va se passer , mais j'espère que sa demande ne sera pas satisfaite car tout le monde connaît la manière avec laquelle fonctionne notre parti, Annahj Addimocrati, qui travaille dans des conditions normales comme toutes les formations politiques [...] si la situation continue ainsi, il est très probable que l'on se trouve amené à l'extrémisme et au radicalisme. [Annahj Addimocrati] est un parti patriote qui défend les intérêts du peuple et des classes défavorisées [...] je ne permettrais à personne de mettre en doute mon patriotisme et celui de mon parti. ³⁸⁵

In the end, the party was not disbanded and its leadership was able to overcome this critical phase of direct clash with the regime. However, episodes of this kind testify the tense atmosphere between Annahj Addimocrati and the Makhzen, even after the institutional recognition of the party. The Sahara question is indeed one of the most sensitive issues in Morocco and hardly ever a political party would deal with this matter in open conflict with the monarchy. I believe that the legalization of Annahj was likely to be another authoritarian upgrade strategy of the monarchy aimed at giving the illusion of a transition to democratic openness. It is also possible that the regime did not even feel threatened by a party that, despite its radical positions, lacked of a deep-rooted popular support and therefore did not pose a real danger for the maintain of the Makhzenian system. However, whenever the marxist militants would cross the lines imposed by monarchy, as for the boycott of the elections or the claim of pro-separatist positions, the regime would not hesitate to do whatever it takes to preserve its interests and to repress any real threatening opposition.

Between July 18-19, 2008, the second national congress of Annahj Addimocrati was convened in Casablanca. On the occasion, the attending leaders took the opportunity to reassert their philosophical frames of reference and the political agenda of the party. Even though they basically reconfirmed the

³⁸⁴ Hamrouch M., “Mohamed Ahmed Bahi: J'appelle le Premier ministre à dissoudre Annahj”, in *Aujourd'hui le Maroc*, 07/10/2008. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourd'hui/64252>

³⁸⁵ Dhabi O., “Annahj Addimocrati: Abdallah Harif menace de recourir à l'extrémisme pour faire valoir ses idées”, in *Aujourd'hui le Maroc*, 09/10/2008. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourd'hui/64309>

positions expressed before the 2002 elections, a further analysis of the party program might help us to better appreciate its political ambitions and its ideological framework:

Annahj Addimocrati adopts Marxism as its analytical approach and theory of revolutionary change. However, we do not consider it a rigid theory, as it can develop and it can be enriched through the practice of the struggle and leveraging scientific progress. Therefore, Annahj Addimocrati is based on the thought of Marx, Engels, Lenin and other communist thinkers and leaders who enriched Marxism as theory of revolutionary change and as analytical approach. Essentially, Marxism is based on historical and dialectical materialism. Marxism, as an idea of freedom aimed at liberating humanity from exploitation and tyranny, provides the theoretical and practical foundations at a time when the capitalist system dominates the world [...] For us, communism is not a model that reality must conform to, but rather [...] the actual movement that destroys the existing reality: capitalism. Marxism, based on historical materialism, considers the class struggle between exploiting and exploited classes as the motor of history [...] Annahj Addimocrati, based on Marxism, aims at freeing the people not just from the capitalist exploitation but from all kind of oppression and alienation.³⁸⁶

In this regard, the defence of the rights of the Sahrawi people and the Moroccan Amazighs emerged as an issue of primary importance:

Annahj Addimocrati has always affirmed the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination and it calls for direct negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario front, in order to find a solution to the conflict that complies with the international law.³⁸⁷

Furthermore, the party demanded:

the recognition of the Amazigh culture and language and its adoption, with Arabic, in education, administration, information and several spheres of public life.

Interestingly enough, the status of women as well is interpreted through the lenses of class struggle against capitalism. Indeed:

the inferior status of women did not always exist in the history of mankind [...] it is the result of a historical process that led, thousands of years ago, to the establishment of the patriarchal family, the state, the private property and the class society in general. Capitalism took advantage of this position of subordination to exploit women who work even more than man with lower wages and poorer working conditions. [...] Hence, the struggle of women for gender equality at all levels that ensures special rights to women, as women and as mothers, pours into the general struggle against capitalism as an exploitative system, and working women occupy the forefront of this struggle because they suffer as women and exploited workers oppressed by this system.³⁸⁸

I believe this is actually a fundamental aspect, especially in the Middle Eastern countries. The interplay between the condition of women, the economic system in place and the economic policies

³⁸⁶ Translated from Arabic : Faqīr ‘A., “Ḥawla mā yata‘arraḍ la-hu al-nahj al-dīmuqrātī”, in *al-ḥiwār al-mutamaddan*, al-‘adad 3478, 06/09/2011. Available online: <http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=274430&r=0>

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

pursued by the governments is an interesting yet complex field of study quite often inadequately investigated. Even though the gender-focused researches must always consider a huge combination of different factors, such as religion, society, educational background and so on, there are some studies that highlight a correlation between the implementation of neo-liberal policies in the last thirty years and the deterioration of the status of women, especially in terms of self-empowerment, emancipation from the nuclear family and right to have a decent wage.³⁸⁹

Concerning its international allies, in the last decades Annahj Addimocrati forged good relations with other leftist parties both in the Middle Eastern countries and all around the globe. For instance, in the neighbouring Tunisia, the party developed contacts with the communist Workers' Party (Ḥizb al-'ummāl). Moreover, the former militants of Ilā al-Amām were able to renew their relations with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), strengthening their support for the Palestinian cause against the Zionist occupation. The party took part to the Progressive and Communist Forces Forum in South Africa and it forged links with other revolutionary and communist movements in Latin America and Europe.³⁹⁰ For instance, in 2014 Annahj co-signed the so-called "Declaration of Casablanca" with other international leftist forces such as Syriza and Podemos.³⁹¹ Few years later, in June 2019, members of Annahj attended, with other radical leftist parties from Italy, France, Greece and Catalonia, an international conference held in Milan entitled "Un'alternativa euromediterranea contro la fortezza Europa" (An Euro-Mediterranean alternative against the fortress Europe).³⁹²

Considering the Arab region, Annahj Addimocrati deems it necessary to get rid of the reactionary control of the US imperialism, the Zionist rule in the Middle East and their local allies. Along with the liberation of Ceuta, Melilla and the Chafarinas Island, the party voiced its support for a real unification of the Maghreb, in terms of economic integration and political and cultural cooperation, as the first great step towards a larger pan-Arab unity.

³⁸⁹ For more detailed studies: Hellio E., "Importer des femmes pour exporter des fraises (Huelva)", *Études rurales*, vol. no 182, no. 2, 2008., pp. 185-200; Sippel S. R., *Disrupted livelihoods? Intensive agriculture and labour markets in the Moroccan Souss*, in *Seasonal Workers in Mediterranean Agriculture: The Social Costs of Eating Fresh*, edited by Jörg Gertel, Sarah Ruth Sippel, Routledge 2017, p.186-198; Cairioli L., "Garment Factory Workers in the City of Fez", *Middle East Journal*, Vol 53, N. 1, Winter, 1999, p. 28-43; Martinez A., *Emerging grassroots processes for inclusive citizenship: the case of Moroccan female workers in the textile and garment sector*, in *Political and Socio-Economic change in the Middle East and North Africa, gender perspectives and survival strategies*, edited by Bahramitash R., Esfahani H. S., Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2016, p. 99-126

³⁹⁰ Translated from Arabic: Faqīr 'A., *op. cit.*, available online : <http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=274430&r=0>

³⁹¹ Sbiti S., "Que revendique Annahj Addimocrati, le seul parti qui boycotte les élections? ", in *TelQuel*, 22/08/2015. Available online : https://telquel.ma/2015/08/22/que-revendique-annahj-addimocrati-seul-parti-boycotte-les-elections_1460147

³⁹² The conference was organized by "Piattaforma Eurostop Centro studi Cestes Proteo": "Un'alternativa Mediterranea contro la fortezza Europa". Available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJeCOJVgwuhpzAz4X43TkYZEuNbn99AR>

With regards to the domestic context, Annahj Addimocrati seeks to overcome the discrepancy between the proletarian masses and the capitalist exploiting classes and their imperialist international allies. In order to achieve this goal, the party aims at implementing a truly democratic rule which ultimate purpose is the establishment of a socialist system. High priority is given to the adoption of a new constitution, the implementation of a rule of law, the dismantling of the secret and repressive agencies at the service of the regime, a reorganization of the Interior Minister, the total independence for both the judiciary and the media and, in more general terms, the abolishment of the Makhzenian system.

On the economic level, Annahj Addimocrati advocates the planification of the national economy independently from foreign monopolies in order to stop the submission to global financial powers. The party also called for a radical tax reform, the cancellation of the Moroccan foreign debt, the abolition of free trade agreements, the development of a strong domestic industry, the reduction of the service sector and, one more time, for a profound agrarian reform aimed at redistributing the lands to smallholder farmers.

5. ANNAHJ ADDIMOCRATI AND THE 20 FEBRUARY MOVEMENT

As I already discussed in the previous chapter, in first decade of the 2000s, Morocco recorded a further deterioration of its economic condition. The cosmetic democratization policies carried out by Muḥammad VI did not give any answers to the rising social inequalities, unemployment and uneven development between marginalized areas and urban centres.³⁹³

With the outbreak of the 2011 protests in the Arab region, Annahj Addimocrati emerged as one of the major political forces that supported the 20FM in the country, alongside the PSU, the PADS the CNI, the AMDH and other social forces. As it was the case of the FGD, on February 20, 2011 members of Annahj joined the protests all around the country.

As ‘Abdallah al-Ḥarīf wrote few years later, the party conceived the spread of the Arab springs as the inevitable outcome of the “separation between the existing regimes and the people desiring freedom, democracy and a decent life”.³⁹⁴ Once again, Annahj Addimocrati offered a Marxist interpretation of the popular uprising led by the 20FM: “the profound crisis of the capitalist system” al-Ḥarīf argued “was a fundamental factor in the outbreak of these revolutionary processes while the rising of a multi-

³⁹³ Bennafla K., “Seniguer H., Le Maroc à l’épreuve du printemps arabe : une contestation désamorcée?”, *Outre-Terre*, n. 29, March 2011, p. 143-158

³⁹⁴ Translated from Arabic: “‘Abdallah al-Ḥarīf, Manāḍil taqaddumī wiḥdawī wa qiyādī fī al-nahj al-dīmuqrātī al-maḡribī – fī ḥiwār ma‘a al-qārī‘āt wa al-qirā’ ḥawl : al-sīrūrāt al-ṭawriyya fī al-‘ālam al-‘arabī, ‘asbāb al-faṣl al-mu’aqqaṭ wa mutaṭallibāt al-nuhūd”, in *al-ḥiwār al-mutamaddan*, al-‘adad 5663, 8/10/2017. Available online : <http://www.ahewar.org/debat/s.asp?aid=575024>

polar world offers better chances for the fight of the people who suffer from western imperialism, Zionism and reactionary Arabs in our region”.³⁹⁵

Afterwards, al-Ḥarīf identifies four main reasons behind the spread of the 2011 protest in the Middle East. Firstly, there is the strong mutual influence that the Arab countries exercise over each other due to their shared language and culture and their common enemies: Western imperialism, Zionism and reactionary Arabs. Secondly, there is the crisis of capitalism and the problems caused by rentier-based economies that resulted in high rates of unemployment, poverty, welfare cuts, prices increase and loss of consumer purchasing power. Moreover, there are the widespread corruption and clientelism alongside the abuse of power of the authoritarian local rules that suffocate the fight for democracy to preserve their own interests.³⁹⁶

Indeed, throughout 2011, the Moroccan political arena was conquered by the 20 February Movement. Thanks to a wide use of social medias, the Movement quickly gained both national and international recognition. Born on Facebook with the aim of engaging with young generations, the 20FM surely expressed a new way of protesting as it was able to include a large proportion of the citizens under the demand of constitutional and political changes without imposing any ideological barrier.³⁹⁷

As I pointed out in the third chapter, the parties of the FGD supported the claims of the 20FM and attempted to catalyse this rising social force in order to pursue their fight against the regime, although with little success. Nevertheless, other political forces, such as Annahj Addimocrati and the islamist movement al-‘Adl wa al-Iḥsān, joined the protests carving out an important space of visibility.

Actually, by reading the local medias discussing the events of 2011, several newspapers and political figures accused the radical members of Annahj Addimocrati and the islamists of al-‘Adl wa al-Iḥsān of manipulating the young militants of the 20FM, imposing their ideology and political agenda, no longer considering the initial objective of the Movement and the real needs of the Moroccan people. According to these commenters, right after the month of February 2011, the members of the 20FM became less and less independent as they were subdued to the political exploitation of ‘Abd al-Salām Yāssīn and ‘Abdallah al-Ḥarīf.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ Radi A., “Protest Movements and Social Media: Morocco’s February 20 Movement”, *Africa Development*, Volume XLII, N. 2, 2017, p. 31-55

³⁹⁸ “Les liaisons dangereuses”, in *Le temps*, 12/07/2011. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/letemps/27929>; Aswab M., “Houcine Abenkcer : Il y a plusieurs parties qui tentent de récupérer le Mouvement du 20 février”, in *Aujourd’hui le Maroc*, 13/05/2011. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourdhui/82441> ; Aswab M., “Réformes : Comment le Mouvement du 20 février a perdu son autonomie”, in *Aujourd’hui le Maroc*, 13/05/2011. Available online: <https://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourdhui/82432>

Harsh criticisms were also received by the “Collectif des associations marocaines en Europe” that stood against the positions of Annahj and the AMDH regarding the issues of territorial integrity. A huge scandal erupted following a session of the European Parliament on March 22, 2011, in which ‘Abdallah al-Ḥarīf and Ḥadīja al-Riyādī, former president of the AMDH and member of Annahj, expressed their support for the separation of the Western Sahara. Feeling outraged, the “Collectif des associations marocaines en Europe” accused Annahj and the AMDH of proclaiming themselves as the spiritual and ideological leaders of the 20FM arguing with an official statement that “Sans aucune forme de respect ni d’égard pour les valeurs sacrées de leurs concitoyens, Annahj Addimocrati et l’AMDH vendent leurs âmes et bradent l’idéal des jeunes du mouvement du 20 février aux rebelles du Polisario et à leurs mentors algériens”.³⁹⁹

However, an opposing view was expressed by one of the major leaders of the 20FM, Yūsuf Mīzzī: “Annahj Addimocrati et l’Association marocaine des droits humains (AMDH)...” he stated interview by *Aujourd’hui Le Maroc*, “...n’ont jamais été les guides spirituels du Mouvement du 20 février. Je crois que ces personnes représentent leurs propres structures politiques, parlent en leur nom et ont été invitées à Bruxelles en tant que telles». Referring to the Sahara issue, he also argued that “Le débat autour du Polisario et le sujet de nos provinces du Sud n’ont jamais été abordés [...] Le mouvement réunit les membres de la jeunesse de plusieurs parties qui défendent la marocanité des provinces du Sud. Mon avis personnel est que tant qu’il n’y a pas une véritable démocratisation dans le pays, une véritable séparation des pouvoirs, le problème du Sahara ne sera pas résolu”⁴⁰⁰.

If the exact role played by the militants of Annahj during the 2011 protests remains unclear much more straightforward was the position of the radical leftists towards the response of the King to the 20FM. As underlined by Maghraoui, by the 2011 constitutional referendum, Morocco had 35 political parties. Thanks to the intense control policies exerted by the King, the new constitution was welcomed by the overwhelming majority of the political forces. In fact, the referendum was not only supported by the monarchical parties such as the PAM or the RNI, but by the Istiqlāl and the USFP as well, that called the Moroccan people to vote yes for the new constitution. Just like in former constitutional referendums, the position of the different parties said a great deal about their level of autonomy or cooptation.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁹ Aswab M., “Annahj manipule-t-il les jeunes du 20 février à des fins séparatistes?”, in *Aujourd’hui le Maroc*, 28/03/2011. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourd'hui/81624>

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰¹ Maghraoui D., “Constitutional reforms in Morocco: between consensus and subaltern politics”, *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 16, N. 4, December 2011, p. 679-699

For Annahj Addimocrati, the leadership of the party decided to go along with the decision of the PSU, PADS and CNI, of boycotting the referendum, set for July 1, 2011. Few months later, the members of Annahj gathered in Casablanca for the national congress of the party on September 11, 2011. The meeting decided to issue a communiqué declaring its position towards the upcoming legislative elections the following month.⁴⁰²

‘Abdallah al-Ḥarīf and his party remained highly critical towards the regime and its disappointing answer to the demands of the population. Analysing the failure of the 2011 protests in the Arab region, the leader of Annahj attacked the authoritarian system and its large use of violent repression on the demonstrators. “The local regimes and the imperialist powers used all their repressive, political and intellectual weapons as well as their financial resources to counteract any revival of the popular fighting movement, trying to crush the ambitions of people for dignity, freedom and social justice”.⁴⁰³ Nevertheless, the critical analysis of the secretary of Annahj is not limited to the domestic authoritarian rules but includes the leftist forces and their political weakness as well. In fact, al-Ḥarīf is well aware of the ongoing ideological crisis that the left is experiencing since the fall of the USSR and the success of the neoliberal project on a global scale. Indeed, the feebleness and the balkanization of the Moroccan opposition parties translated in the inability to achieve any tangible results or to provide a real alternative to the ruling regimes. Interestingly enough, al-Ḥarīf also criticised the relation of the leftist forces with the islamists. He argued that their mutual consideration was wounded by hostilities and based on misconceptions and preconceived ideas. On the contrary, by giving top priority to the social question, al-Ḥarīf argued that neither the left or political Islam are homogeneous and static forces and he therefore condemned any form of reciprocal prejudice. Moreover, given that both the islamist and the leftist are victims of social inequalities the political struggle should only be shaped by the class struggle, and not by an unreasonable conflict between *laïcité* and religion.⁴⁰⁴

The points made by al-Ḥarīf in the previous statement strikes me as being quite unusual for a radical-left party. In the previous chapter I highlighted the adversarial relationship between the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique and the islamist movements. In that case, the leftist forces perceived the islamists as ideologically opposed to the progressive parties, asking for a clear separation between the confessional dimension and the political one. Indeed, political Islam was perceived as threat as much as the Makhzen itself. On its side, Annahj Addimocrati as well calls for the establishment of a

⁴⁰² Aswab M., “Le PSU boycotte, le CNI participe et le PADS pas encore décidé : La participation aux élections législatives divise les gauchistes”, in *Aujourd’hui le Maroc*, 19/09/2011. Available online : <https://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourd'hui/84416>

⁴⁰³ Translated from Arabic: ‘Abdallah al-Ḥarīf, *op. cit.*, available online: <http://www.ahewar.org/debat/s.asp?aid=575024>

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

secular state that separates the religious discourse from the institutional power. However, al-Ḥarīf seems to be less harsh on the islamists as he gave lesser value to their ideological differences in favour of a more Marxist approach focused on the social needs and economic inequalities of all citizens. From this perspective, the political clash between exploiting employers and oppress workers acquired more relevance than the fight between leftists and islamists. Nevertheless, I believe that the words of the leader of Annahj were more referring to al-‘Adl wa al-Iḥsān, an illegal movement openly opposed to the monarchy, rather than to the PJD, an islamist yet ruling party totally aligned with Muḥammad VI. I also argue that the chance to carry on some kind of collaboration with al-‘Adl wa al-Iḥsān was indeed restricted to the Moroccan uprisings in 2011 as the movements had, alongside the 20FM, a shared and anti-makhzenian agenda aimed at pushing for constitutional changes.

6. FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

In the years following 2011, Annahj Addimocrati did not really change its attitude towards the regime or its political participation. After the boycott of the 2007 legislative elections, in 2009 al-Ḥarīf announced that the party would have boycotted the communal elections set for June 12. The reasons were more or less always the same. In a video posted on YouTube, the secretary of Annahj condemned, once again “Le cadre général dans lequel vont se passer ces élections [...] dominé par la persistance du despotisme et le pouvoir individuel absolu légitimé par une constitution octroyée et anti-démocratique, par l’immunité du crime politique public et par une plus grande maîtrise du pouvoir sur tous les secteurs de la vie, aussi bien sur le plan politique, économique, cultural, social et même religieux”.⁴⁰⁵ As mentioned earlier, in 2011 Annahj boycotted both the constitutional referendum and the legislative elections, this time with the full support of the other leftist parties. In the following years, while Annahj Addimocrati maintained good relations with all the members of the FGD, their political projects remained detached and independent from one another. It is worth mentioning that there was a further attempt to merge between Annahj and the PSU in 2012. At the end of August 2012, Nabīla Munīb, leader of the PSU, and the Muṣṭafā al-Barahmīh, succeeded to al-Ḥarīf as secretary general of Annahj⁴⁰⁶, met in the city of Taza in order to discuss a new leftist political project that would have brought the two parties together. However, to date nothing of the sort has been achieved.⁴⁰⁷ Quite the opposite, since a different attitude towards the participation in the 2016 electoral process further widened the distance between Annahj and the FGD. While the alliance

⁴⁰⁵ “Elharif A ; secrétaire national annahj addimocrati Voie Démocratique”. Available on YouTube :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pIVGkA5HG8>

⁴⁰⁶ El-Farah T. A., “Annahj Addimocrati change de tête...et arrondit les angles?”, in *La Vie éco*, 25/07/2012. Available online : <https://www.lavieeco.com/actualite-maroc/annahj-addimocrati-change-de-tete-et-arrondit-les-angles-22870/>

⁴⁰⁷ “Vers un une Gauche Unifiée?”, in *Le Soir Echos*, 28/08/2012. Available online :

<https://www.maghress.com/fr/lesoir/56661>

led by Nabīla Munīb run in the elections winning two seats in the House of Representatives, Muṣṭafā al-Barahmīh and his comrades started an intense boycott campaign in numerous cities, where militants of Annahj delivered strongly worded speeches against the regime. Interviewed by *Middle East Eye*, Amīn Lakhbābi, member of Annahj, claimed that: “Le parlement ne sert à rien, le gouvernement ne sert à rien. C’est le Makhzen qui gouverne [...]. Beaucoup d’argent est dépensé à l’occasion des élections pour ensuite dire que le Maroc est un pays démocratique. Mais ce n’est que la décoration du système”.⁴⁰⁸ Once again, the expression of political dissent was immediately repressed by the regime. For instance, in August 2015, in the middle of the electoral campaign, several militants of Annahj were arrested (few were badly beaten and sent to the hospital) for manifesting against the elections in Bouzakarne, Bijaad, Sefour, Salé and Rabat. Among them, *TelQuel* reports, there were few members of the AMDH, including Ḥadīja al-Riyādī, former president of the human rights association.⁴⁰⁹

Indeed, in the last few years, the confrontation between Annahj and the Makhzen, and the Interior Minister in particular, has continued. While the police has often dared to indulge in violence or to arrest the militants, the Interior Minister has actually played the major role in fighting the party, especially at regional level. For instance, in early 2020, Annahj Addimocrati attacked the Interior Minister for not letting the party hold its regional conferences in Beni Mellal-Khénifra, Marrakech-Safi and Fès-Meknès. Again, at the end of February, Muṣṭafā al-Barahmīh and numerous members of Annahj protested in al-Hoceima against the local authorities that prevented them from organizing the regional congress in the city. The manifestation was also joined by members of the FGD, by militants of al-‘Adl wa al-Iḥsān and by a number of families of detainees from the Hirak Rif Movement.⁴¹⁰

In conclusion, I argue that any foreseeable future development of Annahj Addimocrati is hard to predict. From its very foundation, or perhaps even from the 1970s, the party has remained true to its original values and it has never really experienced any considerable changes in its positions, opinions or tactics. Indeed, since its formation as a proper party in 1995, Annahj has tried to act in accordance

⁴⁰⁸ Massy P., “Elections marocaines : le royaume peut-il évoluer vers une monarchie parlementaire?”, in *Middle East Eye*, 7/10/2016. Available online : <https://www.middleeasteye.net/fr/reportages/elections-marocaines-le-royaume-peut-il-evoluer-vers-une-monarchie-parlementaire>

⁴⁰⁹ Bennamate N., “Les autorités arrêtent des militants d’Annahj Addimocrati qui appellent au boycott”, in *TelQuel*, 27/08/2015. Available online : https://telquel.ma/2015/08/27/annahj-addimocrati-viseur-du-ministere-linterieur_1460826

⁴¹⁰ “Man‘ al-Nahj al-Dīmuqrātī min ‘aqd mu’tamarīh al-juhuwī bi-l-ḥusaima”, in *al-yawm* 24, 03/03/2020. Available online : <http://www.alyaoum24.com/1384495.html> ; “Al Hoceima : Le parti de la Voie démocratique dénonce l’interdiction de son congrès régional”, in *Yabiladi*, 03/03/2020. Available online : <https://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/90006/hoceima-parti-voie-democratique-denonce.html7>

with the law and it did no longer refuse the monarchical institution itself, as long as a genuine democratic system would be established.

In September 2019, Annahj Addimocrati organized a conference titled “The left and the possible alliances” (*al-yasār wa al-taḥālufāt al-mumkina*) held for the death anniversary of Muḥammad Ma‘rūf, former militant of Ilā al-Amām. On the occasion, Amīn ‘Abd al-Hamīd, member of the party, gave a speech addressing the future of the Moroccan left. Besides dwelling again on the major challenges that the left must address, the fight against western imperialism, the abolishment of the Makhzen, the eradication of the rentier economy and so on, ‘Abd al-Hamīd paid a great deal of attention to the relation between Annahj and the other leftist forces, the FGD *in primis*. First and foremost, he defines as “leftist” all the political and social forces that fight for a total democratic state, in political, economic, social and cultural terms which long-term aim is the establishment of a socialist system. He rules out from this definition all the government forces that hold institutional positions, including the USFP and the PPS.

In light of this, the new Moroccan left is today mainly represented by Annahj Addimocrati, the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique and some other minor Marxist movements inheritors of the progressive student groups.

However, upcoming changes will renovate the structure of Annahj this year. In fact, ‘Abd al-Hamīd communicated that concurrently with the fifth party congress in July 2020, the leadership of the party will announce the establishment of a new political project, the Working-Class party (*ḥizb al-tabqa al-‘āmila*). Subsequently, the leaders of Annahj aim at reaching out to all Moroccan Marxists and engaging in dialogue with all other leftist forces. As stated by ‘Abd al-Hamīd “After the unification of the FGD and after the announcement of the foundation of the Working-Class party we will keep working with the Fédération and with the other leftist democratic forces as we aspire to form a solid alliance of democratic forces, whose central core are Annahj and the FGD”.⁴¹¹ ‘Abd al-Hamīd concluded his speech calling for a new phase in the history of the Moroccan left. A time where the willingness of fighting side by side will soon prevail the makhzenian politics of balkanization and the culture of division. In other words, it seems that Annahj Addimocrati is now calling more and more for a political unification with the FGD, but whether this will happen or not is yet to be confirmed.

⁴¹¹ “‘Abd al-Hamīd...al-yasār wa al-‘amal al-wiḥdawī”, extract of the conference “al-yasār wa al-taḥālufāt al-mumkina” available online on the website of the Jeunesse de la Voie Démocratique: <http://chabiba.org/archives/4250>

7. CONCLUSIONS

In this last chapter, I attempted to place the development and the ideological profile of Annahj Addimocrati within the wider study on the new Moroccan left addressed in this thesis.

As noted, the history of the party dates back to the 1970s. Indeed, after the abduction of bin Barka and the political repression against the UNFP, new underground radical-left movements emerged in Morocco. Among them, in 1970, Abrahām Serfāī and other communist militants split from the PLS and founded the Marxist-Leninist organization Ilā al-Amām. Embracing a strong marxist ideology and Third Worldist stances, Ilā al-Amām gave high priority to the class struggle and to the fight against international capitalism and neo-colonial relations with the western countries. By questioning the power of the monarchy and carrying out an intense illegal political activity, the organization immediately posed a threat to the maintenance of the status quo of the ruling elites. Due to the harsh political persecution, countless leftist members were sentenced to death, exiled or imprisoned.

In the 1990s, after a general amnesty granted by Ḥassan II, numerous former militants of Ilā al-Amām were released from jail. Despite the passing of time and the numerous decades in prison, the values and political commitments of the newly released leftists had not diminished. Indeed, the foundation of Annahj Addimocrati, on April 15, 1995, under the lead of ‘Abdallah al-Ḥarīf, expressed their will of continuing the battle for freedom, rights and democracy. If the political openness of the regime towards far-left groups may seem strange, it should be recalled that the 1990s were a period of major reform programs through which the monarchy pursued a cosmetic liberalization of the political system aiming at bringing the leftist opposition within the government. With this in mind, I would argue that the general amnesty of 1994 and a slightly greater tolerance towards the political opponents hid another of the numerous authoritarian upgrade strategies of the regime which are aimed at giving the illusion of a democratization process. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Ḥassan II did not trust the militants of Annahj Addimocrati, and the regime prevented the leaders to establish a fully recognised party, at least until 2004.

As noted, over the years, the members of Annahj did not really change their radical positions and they kept opposing to the Makhzen and to any form of rule that prevent a real democratization of the institutions. In many respects, their demands are similar to those of the Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique analysed in the last chapter. The constitutional and the agrarian reform, the generalization of education, the independence of the judiciary and the abolishment of the Makhzenian system appear to be the top priorities of both Annahj and the FGD. After all, these are the very same claims made by the first leftist opposition forces in the aftermath of the independence, which says a

lot about the advances made by the Moroccan regime on the very fundamental questions of the country.

Nevertheless, *Annahj Addimocrati* differs from the FGD for its firmness and intransigence on some other crucial issues. Firstly, there is the refusal of taking part in the elections. While both parties emphasize the necessity of bringing about a mutation in the political system, *Annahj* refuses to enter parliament, believing that no real change can be accomplished by playing under the rules of the King within the institutions. Secondly, and I believe this is even more crucial, there is a different attitude towards the Sahara question. On one side, the FGD has been calling for a rapid and peaceful resolution for the Sahara issue, arguing that no real answer can be provided as long as the monarchy holds all powers. Nevertheless, the PSU, PADS and CNI never took any positions in favour of the self-determination of the Sahrawi people. Actually, in 2015, Nabīla Munīb led a delegation of Moroccan MPs who visited Sweden in order to deter the ruling Social Democrats and Greens party from recognizing the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.⁴¹² On the contrary, *Annahj Addimocrati* has always given full support to the political independence of the Western Sahara from the Moroccan control. This was probably one of the main demands that put the militants in the crosshairs of the regime during the 1970s and it still remains one of the hottest issues in the contemporary political scene. I also argue that, compared to the FGD, *Annahj Addimocrati* embraces a more radical Marxist ideology. Indeed, in the political programs analysed in the previous pages, the party paid more attention to the concept of class struggle, to the socialization of means of production and to the willingness of establishing a proper socialist system. Due to its class-based vision, it seems that *Annahj Addimocrati*, at least on a few occasions, attached less importance to the ideological opposition between leftists and islamists, focusing more on the class conflict between exploiting elites and exploited working masses.

To conclude, the rise of *Annahj Addimocrati* during the 2000s proves that the Moroccan left is today trying to overcome the crisis experienced in the last decades. The end of the years of lead, the crisis of socialism on a global level, the failure of the USFP and the PPS and the growing interference of foreign financial powers with the Moroccan domestic affairs is leading to a revival of a new leftist front willing to fight against western imperialism and the authoritarian Moroccan rule. As it was shown, there have been few attempts to unify the leftist forces, but some critical differences prevented the FGD and *Annahj* to merge together. If the establishment of a stronger and unified front should be the ultimate goal of all leftist forces, differing views on the Western Sahara and the participation in

⁴¹² Choukallah Z., "Maroc-Suède: Nabila Mounib prépare ses arguments pour Stockholm", *TelQuel*, 03/10/2015. Available online : https://telquel.ma/2015/10/03/maroc-suede-nabila-mounib-prepare-ses-arguments-stockholm_1465047

the elections might continue to pose a major problem in the foreseeable future. However, the fight against the Makhzen, the establishment of a parliamentary monarchy and the adoption of a democratic constitution will surely need the Moroccan left to overcome once and for all the internal divisions of the past years.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis provided a new outlook on the intricacies of the Moroccan political and institutional scene, highlighting the emerging role of the new Moroccan left.

Since the independence, the political and financial interests of Morocco have always been strategically tied to those of France and the European powers. In the last thirty years, four main local and global changes have contributed in bringing about a diversification and a renewal of the political players in Morocco, paving the way towards new expression of leftist and opposition forces. First and foremost, the far-reaching international changes that have taken place since the end of the 1980s and the failing experience of the USFP-led government between 1998 and 2002 resulted in an ideological emptying and a loss of credibility of the former socialists, allowing new leftist parties to take the lead of the democratic and progressive front. Furthermore, the enthronement of King Muḥammad VI and the unbearable socio-economic conditions of Morocco, made worse by the brutal implementation of the neo-liberal project, have stressed the need of new and strong forces capable of fighting against international capitalism and social inequalities, challenging the power of the King and the interests of the Makhzen.

In 1995, Ḥassan II ordered the release of hundreds of leftist militants jailed during the years of lead. Indeed, this decision falls within a wider project of cosmetic democratization initiated by the monarch in the 1990s and aimed at pushing the opposition forces to align with the regime. If, on one side, it was right in these years that the USFP approached the monarchical positions, former members of the Marxist-Leninist organization *Ilā al-Amām* established a new radical leftist party under the name of *Annahj Addimocrati*. Apparently, the regime tolerated the foundation of *Annahj*, since its immediate repression would have undermined the illusion of political openness that the King was giving both domestically and internationally. Nevertheless, the members did not receive the necessary documents to gain a formal governmental recognition and their political activities basically remained unlawful until 2004.

Few years later, the OADP, a radical leftist party founded at the end of the 1960s that joined the *Koutla* alliance at the beginning of the 1990s, was weakened by a series of internal divisions that parted the uncompromising wing of the party from the members that were gradually seeking to collaborate with the regime. For instance, a first split occurred around the choice of whether approving or not the 1996 constitution. Following the 1997 elections, the OADP won four seats in the Parliament, but it did not join the alternance government as the leadership refused to cooperate side by side with the monarchy. However, another good part of the members abandoned the OADP

and eventually joined the USFP. The militants who remained loyal to their more radical positions soon decided to engage in dialogue with other minor leftist movements with which they founded the PSGU. In 2005, *Fidélité à la Démocratie*, an opposing wing of the USFP, joined the PSGU leading to the establishment of the PSU. From the very beginning, the PSU was conceived as a new and independent socialist party. As such, it opposed to both the authoritarian local rule and the financial control exerted by international powers over Morocco. It pledged to fight for democracy and individual freedoms, paying special attention to socio-economic injustices and voiceless people. Soon, the PSU approached other leftist parties that stood back from the USFP for their uncompromising positions against the regime. Among them, the PADS and the CNI were the political forces that more than any other embraced the socialist ideology and the commitment to bring about a shift towards the parliamentary monarchy. Both parties were founded following a split within the USFP and they were therefore highly critical towards the governmental left. However, while the CNI was only founded in 2001, the PADS has an older history, as it was founded in 1983 and officially legalized in 1993. The CNI has always kept a strong affiliation with the CDT, one of the national trade union, while the PADS, alongside *Annahj Addimocrati*, has always been strictly tied to the local human rights associations, notably the AMDH and the LDDF.

The willingness of the PSU, PADS and CNI of building a new leftist front emerged during the 2007 electoral campaign, when the three parties allied in order to run for the elections together under the name of *Alliance de la Gauche Démocratique*. In the following years, with the outbreak of the 2011 protests and the adoption of a new constitution which disappointed the expectations of both the leftists and the 20FM, the need to establish a more formal and structured alliance became ever more pressing. Indeed, with the official foundation of the *Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique (FGD)* on January 30, 2014, a new chapter in the history of the Moroccan left was finally opened.

Today, the *Fédération de la Gauche Démocratique* and *Annahj Addimocrati* represent the only Moroccan political forces that oppose to the despotic monarchy and question the neoliberal economic system while embracing a strong socialist ideology.

From an ideological point of view, both the FGD and *Annahj* adopt socialism as the principal ideological framework of their political approach. *Annahj Addimocrati* openly refers to Marx, Engels, Lenin and, generally, to classical communism, accepting the historical and dialectical materialism and assigning high priority to the global fight against capitalism and the class struggle. On its part, the FGD considers the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the international crisis of socialism as the founding causes that urge all leftist forces worldwide to re-found a global socialist movement. Therefore, *Annahj* and the FGD do not represent a new left in a narrow sense. On the contrary, this

study strengthens the idea that they both represent the natural extension of the classical leftist movements of Morocco that are now trying to re-establish themselves. Indeed, they believe that in despite of the international crisis of the left, the socialist forces are more needed than ever and they must play a crucial role in the fight against global neoliberalism.

Indeed, on the international level, both the FGD and Annahj Addimocrati oppose to the wild large-scale capitalism spread in the last thirty years, in an ever more globalised world controlled by international agencies and global powers, the United States at the forefront. More and more often, the labour rights and the social welfare policies have been sacrificed for the market imperatives and to preserve the interests of multinational companies. In this sense, the international struggle against an unbridled capitalism eventually translates into a national fight for social rights and socio-economic equality. Yet again, no long-term project of a socio-economic nature can be accomplished without an early political change. In other terms, the traditional leftist claims made by the FGD and Annahj are inevitably tied to the fight against the Makhzen and to the establishment of a democratic parliamentary democracy. At the same time, only eliminating the international financial interest of the royal family, the power of the monarchical institution might be undermined. One fight inevitably requires the other. As stated by bin Barka himself almost sixty years ago:

Il ne suffit pas d'attaquer politiquement le régime du pouvoir absolu, mais il faut encore affaiblir économiquement ses alliés [...] Nos tâches sur le plan de la politique extérieure sont claires; elles s'inscrivent dans la ligne de solidarité totale avec l'ensemble du mouvement international de révolution nationale et anticoloniale comme elles s'inscrivent plus particulièrement dans le combat commun que nous devons poursuivre aux côtés de nos frères algériens, arabes du Moyen Orient ou africains.⁴¹³

Still today, the words of the leader of the UNFP seem to be more than relevant. After all, the demands made by the Moroccan socialists have not really changed since the independence. As discussed in the last chapter, most of the core issues of the country denounced by the first generation of the UNFP members are still unresolved. Among them, an agrarian reform that would challenge the interests of the large landowners, a new democratic constitution that would restrict the privileges of the King, a real separation of powers that would reduce the influence and the capillary control of the monarchy. Therefore, both in terms of ideology and political content, the new left in Morocco follows the footsteps of the UNFP and the other Marxist-Leninist movements emerged in the country in the 1960s. To prevent further waves of repression, the FGD and Annahj Addimocrati do not explicitly

⁴¹³ Ben Barka M., *Option Révolutionnaire*, in Mehdi Ben Barka, *Écrits Politiques 1957-1965*, ed. Syllepse, Paris, 1999, p. 248.

refuse the monarchical institution itself but they claim the full democratization of the country regardless of the system of rule in place.

Nevertheless, there are few crucial differences between the FGD and Annahj Addimocrati. The first one, the choice of running for or boycotting the elections, is a strategic aspect that still poses a major obstacle to a profitable dialogue between the two forces. From 2016, the members of the FGD deem it necessary to stand for elections in order to have a greater influence on the political decision-makers. Despite the disappointing results obtained in 2016, the electoral campaign, the publication of a clear political program and a strong media presence are considered the best ways to affect the institutional bodies. For Annahj Addimocrati, as long as the political forces play by the rules of the monarchy, no real changing can be accomplished neither inside nor outside the institutions. Therefore, the militants of Annahj seek to bring about a first cultural and political change within the civil society in order to obtain the right constitutional conditions to take part in the elections. Besides that, divergent opinions concerning the Sahara question also represent a crucial difference. As noted, while Annahj Addimocrati recognized the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, giving its support to the claims of the Polisario front, the FGD has taken a more moderate position, seeking to achieve a not-so-clear peaceful and democratic solution that preserves the territorial integrity of Morocco.

Nevertheless, as one can notice, the research topic of this thesis is still a delicate and constantly evolving subject. Despite the authoritarian context of Morocco, the political parties do not represent homogenous and unchanging forces, but they develop and transform according to their leadership, their local militants, the national and international pressures. Indeed, the evolution and the reinforcement of the new Moroccan left is still a work in progress and it will undoubtedly require future extensive studies. In fact, several questions still remain to be answered. In the near future, it is likely that the PSU, PADS and CNI will ultimately merge together making the FGD a single political party. In the meanwhile, as ‘Abd al-Hamīd anticipated, the leadership of Annahj Addimocrati planned to turn the party into a new political force, the Working-Class party, with the long-term project of joining the FGD and establishing a united socialist front.

Indeed, further studies regarding the future role of the new Moroccan left would be worthwhile. While the power of the Muḥammad VI remains unchallenged, studying the future developments of the leftist parties in the country can shed some light on the complex interplay between the opposition forces and the regime, exposing its degree of tolerance and political openness. Will the Moroccan leftists be able to overcome their differences and band together in order to be truly competitive in the electoral competition? Will they be able to survive the tactical strategies and the political oppression carried out by the monarchy? Will they be able to bring about a real change also in terms of political

consciousness, democratic culture and human rights respect among the Moroccan people? The answers to these questions rely on the abilities of the new left to lead the progressive forces presenting itself as a strong alternative to the monarchical parties. Nevertheless, the King remains today the greatest symbolic reference for the common people, as he embodies both the role of major political leader and the *'amīr al-mu'minīn*⁴¹⁴, the religious guidance, enjoying the overwhelming support of the Moroccan people. The fight for democracy and freedom is still far from being over.

⁴¹⁴ lit. Commander of the Faithful.

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