Commitment to the Party Line:
Egyptian and International Experiences

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Introduction

One cannot imagine that the crisis of party-line commitment faced by Egyptian political parties can be tackled or resolved without dealing with a key structural factor related to the process of establishing political parties following the Egyptian revolution. This was the historic moment that has ever since deeply affected the Egyptian political parties with its complications, manifestations, impacts and echo. The moments of the emergence of the Egyptian revolution and the first days of the revolution in the following 18 days were basically epic moments given the variety and diversity of the backgrounds of citizens and participants and the consensus reached by the crowd over the main demands raised at this time. This status dominated the scene in the first days of the revolution under the name and pretext of consensus.

These variables and epic scenes by which the revolution's first days were characterized were saved and reflected in the political arrangements that followed the revolution, and in the heart of those arrangements came the establishment of political societies. Those responsible for political societies were keen on reproducing these epic collective scenes on the partisan level through adopting partisan programmes that mostly aimed at forming a common umbrella that unified the different social components and interests within the Egyptian case. This was clearly reflected in the content of these programmes, which were characterized by wide similarity despite the different ideological and intellectual affiliations of the political parties.

It also made these parties and the people running them believe that this formation and structure could manage and contain the intellectual differences and the different interests of these components, as was the case during the 18 days at Tahrir Square. They believed that being under a certain partisan umbrella implicitly means aiming at achieving the same demands and defending the same interests. Assuming that opposing Mubarak's policies was enough to reach consensus on interests, demands and tendencies in the post-revolution phase—but the reflection of the context spans over another aspect related to the nature of the political scene in Egypt since that period. This period was characterized by the great extent of political and social liquidity among the different citizen movements and social classes at that time. The absence of leaders in the revolutionary political scene contributed to further aggravation of this aspect and could have, by any means, played a role in consolidating certain thoughts or making people attached to certain partisan entities. This mainly contributed to political parties established at that time being restricted to certain communities that were politicized and politically active. These in turn were limited and burdened in one way or another by the consensus visions and unified interests previously mentioned. This has also affected programmes adopted by Egyptian political parties following the revolution, which were characterized by wide similarity and common features despite the different intellectual and ideological criteria based on which political parties are classified.[1]

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[1] محمد العجاتي، نوران أحمد، "مفهوم المواطنة في خطاب التيارات السياسية المختلفة: دراسة مقارنة"، منتدى البدائل العربي للدراسات، 2014، ص-ص: 34-36

This issue was partially affected by the quick political developments in Egypt, which were followed by a phase of openness in the political field, and many political forces believed in the importance of investing in this through involvement in the arrangements of the political scene of this period. This made the political parties face a major problem represented in the fact that they were still not well established among the different social groups or classes. They were dominated by the so-called "newcomers" in Egyptian political life who needed some time to understand and shape their own concepts regarding politics in general and political parties in particular, especially since many of them were young people who had participated in the revolution then moved on to partisan work while maintaining the same spirit of revolutionary rebellion.

Concerning legislation in this regard, Egypt's Political Parties Law requires 5,000 members for the registration of a political party, a number that is considered the highest in the world. This forces political parties to include members who are not of the same intellectual line, increasing liquidity within the political party and widening the scope of disagreements that sometimes exceed the level of opinions and reach the level of orientation.[2]

Mohammad Al-Agati, Nouran Ahmad, "Concept of citizenship in the discourse of the different political movements: comparative study", Arab Forum for Alternatives for Studies, 2014, pages 34–36.

[2] محمد العجاتي، "قانون الأحزاب وخطوة جديدة نحو الديمقراطية"، منتدى البدائل العربي للدراسات، 2012، ص: 7

Mohammad Al-Agati, "Political parties' law and a new step towards democracy", Arab Forum for Alternatives, 2012, page 7.

The Egyptian electoral system and its potential impact on the issue of party line commitment can also be referred to, as it intentionally marginalizes party lists.

According to Egypt's new Political Parties Law introduced in June 2014, an electoral system was ratified which combines individual parliamentary seats comprising 420 of the 567 possible seats, leaving 147 seats that can be competed for through the party list system.[3] Given the fact that the party list philosophy is based on the principles of solidarity and party line commitment, this new formation of parliamentary seats will lead to the party list system losing a considerable part of its attractiveness to political parties. Also, those responsible for the electoral process within it will consider it to not guarantee winning the majority of seats when compared to the individual system. Even in cases where people want to compete based on the party list system, it reduces the political party's margin of movement in proposing its conditions and binding rules to the elements or members included in the list. In addition to that, the current closed list system allows one list to win as long as it obtains 50% of the valid votes, which deprives other lists from the right of winning and being present on the scene. This is an additional factor, which contributes to weakening the attractiveness of political lists and participation in the elections through them.

Within the framework of discussing the general context, one cannot ignore the issue of the culture of public and collective

[3] أحمد مرسي، "الأفراد قبل الأحزاب في الانتخابات المصرية"، مؤسسة كارنيجي للسلام الدولي، 15 يوليو 2014، http://is.gd/zehhTN

Ahmad Morsi, "Individuals ahead of parties in Egyptian elections", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 15, 2014.

work in Egypt, which creates a problem concerning the achievement and consolidation of the party line commitment concept. This suffers from great frailty and a lack of rootedness that is strongly reflected in voluntary work, which partisan work is considered to be one of its different faces and branches, and this is a culture that is deemed undemocratic[4].

Accordingly, this book tackles issues related to party line commitment in Egypt, and the British experiences in that field, through two main angles: First, the internal commitment of party members and leaders; Second, the partisan interactions of party representatives in the public sphere. The book ends with an analytical chapter about the most important Egyptian dilemmas in the field, as well as the lessons learned from the British experiences in dealing with similar problems, matching them to the Egyptian context.

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[4] أحمد فوزي، الالتزام الحزبي"، فصل في نفس الكتاب .
Ahmad Fawzi, "Partisan commitment", chapter in same book.

Chapter I: Commitment to the Party Line and Structural Dilemmas

A. Commitment to the Party Line in Egypt

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Introduction

"Commitment to the Party Line" is an issue that is brought to the surface often by party activists, mostly at times of parliamentary elections in Egypt or when attempting to impose decisions already taken at the decision making levels of the party on some of the party's middle and young leaders. This can be considered one of the main reasons for the reluctance of youth to engage in organizations such as parties or even social or protest movements, whose rules, outlines, and regulations may force its members to commit to its decisions. The youth prefer freedom of movement to committing to any decision. Moreover, there is another old, unsolved issue: the relationship between intellectuals and parties. The intellectual always wants to exercise his absolute freedom of thought, research and expression. He sees committing to a Party line as something that deprives him of this freedom and may even put an end to his ability to freely express his ideas and opinions.

Commitment to the party line has been an ongoing issue and it often emerges at different times. But the existence of parties is unjustified and pointless as long as the members do not commit to the party's principles and decisions, while retaining their right to criticize those and try to change them. Parties are peaceful groups, formed by their members who are brought together by

common ideas and social, economic, and political visions. Their goal is to convince citizens to join them and prompt them to vote for them in the elections in order to come to power. Without the party members' commitment to the party's organizational outlines as well as its principles and ideas, one faces a weak and loose structure, unfit for the task. But the only way for the party to achieve a balance between organizational cohesion and a level of members' freedom to express their views, without causing prejudice to the party's decisions and withdrawing from the party, is through flexible party rules and elected leaders. Together creating mechanisms allowing members to advance their ideas without contradicting party decisions. On the other hand, to participate in making those decisions through democratic mechanisms, while preserving their right to form blocs within the party institutions in an attempt to change and amend those decisions.

Before discussing the issue of commitment to the party line in Egypt, we mustn't overlook the fact that the post January 2011 modern democratic experiment in Egypt is a nascent one. We can say that the existing parties are still "under construction". Their members are trying to establish regulatory and public frameworks and to reach a consensus on ideas and programs. They have experienced a very difficult transition phase that originally rejected collective and partisan activity. Therefore, in order to discuss commitment to the party line, we should discuss the following:

I.   The Concept of committing to the party line

II.   Challenges to the party line: an ongoing issue or one that emerges at particular times?

III.   How to manage the issue of commitment in a party?

I.   The Concept of Commitment to the Party Line

It is manifested in the following points:

1) Commitment to the fundamental principles, based on which the party was founded. The member cannot breach or violate them. If the member himself/ herself felt that those principles and ideas are not compatible with his own ideas, then, he/she should not join this party in the first place. The party must warn the member, bring this to his attention and in case of non-compliance, he must be excluded. Such examples are: committing to peaceful principles of political action, not resorting to violence, committing to the values of citizenship and human rights, not engaging in anything that contradicts them or embracing ideas that are completely contradictory to the party's economic, social or cultural direction, like exercising discrimination on the basis of color, sex or creed; or involvement in crimes. All these are different from the member's violation of some points of the party's programme. Such points can be amended and debated, the members are even entitled sometimes to demand a change.

2) Commitment to the stances taken by the part; such as: commitment to support the party's candidates or support a candidate from an electoral coalition the party is part of or made the decision to back, support for a governmental decision, the party releasing a statement about its political position towards an issue, commitment to an internal decision related to

the party's institutional structure or commitment to a decision related to the regulatory structure or mass action. Such decisions and positions must be open for dialogue, decisions must be taken following democratic mechanisms. A distinction must be made between what can and cannot be violated. That must be stipulated clearly in the internal regulations. One of the most important provisions of the internal regulations must be the members' right to form blocs, so that they feel they are capable of altering the party's decisions. In case members violate the decisions, the regulations must be fair; the punishment must be commensurate with the breach of partisan duties and applied fairly. At any rate, the party must commit itself to creating a state of permanent consultation about its decisions, and flexibility to allow members to change them through democratic mechanisms.

II.   Challenges to the Party Line: an ongoing issue or one that emerges at particular times?

Commitment can be considered an ongoing issue, it is realised in the members' implementation of the party's assignments and activities. It is a problem with no definitive solution. On the one hand, you cannot force a member to exercise a voluntary activity. After all, it is not a professional working relationship where the assiduous worker is rewarded, while the lazy one is punished. Some parties have started to imitate some international experiences, such as the professionalization of the structural and administrative process in the party by having full-time committed leaders, or setting up a functional paid staff to implement party decisions. In the end, this is something not

available to everyone. It constitutes an issue that may affect the effectiveness of the party or the implementation of its activities, but it is not dangerous to the party as an institutional entity.

As for the commitment to decisions that may affect the existence of the political party and its path, or represent dangerous junctures for the party, they may emerge in time of elections. Such examples are entering into an electoral coalition, choosing the lists of the party's candidates, the decision to participate in or boycott the elections, participating in a coalition government, or participating in a dialogue with the regime. What Egypt actually experienced during the transition period, or the two transition periods the country has faced, was very difficult? For example, for our party, it was hard to convince the members to start a dialogue with the Military Council more than once, to reject or accept the dialogue with the President of the Republic, to participate in or boycott the elections, or support one of the candidates for the presidency of the Republic. Despite the democratic mechanisms through which all these decisions were taken, those decisions have sometimes led to some members leaving the party. However, in order to avoid such outcomes, one must: maintain a constant dialogue, provide members with available information during the decision-making process, allow freedom for members to express their views, or even choose a leader who is capable of representing all views in the party to the members during the decision-making process. Also, try to reach consensual solutions as much as possible, and/or provide the opportunity for those who oppose the decisions to express their opinion within certain limits.

The worst thing that might happen is when a member disobeys the party's decision with regard to him running for elections or not and to the party's choice of its candidates. Also for example, his commitment to renounce a district in favor of another candidate to save the coalition. This is where a party must deal firmly with the one who violated the decision.

III.   How to manage the issue of commitment in a party?

In this regard, we must comply with the following principles:

1) Members must feel that they are part of the decision-making process through democratic mechanisms.

2) Clear regulations with no vagueness or ambiguity that address the issue of violations of the party's decisions and their fair application to everyone, and respect the distinction between the types of offenses based on their gravity.

3) Permanent and continuous consultation and dialogue between the leaders and the members across various organizational levels, and preserving the minority's right to form structured blocs with mechanisms that allow them to apply pressure and create dialogue in order to change the decisions or amend them.

Finally, during the transition period and given the nascent democratic experience in Egypt, we can say that the bigger issues of commitment have been experienced with Members of Parliament and youth.

This issue has to be addressed, given the importance of Parliament and youth in the construction of any political party and its existence.

For Members of Parliament, the electoral system in Egypt and the novelty of political parties after January 2011 together pose a major problem in the relationship between the Members of Parliament and their commitment to the party's decisions. A Member of Parliament does not feel that his/her party has brought him to the Parliament. He feels stronger than the party, which might have helped him with campaigning, funds or a voting bloc contributing to his success, but to begin with there's no ideology linking them. This is especially the case with individual candidates, while the situation of the proportional list can be different. In the 2011 Parliament, when members of a certain party bloc spoke, you could never tell that they originally belonged to one organization or party. I can even assure you that they never even held any organizational meetings among them. One of the parties even changed the president of its parliamentary bloc three times, whereas some party deputies did not commit to their decisions and their parties did not correct those mistakes. One example was the position towards withdrawal from the Parliament after its dissolution in 2012 and the conflict between former President Mohamed Morsi and the Supreme Constitutional Court.

It was relatively different for the Social Democratic Party because the way it chooses its deputies was different. There were 20 deputies, 19 elected and 1 appointed. After a month, the party decided to categorically rule out three of them after several useless attempts to force them to commit and change their behavior; it was a mistake that the party decided not to

announce this decision. On the other hand, 11 deputies out of the remaining 17 maintained strong bonds with the party from the beginning, committed to its programs and founders. The party helped them to control the other six members, who started realizing the importance of the party and how it relates to them. The following is what eventually convinced the members to commit to the party line in Parliament:

1) The member must realize the advantages that the party brings to him/her: media support, services and organization.

2) The participation of members in the dialogue and decision-making process within the party and their knowledge of all the details.

3) A well-managed parliamentary bloc, led by a strong party representative capable of wisely distributing the roles among its members.

As for the youth, the major challenge lies in their perception of the difference between a party and a protest movement, and the role of political parties, which is originally to negotiate with the various actors and present solutions, to ensure the peaceful transition of power, through parties' struggle to preserve conditions of an open political space.

Ultimately, committing to the party line continues to be a challenge in Egypt, and but what is more dangerous is not addressing it, as well as insisting on promoting internal democracy within parties, encouraging constant dialogue and the involvement of members in the decision-making process instead of unilateral decisions taken by the party leadership.

B. Commitment to the Party Line: A View from Party Headquarters

NICK SIGLER,

Former International Secretary, Labour Party, UK.

Keeping everyone on board

In any Parliamentary Democracy, where political parties play a dominant role, making sure that members of the party, its representatives and its leadership adhere to the 'Party Line' is a key component to ensuring political coherence and party discipline. To do otherwise is to give way to party fragmentation, internal disputes and, eventually, political chaos. Parties that appear to be divided and unsure about where they stand on key issues usually end in failure. Parties that keep to their line and keep everyone on board have a far greater chance of success both in winning elections and in forming effective governments.

What do mean by 'Party Line'?

A loose, dictionary, definition of the term 'Party Line' could be:

'*The policies and ideology of a political party to which all members are expected to adhere*'. In many ways, that definition is too simplistic. The 'Party Line' can be seen as three main elements – the vision, the policies and the ethos of the party.

The vision of the party is what defines the general position of the party, often found in a preamble to its constitution or policy

programme, a few short sentences which summarise the ideological position of the party. And sometimes that will be further summarised into one or a number of short pithy slogans – in the case of the British Labour Party something like 'For the many not the few' and 'For hard working families'.

The policies are usually what is contained in the party programme and then distilled into the election manifesto. These set out the detailed specific commitments of the party across the board. They are usually defined and agreed over a period of time but can often be added to or amended by the party leadership in response to changing circumstances and thus sometimes lead to a blurring of positions and in turn create a degree of confusion.

The ethos of the party is a little harder to describe but can be seen as the key characteristics of a party – opposed to racial discrimination, in favour of gender equality, opposed to privatisation, against government intervention and so on. While not strictly part of the party line, when leading party members act contrary to it, it can be extremely damaging. So if a party promotes propriety on tax issues but a member is involved in a tax avoidance scheme or a party stands in favour of a public health service but a member uses private medical facilities, these situations can create damaging media stories and undermine the credibility of the party.

All strong political parties will expect their members to subscribe to all three of these elements of the party line – although at times with differing levels of commitment – and we will see below how that can be achieved, and what the consequences of failure are.

How is the Party Line determined?

Given the centrality of the Party Line, the way in which it is determined is crucial to the process of party management. Different political parties will have different ways at arriving at their 'Line'. But all democratic parties will have a method which involves, inter alia, taking the views of their members and supporters, taking advice from experts in the field, drafting detailed policy proposals and eventually asking the party membership to express a view on the finalised policies either through a vote at a party conference or through some form of ballot or referendum.

In terms of being able to maintain the Party Line it is important to ensure that this process is as inclusive as possible and that those who will be eventually be asked to promote and defend it feel ownership of the policies. Inclusion can be achieved by ensuring that there is a simple way of feeding in the views of the members, that the voices of different interest groups are listened to and accommodated and that the needs of different strata in society are recognised. Inevitably one looks for a 'bottom up' rather than a 'top down' process whilst recognising that the party leadership has a crucial role to play. The process for finalising and agreeing the policies needs to be open and transparent with a balance between the various sections of the party. And there needs to be space for discussion and dissent so that those who may take a different view on certain parts of the policies, while supporting the main thrust, feel that their voices have been heard and understood even if, in the final analysis, they have not been accepted.

A further dimension of the party line is the election manifesto. Most democratic political parties will, prior to major national or

local elections, issue a manifesto on which they intend to fight the elections. This will normally be a version of the party policy programme which prioritises the policy proposals for the parliamentary period, whereas the party programme itself will have a longer time frame, and contain broader aspirations as well as detailed policies. The manifesto can also take on a heightened importance in the context of the party line in that it is often seen as a 'contract with the people'. While not legally binding, it is a set of promises made by the party and its candidates to the voters, promises which if elected, voters will expect the party to deliver on. And the party will normally expect greater adherence to the line as set out in the manifesto than it might do to the wider, more aspirational programme, precisely because the candidates have 'signed up' to the manifesto when accepting to fight the election under the party banner.

Why is it so important to maintain the Party Line?

There are perhaps three key reasons why it is important for the Party Line to be maintained. Firstly is the issue of coherence. If key players in a political party disagree and argue about the party's policies once they have been agreed then the party will look incoherent and lack credibility. Secondly, if the party lacks coherence, then the voter will not know who or what they are voting for. And thirdly if there are key disagreements over the party's line then this is bound to result in internal conflict within a party and lead to party members fighting each other rather than fighting their political opponents, again undermining the party's credibility and creating unnecessary distractions which the media will revel in but which will ultimately damage the party's standing.

The bottom line is that the voting public will reject a party that is fighting amongst itself and if it is unclear what the party will deliver if elected.

How does a Political Party maintain the Party Line?

This paper is primarily concerned with the role of the Party Headquarters in maintaining the party line while other papers will look in more detail at maintaining the party line within parliament and among elected representatives. Therefore, this section will look at the tools and methods available to party officials to build a coherent and united party by ensuring that those that are seen to speak on behalf of the party and to create its profile are able to understand, support and maintain the party line.

- **Understanding**:

  Critical to efforts to maintain the Party Line is a clear understanding of what that line actually is. There should be no ambiguity in policy statements emanating from party headquarters. Policies should be clearly set out and explained. Where the policy is detailed and complex simpler versions explaining the policy need to be available. If the policy is questioned then a rapid and clear response is essential. Detailed policy briefings, usually agreed with the relevant members of the party leadership, need to be made available. Leaflets and similar, shorter, publications need to be available to disseminate the policies and the line to the party membership and wider public. It has to be recognised that not all those speaking on behalf of the party – even at the most senior level – will have a complete

knowledge of all the party's policies in all the different areas. So, it is vital that party spokespersons are given regular support, especially when appearing on key media programmes, to ensure that they are both fully aware and updated on all party policies. Finally, it should be noted that there are likely to be occasions when party members or spokespersons accidently fail to maintain the Party Line, often in a situation when they are caught out by a well-researched journalist or a clued up opponent. These situations can be very damaging for the party and are best avoided by working with all key players to ensure that they have as complete as possible knowledge of the party's programme. They are also well versed in the art of answering difficult questions.

- **Repetition:**

  Part of the process of building understanding of the Party Line is to ensure that the line is constantly – and consistently – repeated, in speeches, broadcasts, advertising, social media, party documents and so on. Through repetition, not only will the party's political message get across to, and be recognised by the public, but it will help build coherence in the party and ensure that the Party Line is understood and adhered to by the largest possible number of party members and supporters.

- **Latitude:**

  For democratic political parties, especially those that are strong advocates of freedom of speech and expression, attempts to maintain a Party Line could be seen as going against the ethos of the party. But a

balance has to be struck between building a coherent and effective party and allowing members free rein on policy issues. On the one hand, there must be 'space' for discussion in the party and the opportunity to be able to question policies in order to allow them to develop and move on. On the other hand, there needs to be latitude for members to take a different view to the party line when it comes to be what are often seen as issues of conscience. In all instances, it has to be clear 'where the lines are drawn' and to be accepted that once the discussions over policy are concluded then there is an expectation that members will stick once again to the agreed Party Line.

- **Autonomy:**

  As well as giving individuals a degree of latitude sometimes it is necessary to give different groups within the party a certain degree of autonomy in determining their detailed policies within the broad framework of the party's line. This might usually apply to regional or local parties and youth or women's groups. When fighting local or regional elections it might be the case that there is a need to adapt policies to local circumstances and therefore to 'bend' the Party Line somewhat. At the same time though it is important to recognise that the way in which a party governs at the local or regional level is often seen as an indicator as to how the party will perform at the national level. While the party may have less control over local politicians they can have a significant national impact and it is critical therefore that those local members are fully involved in the party and

understand the impact they could have on the party's national success. In the case of youth groups, often the most dynamic section of a party, it is important not to curb their political enthusiasm and to allow them to develop their ideas but always with the understanding that they operate within the general guidelines of the party's position.

- **Management:**

  One of the keys to maintaining the Party Line is effective party management. From the selection of candidates to the running of campaigns the party needs to be able to ensure that it is promoting a clear and intelligible message, agreed by both the leadership and the membership and expressed in a strong and consistent manner. In selecting members to stand for elections, the party might feel the need to get successful candidates to sign an agreement that they will adhere to and promote party policy. It is probably wise to only allow people who have been members of the party for some time (say one or two years) to stand as candidates, both to ensure a degree of commitment to the party and to ensure that they have a degree of understanding of the party's policies.

- **Discipline:**

  Success in maintaining the Party Line is usually down to clear understanding, coherent policies which have been agreed in an inclusive way and strong back up from the party machine. Resorting to disciplinary measures should always be a last resort. However, on occasion they may be needed. It is important, therefore, that the

party has clear rules – and that they are in place before any dispute arises – that the process of administering those rules is seen as fair and transparent and that they cannot be used in an arbitrary way to achieve other political ends. The disciplinary route often taken is a charge of 'bringing the party into disrepute', while this avenue is more frequently used for members breaking rules about financial irregularity or for speaking out or acting against the party, it can also be used in relation to issues of policy. Using disciplinary measures can also do damage to the party – again especially when the party is an advocate of free speech – and so should be used as sparingly as possible. As will be seen in other sections the use of gentle persuasion and peer pressure are preferable alternatives to disciplinary action.

This paper has looked in outline at how a party can help to maintain a 'Party Line' – a key element in building a strong and successful political party. There are no single or simple methods but a series of measures which when taken together will help the party officials in their efforts outside parliament. Those measures are built around promoting an understanding of the party's position, elements of good party management and a degree of flexibility to accommodate both different sections of the party and the tolerance necessary in any party that believes in freedom of speech and expression.

Chapter II: Commitment to the Party Line and Representative Dilemmas

A. Key Points:
The relationship between the MPs and Party-Line Commitment: Constraints and Freedoms

Sameh Makram Ebeid,

Former Member of Parliament, Egypt.

Political and parliamentary life in Egypt is characterized by its early start at the beginning of the twentieth century. With regard to the problem of party-line commitment in Egypt and the relationship of the MPs with their parties, this can be reflected in the following five main themes:

• Why form a party?

• Do parties believe in democracy? Are these parties democratic in their structure and management?

• Can there be a party-line commitment by the MPs within the Parliament and no commitment within the party itself?

• Is the MP part of the bigger partisan machine or does he/she have personal views and values that they can express?

• Can democracy within the parties be expressed without talking about democracy in the overall political context?

With regards to the first question, a historical model can be mentioned—the old *Wafd* Party, one of the oldest and most prestigious Egyptian parties. Party Members and founders believe that parties are established to reach power, whereas Sameh Makram Ebeid thinks that the party is a group of people

who believe in a set of principles and seek to change people's lives for the better as far as possible. Reaching power—albeit important as such—after all is a mean to that end.

Within this context, an important question emerges, is it possible for the MP in the parliament to have a commitment to the party line while the party does not fundamentally believe in democracy? For example, Saad Zaghloul, the first leader of Al-*Wafd* Party, was running the party in a dictatorial way, as it was the case with his successor, Mustafa El-Nahhas. Despite their strong nationalist tendency, they expelled those from the party who disagreed with them, which was clear during the negotiation and discussion with the Milner Commission[5]. As a result of a dispute that occurred with a wing within the party about the obligation to negotiate or not that wing split and a new party emerged, the Liberal Constitutionalists[6]. This happened again in the era of El-Nahhas Pasha in 1932 when the group "of the 7" emerged because of a power struggle within the party and not about the party's principles. Then Al-Nuqrashi and Ahmed Maher left the party as a result of their being oppressed by Makram Ebeid's dictatorial rule, and then he himself left the party after his struggle with El-Nehhas and Fouad Serageddin.

It is noticeable in this case that those who disagrees with the party leader, not with the party line, get marginalized and then expelled, and maybe leaves political life as a whole. This is

[5] - A commission formed in 1919 headed by Lord Milner, Minister of the British Colonies, to report on the causes of the 1919 Revolution and to find proper solutions to solve the situation.
[6] - A political party formed by the members of the Committee of the 30 who wrote a draft Constitution for Egypt in 1922. The aim of the party was to defend the constitution.

because parties are always stronger than people. After the 1952 revolution the partisan life was frozen for 30 years, and with the return of partisan life during Sadat's rule, the *Wafd* Party was re-established, and it was said that it reached, for the first time, a million members. However, Fouad Serageddin continued with his previous approach of personifying and excluding those who opposed him, which resulted in many members leaving the party. Here, we can refer to a famous incident, a rift that occurred between Al- *Wafd* MPs in the Parliament of 1987. The cause of the incident was that the MPs were invited to a tea party with the President of the Republic (then Hosni Mubarak), but they refused to go because of their dissatisfaction with the State's administration of the Parliament. Fouad Serageddin (leader of Al-*Wafd* at the time), considered that as a violation to the party line; because he had accepted the invitation, and threatened to resign. Attempts were made to persuade him not to, and apologies were presented by the MPs for their great mistake!

Another noticeable fact regarding parties in the Egyptian political life is that parties are not only centred on the party leader, but their activities are also confined to the capital. Their constituencies are weak, the party's principles are unclear and there is no clear manifesto. If there is one, it is not implemented and there is no involvement around it. Members and Representatives of the party do not fundamentally know what the Party Line is, with regards to public issues before the private ones.

What was witnessed before the revolution of January 2011 continued after that year in terms of lack of a clear vision or trends, as the Egyptian general political context has been dominated by the presence of three types of parties: Islamist parties, authority's parties, and opposition parties. Parties that

call themselves Islamist only seek to seize power aiming to apply, in their view, is the "Islamic *Shari`a* law". The authority's parties, and what revolves around them, were established to desperately defend established regimes, no matter what ideology they claim to adopt. The opposition parties or the vast majority of them are weak entities guided by non-institutional individual characters. They do not have a clear and specific intellectual or ideological orientation.

In this regard, we can refer to an important experience the speaker personally lived: the experience of the Constitution Party at the time of Dr. Mohamed El Baradei's leadership. El Baradei's vision was that the party should gather members from the far right to the far left, including the Islamist movements. While the writer disagreed with him, because the party needed to have a certain orientation and a clear audience to address, what happened was that the party was born with an unclear vision; it was not institutionally disciplined, so it exploded internally. Besides that, the party leadership did not take a firm and decisive stance about this, and instead of being the strongest party in Egypt and the first defender of the civil state and composed of the majority of the revolutionary youth movements. Unfortunately, it became a party like the other 85 parties present on the Political arena.

However, to be fair when it comes to the parties' experience after the January 25 revolution, these parties were continuously present in the street protests throughout the four years. As a product of the successive political developments or by virtue of the tasks required by the situation in Egypt after the revolution, they then didn't have the opportunity to be present as parties inside the society, and they were not able to fully and

institutionally build the party and to establish the necessary rules in this regard.

Returning to the internal structure of the parties, it is to be noted that despite of the internal programme and rules of the party, the decisions within it are taken in an elitist way, the rules are adopted without a real debate, resulting in separation between the rules, and leadership as it lacks institutional Structure. For example, there was an attempt to create a real database inside the parties, but it did not succeed either in the case of Al- *Wafd* Party or in the case of the Constitution Party.

Nevertheless, are there mechanisms for party commitment? In reality, the only mechanisms that have been used for 90 years is expulsion or separation, and unfortunately this will continue in the coming period until the creation and management of parties will happen in a sound institutional manner, especially that the 2014 Constitution stipulate that if any MP changes his/her affiliation to a party while in Parliament –because of disagreement with the orientations or decisions of the party- then he/she can be dismissed from Parliament by a majority of two-thirds of the members .

With regards to the Egyptian Parliament, the experience of the Egyptian Bloc (the Free Egyptians Party, the Egyptian Social Democratic Party , *Al-Tagammu`* Party, and a group of independents), how can a Representative be independent and run for elections on an electoral list? Moreover, the bloc brings together the far right (the Free Egyptians) and the far left (*Al-Tagammu`*), and everything in between, like the Egyptian Social Democratic Party (centre-Left), which strongly raises the problem of the absence of a clear line for the bloc. This was the case also between the independents and the rest of civil parliamentary

blocs, as they did not seek and were unable to agree among themselves on a clear line inside the Parliament. When the chance came to elect a Speaker and his deputies, the representatives of the civil current did not agree on a candidate because they did not have a precise orientation or a clear opinion on this matter. This problem happened again in the election of special committees, as the representatives of civil political forces were split between participation in and boycotting of the election of the Committee Office (the head of the parliamentary committee and his deputies) without coordination between them. In fact, this tendency is also absent from the parties; as they don't have a clear vision and coordination with their members or organization within the committees. The result was that the presidency of the Council and the presidencies of almost all the committees went to the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists, because they had an organized structure and a clear direction. The problems associated with the organization and coordination within the Parliament were also because of the lack of communication mechanisms within the Parliament to present queries, questions, motions, and interrogation requests which has in part to do with the problem of good governance and coordination between the MPs. The matter is mainly dependent on individuals and not on the parliamentary blocs or partisan orientations.

Thus, any idea to try to find a real and successful commitment to a party line stems from the existence of a democratic structure within the party itself and the drafting of a clear manifesto that defines the party line and the presence of a mechanism to manage the differences. There should be a mechanism for communication between the MP and the party. Also, the establishment of a parliamentary institute to be in charge of parliamentary education, to teach the MP his/her

role, rights and duties, as well as the presence of other alternative mechanisms to solve the disputes between MPs and their parties, rather than expulsion of the member. With the need for the existence of a conviction among parties that the party will not be able to get all the votes or the support of all groups. Then, parties must have a clear direction and interests to express, and specific political, social, and economic visions. All this would have an impact on the issue of partisan commitment of the MP, as how can MPs have a partisan loyalty when the party line is, basically, unclear or undefined? This is in addition to a number of factors associated with public awareness of the country and its specific democratic path in the absence of a social structure working as incubator for democracy.

The parties should be aware that the MP is a central and important figure in the society and in the local community he/she represents. One cannot envisage—in the non-fascist parties—that he/she is only a gear in the voting machine inside the parliament. On the contrary, the stronger the MP's personality and the bigger his knowledge and culture are, the stronger the party he belongs to is.

To strengthen our political parties, they should be built on institutional foundations, not merely as a décor for the head of the party and the elite around him; otherwise democracy in Egypt will be limited to the ballot box, the election of the party's chairman, or the election of the Parliament deputies.

B. Members of Parliament and commitment to the 'Party Line': Reflections and UK

Jacqui Smith,

Former Member of Parliament and Minister of Home Secretary, UK

Party discipline and maintaining a party line would be an easy task if politicians were submissive and easily led individuals, without strong political principles, beliefs and histories, free from constituency responsibility and allegiance and always in agreement with the policies of the party leadership.

Of course, none of these things are likely, so the key challenge for party discipline is **what factors are likely to make a politician remain loyal to a party 'line' even when they have concerns or even disagreements with parts of it**

Firstly, we must assume that it is generally seen as a good thing to endorse and support the 'party line'. Most MPs enter parliament because they want to gain the power and influence to make changes. In the UK and other systems, this often means that an MP wants to be in the party which gains a majority and forms the government. That MP may also want to be promoted to be a Minister in the government. This is only possible where a party can, on the basis of an agreed programme, gain sufficient votes to form the largest group.

If the system is one where coalitions are likely to form the basis for government, there will still be an important role for a party line. In order to form a coalition, parties will need to be clear about their positions, where they are willing to strike agreements and compromises. MPs who are unwilling to

accept their own party line will also weaken the basis for the coalition.

Even if the MP is in a party which forms the official opposition, their challenge to the government. Therefore, the likelihood that they will, in the future, be part of a governing party are likely to be more effective where they are part of a collective voice.

Selection of candidates

Most UK parliamentarians stand for parliament on a party 'ticket'. Selection by a party would usually require a history of membership and involvement with the party so loyalty to the party and its policies and recognition of the strength of collective political action is likely to already be developed.

This may be further emphasised by the requirement to agree in advance to the 'party line'. Being selected for the Labour Party in the UK, for example, requires you to sign an undertaking to campaign and vote on the agreed policies.

However, different histories with the party and different methods of selection would be likely to make people less 'loyal' to the party line.

- New political parties will not have built up the understanding of and loyalty to the party line. They may not even have fully developed their line.

- People who come from a non-political background may not have experienced the significance of party loyalty. They may be more likely to value independence of thought and speech over political organisation and discipline.

- Selection processes that involve a wider range of people, for example open primaries may also tend to select a wider range of candidates including those without a strong allegiance to the party machine.

Involvement in party policy development

Loyalty to a party programme may be influenced by the extent to which MPs feel that they've been able to have a say in its development and the extent to which the rest of the party have had a say. In his paper, Nick Sigler provides more detail on the processes for determining the party line.

MPs as senior members of a party will expect to have a say in the determination of the party's policies and programme. In the UK, for example, the National Policy Forum in the Labour Party has a specific section for MP representation.

The standing orders of the Parliamentary Labour Party have a provision, which expects that MPs will be consulted on the development of the election manifesto on which they will campaign.

Policies that are contained within the manifesto are likely to be adhered to more strongly by MPs as the argument can be used against MPs who publicly disagree or who suggest that they will vote against that they have been elected on the basis of that programme and therefore must adhere to it.

However, party policies are not only determined at election time. There will also be issues during the course of a parliament such as amendments to government legislation or in response to unforeseen events such as economic crises or foreign policy issues. The extent to which MPs are able to have a role in the

ongoing policy development and discussion will influence their loyalty to the party line. This will often depend on the formal organisation of MPs within their parties.

Parliamentary groupings – formal methods of promoting loyalty

<u>Standing orders and code of conduct</u>

In the UK Labour party, all MPs are members of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP). MPs are expected to abide by the standing orders and a code of conduct which requires them to act in accordance with the policies of the party.

<u>Meetings and committees – maintaining a channel of communication between members and leadership; supporting ongoing policy development</u>

One role of the PLP is to provide a forum for ongoing discussion and engagement between MPs and the leadership of the party. The leadership of the parliamentary party meets with the party leader (the PM if the party is in government) each week. There are weekly meetings for all members whilst parliament is sitting which are often addressed by senior ministers or spokespeople. There are committees that mirror each of the major departments/policy areas. The standing orders make clear that there must be close liaison between the chairs of these party committees and the ministers or spokespeople of the party.

The committees have an explicit role to enable MPs to 'question and probe' spokespeople in a more informal and political setting than would be possible (or desirable) in the public sittings. They are also supposed to provide a forum for

developing policy ideas. The standing orders also suggest that major announcements should be briefed to the officers of the relevant parliamentary party committee before they are made publicly and then party leaders should make themselves available for questions and answers immediately afterwards.

In relation to ongoing policy development, ministers and spokespeople should brief the parliamentary party committee on policy areas that they are likely to be working on and to invite the group of MPs to submit papers or to hold special sessions on these plans.

MPs, therefore, have good opportunities 'behind closed doors' to challenge ministers and to feed into the development of policy. This limits (although doesn't eradicate) the justification for speaking or voting against party policy more publicly.

Keeping MPs informed

It may seem obvious, but in order to follow a party line, it is sometimes necessary to ensure that MPs know what it is. In the Parliamentary Labour Party, there is a well-used Resource centre, which provides briefings on party policies (also ideas to support MPs in publicly defending and campaigning on party policy)

Party Whips

Organisation

In the UK system, political groups within parliaments have formal senior roles whose job is to organise the MPs and to ensure that they follow the party line. These are known as Whips.

They make sure that MPs understand what business is coming up in Parliament; that they are present to support it and do not speak or vote against; they supervise attendance. MPs should seek their permission if they need or want to be absent from Parliament.

Sanctions and incentives

They have a set of formal sanctions laid out in the standing orders and code of conduct of the party. However, they are more likely to use more informal methods; for example, making clear that promotion to a position of responsibility or to ministerial office is dependent on maintaining loyalty to the party programme. For example, the PM or Leader of the Party consults with the Chief Whip when deciding on who to appoint as a minister or into a senior position in the party.

Channel of communication

They also play an important role in ensuring that concerns of MPs are communicated to the party leadership. The team of whips keeps in touch with MPs. It would feed back issues of concern or areas where MPs would like to see more focus. They also play a role in supporting MPs where they face personal or professional problems or illness. This is important is ensuring the wellbeing of MPs. However, it also builds a sense of belonging to the party which will tend to also reinforce loyalty to the party line.

Managing challenges to the party line

In the case of a piece of legislation, or an issue where there was potential opposition from MPs, they would organise to try to persuade MPs to remain loyal to the party line identifying who

had concerns; giving MPs the chance to meet with leaders behind closed doors, organising meetings where the argument for the policy could be put by leaders to MPs, persuading MPs who support the policy to talk to friends who might have concerns, identifying which concessions might be necessary to ensure that the piece of legislation could be passed or the policy could be publicly supported and communicating this to ministers and spokespeople.

Informal methods of promoting loyalty

This identifies two other important ways in which discipline can be maintained. Whilst there are formal sanctions and structures, informal methods and peer pressure can be very important.

Being a member of a parliamentary party can bring a real sense of camaraderie, so it becomes more difficult to take a different position to the rest of your colleagues. As a former Chief Whip, I have asked people to speak to other MPs who are their particular friends to try to influence them and to persuade them to maintain the party line.

Where there is a well-developed party organisation, it may also be possible to use party organisation and members outside parliament to influence MPs. For example, a constituency party may exert pressure on their representative to remain loyal to the party.

Responsibility of party leadership

In modern political parties, it will rarely be enough for the leadership of a party to proclaim the party line and to expect MPs to follow unquestioningly. There is a real responsibility on

the leadership of the party to communicate properly with MPs; to involve them in policy development wherever possible and to make themselves available to justify and defend the party's line. However busy the leadership is, MPs will expect to have face-to-face contact with the leadership and the opportunity to challenge and to receive answers.

Constituency issues

Sometimes an MP may find that the party's policy comes into conflict with what they believe to be their constituency interests. For example, a Minister in the current UK government resigned in order to be able to campaign against a new high speed railway line being built through her constituency. MPs with strong defence interests in their constituencies have recently been vociferous in their opposition to the government cutting defence spending. This is a more difficult example as many policies will have a differential impact on different constituencies.

The party leadership will need to decide how much leeway to give in these cases, and whether the issue really is specific to only a few constituencies.

Issues of conscience

There are also sometimes issues of conscience, which may require a different approach. For example, there are issues where there may be very strong moral or religious views that, in the UK system, have been subject to what is known as a 'free vote'. In other words, individual MPs are not bound by a party

line in those cases, but are free to vote however they feel reflects their personal views.

Conclusion

In conclusion then, in my experience the following factors are likely to contribute to party discipline:

- Involvement in developing the party line

- Ongoing consultation on policy development

- Formal methods of gaining commitment e.g. through conditions set out in standing orders including signing declarations as a condition of candidacy or membership of a parliamentary group

- Incentives and rewards for loyalty

- Organisation to ensure that MPs know what the party line is in any given situation

- Opportunities to meet collectively and with leadership to express views and to develop a sense of solidarity

- Informal methods of building peer pressure and support

- Sensitivity to particular constituency or conscience issues.

Final chapter: Can party-line commitment be achieved in the Egyptian case?

Mohammad Al-Agati,
Researcher, Director, Arab Forum for Alternatives[7]

Party line commitment is defined as the commitment of a political party's members to the party's programme, the resolutions of its general policy, and the tools for implementing the party's decisions, in addition to showing loyalty to the party. This makes the issue of party line commitment similar to the 'Carrot and Stick' approach in which distribution and management are subject to the extent of approval of a member's votes and his/her commitment to loyalty to the party[8]. Party members adopting certain attitudes and stances that contradict the basic principles of the party would bring harm to the party's reputation. They would lead to the party losing the trust of people and citizens, since adopting attitudes or stances that are not in line with the party's basic guidelines on a certain issue can be used against the party in the media and in political skirmishes, leading to people losing confidence in the political party.

For the sake of accuracy, these problems related to the issue of party line commitment (a problem that civil political parties are suffering from in general) must be clearly differentiated from the case of religious parties or the so-called political Islam

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[7] Assistant researcher: Nouran Sayed Ahmad, assistant researcher at Arab Forum for Alternatives

[8] نوران أحمد، "بناء الأحزاب وإشكالية البناء الحزبي"، منتدى البدائل العربي للدراسات، 2012/7/11، http://goo.gl/dvsHou
Nouran Ahmad, "Setting up political parties and problem of party structure", Arab Forum for Alternatives for Studies, 11/7/2012.

parties, which on the contrary do not suffer from this problem. This is due to several factors, foremost of which is the fact that these parties have social bases and certain deeply rooted contact points. Hence, the emergence of these parties was the framing and result of their investment in the establishment of grassroots and communication networks; in addition, the dogmatic factor that dominates these grassroots or social classes was also a very important factor in the cohesion of these parties. This is why these parties did not suffer from the problem of party line commitment in the same way civil parties suffered from it at that time[9].

According to the papers submitted within this study, this chapter tries to specify problems of "party line commitment" in Egypt in an attempt to understand their reasons and to determine how to deal with them within the Egyptian context while making use of the most mature experiences in this field.

a) Structural problem:

A problem basically originating from the structure and formation of the political party, its internal relations, and the different classes and sectors it includes and how they are managed. These can be tackled through the following key problems:

1. **Youth**:
Youth represent the major and most important group already involved in political and partisan work in Egypt. Following the

[9] سامح فوزي، "أزمة الأحزاب المدنية في مصر"، جريدة الشرق الأوسط، 19 أبريل 2014،
http://is.gd/VoIdJZ
Sameh Fawzi, "Crisis of civil political parties in Egypt", Asharq al-Awsat, April 19, 2014

Egyptian revolution, large numbers of people got involved in partisan work and political parties also focused on youth, given the fact that they are the largest group and the group most likely to take actions. However, the sequence of political events in Egypt in the wake of the revolution—that was mostly not satisfactory for the Egyptian youth sector—was a revealing occasion that shed light on the problem of youth within political parties. This faction was deeply affected by the nature of that moment in time in terms of the unprecedented liquidity which led to the practice of politics in a direct way (like taking to the streets, sit-ins, etc.) becoming the most effective means to exert pressure and to have an influence. On the other hand, a large portion of Egyptian youth at that time rejected the concept of political deals and understandings that were not consistent with the solutions and options adopted by politicized youth, which were supposed to be more decisive and definite. It should be stressed from the beginning that the problem of how political parties and their leaders dealt with the youth component or the youth sector differed from one party to another according to the nature of the party's formation and structure, as the Egyptian political scene witnessed several waves of political party establishment in the wake of the revolution. There were parties that could be described as multigenerational, and these were the parties where integrating the youth sector was more challenging.

There was also another category of political parties whose structure was dominated by youth. In these parties, the largest groups of members and maybe people in leadership positions were predominantly young people[10]. With regard to the context

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[10] نادين عبد الله، "شباب الأحزاب السياسية في مصر بين قدرات التأثير ومشكلات التهميش"، منتدى البدائل

and legal structure in which these parties carried out their responsibilities, the amendments of Egypt's Political Parties' Law of 2011, for example, did not contain any articles obliging political parties to abide by internal democracy in running the party, nor any that were keen on the empowerment and integration of women and youth within partisan structures. This was the case with similar or identical experiences such as seen in the Moroccan Political Parties Law, or more specifically its amendments of 2011 which contained an obligation to include a certain quota of women and youth (one-third)[11] in its structures and on its different local and national leadership levels, something which was absent in the Egyptian experience. This problem won't solve the problem and procedures of partisan and political work in Egypt and will lead partisan leadership to have a free hand with regard to dealing with those sectors, women and youth, as they wish.

Thus, the problem of integrating youth or and dealing with the youth sector, was one of the major challenges that Egyptian political parties had to face following the revolution. In addition to that, determining a means of dealing with this sector in a way that guarantees cohesion of the party and commitment of the youth to guidelines approved by the party as well as decisions and stances adopted by it.

العربي، 2015، ص-ص: 9- 11

Nadine Abdallah, "Egyptian political parties' youth between influence abilities and marginalization problems", Arab Forum for Alternatives, 2015, page 9-11.
[11] See Moroccan Political Parties Law, Article 26 of the year 2011 ,
http://is.gd/LWc0Sh

When dealing with the problem of party line commitment in terms of the youth sector, it is very useful to shed some light on the nature of the practical experiences of a number of political parties that have revealed weaknesses related to party line commitment within these political parties. It is also important to tackle threats to the cohesion of some parties in a number of cases. For example, some parties raised the slogans and principle of party line commitment when dealing with youth sectors that had rejected the party's stances and decisions concerned with the internal management of the party or issues related to stances on the bigger political arena, without the subsequent adoption of other mechanisms aimed at convincing these sectors or attempting to communicate with them. This had the effect of draining party line commitment as a key axis and mechanism that should be maintained by the leadership, thus harming its legitimacy as an argument when confronting youth sectors[12]. Furthermore, political parties were not capable of benefiting from youth movements as represented by sit-ins and objections (and previously protests), and engaged in feuds with them instead. Attention to party line commitment also came in later stages following the aggravated crises within some political parties that took several forms, including contradictory statements between the leaders and the youth members of political parties—which convinced more youth that these mechanisms were only used as a form of evasion and passing leadership decisions. There were also some cases of political parties being characterized as favouring some youth to a certain extent and marginalizing others[13].

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[12] Interview with one of the members of the Egyptian Social Democratic Party.
[13] Interview with a former member of Al-Dostour Party in Cairo Governorate.

This confusion and disagreement between different generations within political parties is evident in every political occasion, as these parties witness major internal crises. These crises result from the insistence of youth members on not taking part in the elections before the democratic bases of the elections are complete, while party leaders prefer to participate in the hopes of achieving progress through the political track[14].

The experience of British political parties is certainly different. In their quest to achieve party line commitment, they rely on providing a space for open dialogue between all members and groups (such as women and youth) in discussions; as well as on the daily management process of the political party, including those related to the detailed policies of the party in light of its general rules while applying the principle of trial and error.

Yet, the British experience calls to mind the importance of limiting the expanded use of punitive measures against members not abiding by the line of party line commitment, while at the same time, adopting more flexible unofficial measures in an attempt to convince a part of the similar or participating members. As long as the violations have nothing to do with the financial and administrative aspects within the party, as long as they don't include adopting public stances

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محمد ربيع، "الشباب يرفضون والقيادات تقبل ننشر تفاصيل الخلاف داخل الدستور والتيار الشعبى بسبب [14]
البرلمان المقبل"، المصري اليوم، 8/1/2015، http://goo.gl/Wxonn9
Mohammad Rabia, "Youth rejecting and leaders accepting: we publish details of the disagreements within Al-Dostour Party and the Egyptian Popular Current, because of the upcoming parliament", Al-Masry Al-Youm, 8/1/2015.

against the party or attitudes opposing it, as this can bring harm to the popular and media image of the party[15].

This shows that for countries with a long history in democratic practices, the idea of integrating youth into the party, granting them full rights, and sometimes providing them with exceptions that strengthen their presence within the party and its structures is considered one of the key methods for achieving party line commitment. On the other hand, in the Egyptian case, those in charge of political parties try to impose party line commitment as a means to integrate youth, which only highlights the authoritarian patriarchal culture dominating our society.

2. Governorates:

The relationship between the governorates and the partisan entities in the provinces is one of the main challenges to achieving party line commitment in the case of many Egyptian political parties. This can only be understood within the framework of the political and partisan process in Egypt, which is characterized by a considerable deal of centralism, as well as Cairo's basic monopoly of the political process and interactions in general. This is something that is not only restricted to the political context and the nature of the state regime in Egypt, but also extends to many other entities, including political parties.

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[15] Nick Sigler, "Commitment to the party line - a view from party headquarters", 2015, chapter in this book.

While addressing this challenge, we can differentiate between three basic levels in terms of the relationship with governorates:

Despite demands for some decentralization of the work of political parties and the relationship with their entities and grassroots, a problem is unveiled by the experience of Egyptian political parties. This lies in the fact that in many cases, parties do not possess a central action plan that can factor into determining and organizing the relationship between the centre and the partisan entities in the provinces. This is seen as the creation of large margins of manoeuvre for these entities, without clear general guidelines for the entities to abide by in their work[16]. On the other hand, the problem also lies in the communication process between the centre in Cairo and the rest of the entities in the provinces or governorates: a process mostly characterized by slow communication between both sides. For example, governorate entities might seek the centre's help on an issue, request financial aid from the party, or ask for technical assistance to deal with a development. e.g. a governorate entity of a certain party may ask Cairo to quickly provide it with membership forms to meet growing citizen demand to join the party. However, the central administration in Cairo did not respond as quickly as required, leading to the loss of a large number of potential members and members resorting to their own initiatives and mechanisms to fill this gap[17].

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[16] Interview with a member of the partisan entities of Al-Dostour Party in Daqahliya Governorate.
[17] Interview with a member of the partisan entities of Al-Dostour Party in Daqahliya Governorate.

In addition, the communication process between Cairo (Central Party Leadership) and the governorate entities is usually conducted by a very limited number of members. This is quite a bad thing, because it opens the door to a limited number of members to monopolize the communication with Cairo and to deprive other governorate entity members from conveying their demands to the Central Party Leadership. In many cases, this allows tampering with the will of the members, and affects member confidence in the party and its leadership. This negatively affects their commitment to implement the party's decisions on many issues and causes, especially if those issues are related to their local life.

Another key factor that has a strong impact on the issue of party line commitment concerns the decision-making process within the party, which is a process dominated by a great deal of centralism from two basic aspects. The first one is the centralist decision-making process in the party's Central Party Leadership in Cairo, which raises constant difficulties regarding the attendance of leading representatives of governorate entities. On the other hand, the decision-making process usually takes place within narrow circles comprised of the senior leadership of the party. The remaining entities and organizational levels are notified without a chance for grassroots and middle leadership to express their opinion. In some cases, this also contradicts with the bylaws of the political parties themselves which stipulate that any decision of the party—especially with regard to strategic and crucial causes—must be made after governorates are given the chance to express their opinions (usually through voting).

On a related note, the issue of funding must also be referred to because it is a very effective factor in a relationship of solidarity between the party's Central Party Leadership in Cairo and the party's entities in the governorates and can affect the issue of party line commitment. Egypt's new Political Parties Law and its amendments of 2011 were not discussed with political forces and parties. Those amendments have even ignored demands from political parties to lift the ban on their right to invest their money in commercial projects, whose revenues are used for the purpose of party work. Since the only exception stipulated by the law in this regard has to do with investing party funds in the issuing of newspapers and using publishing and printing houses (according to article 11 of the law)[18], the parties mainly depended on sources like member subscriptions and donations from rich supporters. Cairo receives the biggest part of these contributions. Different secretariats were only given fractions that were not enough to cover the requirements for work and activities in the different governorates and secretariats. This created crises in a number of governorates and secretariats, with members adopting personal initiatives in an attempt to resolve these problems, further burdening members and making them leave the parties. A number of secretariats were also closed without Cairo or the Central Party Leadership intervening to help these secretariats and governorates and support them; although the Central Party Leadership burdens the governorates on different scales, especially during election times and the

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[18] Nadine Abdallah, "Egyptian political parties' youth between influence abilities and marginalization problems", Arab Forum for Alternatives, 2015, pages 14–15.

formation of the lists, based on which the party participates in the elections (as well as during party formation).

This also applies to drafting awareness and training programmes that take place in the central headquarters of the Party Leadership, without the participation of governorates in most cases. They are eventually imposed on the governorates, which are notified by the Party Leadership in Cairo without taking their needs or opinions into consideration. This negatively affects commitment of governorate grassroots[19].

We can thereby identify the problem of centralism and heritage of the hydraulic state in Egypt, not only on the regime level but also on the level of political parties. A parallel decentralization process on the level of political entities is required to end the centralization process nationwide.

3. Internal currents:

This is one of the major problems political parties have faced in Egypt after the revolution. Many parties contained a great deal of diversity, in terms of trends and currents within them. This can be, on one hand, attributed to the aforementioned establishment of political parties, as they are characterized by wide similarity in their thoughts and guidelines, despite their various classifications and their different intellectual and ideological orientations. It is reflected in the presence of controversies between currents within the political party regarding the orientation and direction that must be adopted by the party as well as its management, which often takes the

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[19] Interview with a former member of the Socialist People's Alliance Party.

form of a conflict in several political parties in post-revolution Egypt. This crisis also negatively affects party line commitment given the fact that party line commitment is one of the arguments and tools used in skirmishes between the different wings and currents. It is used as a means to control and downsize others, which in turn leads to continuous drainage of this term and a reduction in people's trust and commitment to it.

Moreover, the diversity of political parties on the Egyptian scene, and the fact that each of them contains different and diverse wings plays an indirect, negative role; leading to the weakening of party line commitment among members. Since a member could, in the worst case scenario, split from the party, if he refuses to abide by the decisions and guidelines of his/her party and commit to them. The member could easily join another party or leave to establish a new party or some other political formation, as was the case with Al-Dostour Party, Al-Nour Party, the Popular Alliance and the National Front[20]. In some cases, this then puts constraints on the way the party can deal with members who are not abiding by the rules.

The overlap between money and political work also contributes to further complicating the ability of political parties to manage the issue of partisan commitment. In the sense that this is one of the notable features of the political process in post-revolution Egypt, and also overlaps with a

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[20] سمير عبد الله، "أبرز الانشقاقات داخل الأحزاب المصرية بعد "25 يناير""، الوطن، 2015/5/2،
http://goo.gl/I1xA2F
Samir Abdallah, "Most prominent defections within Egyptian political parties after January 25", Al-Watan, 2/5/2015

number of competing and conflicting wings and currents within other parties. This sometimes decreases the political party's ability to regulate the relationship between these sides, especially those more capable of financing party activities and tasks than others.

Here, we can refer to two key factors that affected the political party's ability to contain competition and conflicts from one party to another. One of them is the nature of the circumstances and challenges the party is dealing with. If there are no certain circumstances or stances that lead the party to adopt a certain position from these currents, these diversities will be maintained under the party's umbrella in one way or another[21]. Added to this is the factor of party leadership, and its ability to manage relations and power balances between the different wings within the party, something which is intensified by the fact that many parties and regulations suffer from shortcomings in addressing this aspect.

This reveals the absence of a culture of collective work and experience in the management of diversity, particularly in new political parties. Party line commitment hence remains dependent on the two aforementioned conditions, while practical experience has proven that they are maintained in political parties following the revolution.

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[21] سامح فوزي، "أزمة الأحزاب المدنية في مصر"، جريدة الشرق الأوسط، 19 أبريل 2014، http://is.gd/VoIdJZ

Sameh Fawzi, "Crisis of civil political parties in Egypt", Asharq al-Awsat, April 19, 2014

b) Problem of partisan interactions

These are the problems resulting from interactions between the party and its representatives, who are supposed to convey its ideas to the broader public, level through the parliament, media, or political and public meetings. If we consider structural problems as the problems related to internal interaction within the party, then this problem is more related to the interaction of the party actually on the ground.

1. Members of Parliament (MPs):

This is a problem that has emerged following the parliamentary elections of 2011/2012. It was not anticipated by political parties, especially parties belonging to the civil bloc. It took several forms, starting from a lack of clarity with regard to mechanisms used to choose certain members to compete in the elections. This can be partially attributed to the nature of political arrangements in the wake of the 2011 revolution, which forced actors to quickly establish political parties to participate in the elections, to be part of the political scene or else face exclusion. This made the parties include many figures and members on their electoral lists, believing that they could strongly compete in the elections and win many votes in certain electoral districts. This happened while not taking into account their intellectual affiliations or their acceptance or approach towards the party's general guidelines—which are mostly similar to the guidelines of other parties—and without being accompanied in many cases by consensus over the outlines the party wants to pass through a certain electoral bloc to the parliament.

The parliamentary experience in post-revolution Egypt (particularly among MPs who belong to the civil bloc) has revealed several crises, most prominent of which is that the idea of commitment or solidarity between members was not necessarily present in their minds. Therefore, focus was only placed on preparing for the elections and achieving electoral gains, without an action plan or coordination between those within the parliament, in a way that lacked institutionalism and rules for organizing work between MPs of the same bloc. This was seen in two incidents; namely, the election of the parliament speaker and his two deputies and the formation of specialized committees, which resulted in every MP adopting stances based on his/her personal estimations. This eventually also affected cohesion of the blocs[22]. It should be noted that this separation basically took place between party members on one hand, and independent members, who were included on party lists on the other hand.

In some cases where there were parliamentary bodies or committees within the party, performance was very good on the technical level. There were attempts to regulate work between members within the parliament, but they had to face another issue: separation between the parliamentary body within the party and the rest of the party, with regard to discussions on the nature of laws and decisions that were referred to them for purposes of getting their opinions[23].

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[22] سامح مكرم عبيد، " العلاقة بين النواب والالتزام الحزبي: القيود والحريات"، منتدى البدائل العربي للدراسات، 2015، تحت النشر.
Sameh Ebeid, "Relationship between MPs and partisan commitment: constraints and freedoms", Arab Forum for Alternatives, 2015, still not published.
[23] Interview with one of the members of the Egyptian Social Democratic Party.

This led to a decline in the party's ability to support its members and representatives in the parliament by providing them with logistic and technical support in the form of assistants appointed to help them in their parliamentary work; such assistants might be young party members or specialists directly assigned by the party to assist them. This was the reason behind some cases in which MPs left their parties during the legislative term and joined other parties.

In the British case, creating some sort of commitment and cohesion between MPs, as well as between MPs and the parties they belong to, was basically an interaction-based process rather than a static variable. Nevertheless, its success required certain conditions:

Clarity and specificity in terms of a clear legislative agenda and clear legislative priorities that are announced to the public and to competing MPs as soon as the electoral race kicks off. It must also be clear that party line commitment is an **ongoing process of communication and negotiation** in all of its phases, starting with the selection of candidates representing the party in the elections and continuing through ongoing discussions and negotiations between them with the aim of developing the electoral agenda and reaching a consensual one. Even in cases where certain legislation won't gain approval from the side of MPs to pass through the parliament, periodic consultations and attempts to convince them constitute a basis mechanism for resolving conflicts in a safe manner. It is also **a process based mostly on a contract** between both individuals/MPs and the party, as well as between the party and voters, which takes the

form of a statement or pledge signed by members nominated to compete in the elections under the party's umbrella. In the pledge, members guarantee their commitment to competing in the elections according to agreed-upon policies.

It is also a **multi-party building process**, which means that it does not only include MPs and party leadership, but also extends to the relationships between MPs and the party's grassroots. This takes place through the so-called policy forum, in which representatives of the different currents take part in voting on party policies (and thus on government policies in cases where the party wins the elections). But the role of supporters and voters as key players in the party's commitment to its rules and outlines cannot be ignored[24].

In addition, the process of building a political party is based on a strong awareness of political work and practices that provide a space for exchanging interests; thereby motivate members to abide by the party's plans and not just shallow values. This is something that is absent in the Egyptian case in one way or another. This is evident in the approval of a scheme for gains and benefits for members who commit to the party line under which they are awarded leading positions or government positions after concluding required discussions and consultations regarding the suitability and efficiency of a member for a certain position.

Among other things, party line commitment also requires the following: flexibility in terms of party rules, interior structures to

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[24] Jacqui Smith, "Members of parliament and commitment to the party line - reflection and the UK experience", March 2015, chapter in this book.

guarantee cohesive party building and commitment, **the presence of clear communication lines between concerned structures within a certain party**, the existence of **specialized structures and committees** within the party that are responsible for providing MPs with all necessary data and information in exchange for the MPs' commitment to clarifying all issues and details requested by those committees, and the existence of something resembling a parliamentary body within the political party for MPs to discuss all causes and developments.

The structural organization of MPs and their work is in turn extended within the parliament through so-called "whips". "Whips" are responsible for managing parliament work, both legislative and procedural, between MPs belonging to the same party and handles work related to communication with civil society and specialists in the different fields and research institutions[25].

2. Constituency issues:

Accommodation and elimination of the conflict of interests between a certain constituency, represented within a political party by a MP, and the policies of the party itself is one of the most difficult and complicated aspects that might affect party line commitment. Partly because it is linked to what the party

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[25] Jacqui Smith, "Members of parliament and commitment to the party line - reflection and the UK experience", March 2015, chapter in this book.

represents, its relationship to itself, and its political relationship with the constituency it represents and partly because it has to do with the party providing it with support and a foundation for its moves. This also makes it harder for the party and its leaders to deal with, since one of the main political targets of party line commitment is the party's public members or supporters. This is the moment when the MP has to confront the public with party policies, which contradict their own interests. Therefore, there is no fixed mechanism in the British experience for resolving this issue in terms of what the MP should do or what the party should do. Instead, the whole issue is left ultimately to the discretionary power of the party leadership, with the decisive factor in the leadership's decision being the knowledge of whether this rejection is a general stance between MPs, which could later lead to boycotts or whether the conflicting interests are limited to certain MPs and constituencies[26].

3. Party heads and leaders:

The five years following 2011 have provided a large space for testing a number of issues related to the general building of political parties, which as previously mentioned is a process where multiple factors have overlapped. One of the key factors is party leadership, a detail that affects party line commitment and is seen as one of the basic features for testing the cohesion of party building.

The experience of Egyptian political parties is generally characterized by the fact that party leadership has, in many

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[26] Jacqui Smith, "Members of parliament and commitment to the party line - reflection and the UK experience", March 2015, chapter in this book.

cases, played a negative role in terms of party line commitment and party cohesion. Contrary to what was expected, given the direct impact the leadership has on party line commitment, due to its power to guarantee that members are committed to the party whenever necessary; this is done through the management methods adopted by the leadership within the party. At the core of it, lies the decision-making process and the role model provided by leadership through its commitment to party outlines, in addition to the possibility of holding it accountable and criticizing it when it does not abide by the party line and rules.

These five years have unveiled the predominance of individual nature of Egyptian party leadership, as well as a great deal of personalization, which is reflected in the powers enjoyed by the leadership/individual. These powers of the leadership can reach a stage of monopoly, as the result of an absence of collective leadership institutionalism within these parties[27]. This can also affect the party's image in the minds of citizens and public groups, who link the party's name to a certain figure. For example, in the case of Al-*Wafd* Party (which has been linked to its President Al-Sayed Badawi), the Free Egyptians Party (which is similarly linked to Naguib Sawiris). In many cases and situations, this was a burden on these parties because people held them accountable for the personal positions of their leaders. This is also seen at the internal party level, in situations where the entire party is ignored as an active entity, in favour of these figures who monopolize the party's representation. This can be partially explained by the relationship between money

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[27] Nadine Abdallah, "Egyptian political parties' youth between influence abilities and marginalization problems", Arab Forum for Alternatives, 2015, pages 15–16.

and political work, which in some cases leads to the leadership of a party getting involved in conflicts and skirmishes[28]. That definitely has a negative impact on the rest of the members and grassroots.

The negative role of party leadership also extended to another issue, related to the leadership's method of dealing with party line commitment, by issuing a number of statements and adopting stances that reflect a gap and contradiction with the party's announced line. This certainly brings harm to the party's image in the media and on the public level. It has also negatively affected the parties' members in terms of completely ignoring and violating party rules in addition to consolidating the concept of selective enforcement of rules, enforcing them in cases where certain members violate the party line yet exempting other violating members from such enforcement.

The issue is also connected to the way party leadership conceives the structural nature of grassroots belonging to their party, as well as the currents and thoughts adopted by those grassroots towards certain issues or policies. Eventually, this results in the party leadership adopting certain stances, while its members adopt opposite ones. Such a situation is manifested in two main forms: either the political party will disintegrate, through defections and mass resignations; or the situation will remain the same on the surface—meaning that these deep disagreements, as well as the inability to contain them, will

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[28] صلاح دياب: البدوي قادر على أن يتجاوز بالحزب أزمته الحالية، مصر العربية، 15 أغسطس 2015، http://is.gd/qtQmLJ
Salah Diab: Al-Badawi capable of overcoming his current crisis, Masr Al-Arabia, August 15, 2015.

continue to dominate the scene but the party leadership will choose to ignore them out of fear that the party will implode. Thus, the party's ability to enforce its rules constantly declines, leading to the creation of weak and ineffective partisan entities. In this regard, we can refer to the experience of Al-*Nour* Party, when it chose to support the July 3 track, while its grassroots tended to adopt another stance, resulting in the presence of some members in the *Rabaa Al-Adaweya* sit-in, which fully opposed that track. This case revealed the means used by party leadership to manage deep disagreements with the party grassroots, and how the leadership preferred to postpone decisive actions, not confront their grassroots. Thereby confusing the people and public opinion regarding the party's stances, choices and credibility[29].

Conclusion:

Varying levels of party line commitment, how keen parties are on achieving it, and how parties deal with their members accordingly can be referenced via a number of considerations based on some stable experiences:

- Membership type:

Decisions taken by the General Secretariat and the general assembly are fully binding on party leadership, while organizational and strategic decisions are only binding for

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[29] الفضالي: "قواعد حزب النور تؤيد أفكار الإخوان.وبكار: القرار في يد الشعب والقضاء"، جريدة الشروق، 15 يونيو 2015http://is.gd/CHRJNy،
Al-Fadali: Al-Nour Party's grassroots support the Muslim Brotherhood thoughts, Bakkar: the decision is up to the people and the judiciary", Al-Shorouk newspaper, June 15, 2015.

members of the parliamentary body. Grassroots members are only committed to organizational decisions taken by the general assembly.

- <u>Nature of the decision:</u>

With regard to general assembly decisions, tactical decisions are binding on the leadership, organizational decisions are binding on all party members, and strategic decisions are binding on leading members and members of parliamentary bodies.

- <u>Decision-making side</u>**:**

Only members of parliamentary bodies are concerned with their decisions, members who violate them are only to be blamed as a punishment. Decisions taken by the General Secretariat and the bodies commissioned by it are binding to members. Members who do not abide by them are accordingly interrogated without being expelled. General assembly decisions are binding to members, and their violation requires investigation with the possibility of the member being expelled.

- <u>Form of expression:</u>

Members generally enjoy freedom of expression that does not include criticism of the party or its work through articles, opinions, TV shows, websites or seminars or does not refer to the party membership. Individual practices are, of course, not acceptable with regard to organizational and strategic decisions. This applies also to leadership. In some cases, direct decisions are taken to prohibit objection to any organizational or strategic decisions.

Organizing levels of party line commitment according to the previous criteria represents part of the solution for the party line commitment problem. It also applies to some of the ideas presented in this book, such as the idea of the "policy forum" as a means to strengthen integration among people's representatives, or the idea of "whips" as a regulatory means to oversee the process of party line commitment. However, this cannot be successful without achieving reform in the structure of Egyptian political parties, which have a great effect on the issue of party line commitment. The first one of these is related to **regulations organizing party work**, where a basic problem arises from the fact that many regulations are not enforced in one way or another. Also, many of the interactions happening between party members take place apart from these regulations. This can also be explained by the fact that many party members are not aware of the party regulations. Therefore, they know neither which regulations are binding for them nor what other procedures could be useful for their interaction within the party. This is also related to the fact that many party members and party components did not take part in the drafting of regulations and rules that took place in the central committee responsible for drafting the bylaws of the party and did not participate in the process of commenting on the proposed drafts. This is partially due to a lack of electronic devices (computers and printers) in secretariats, which weakens the capability of political parties in terms of distributing these drafts to members so that those members can express their opinions on them. In some cases, paper copies cannot be easily provided either.

Reference can also be made to the fact that at the time of their establishment, many Egyptian political parties were suffering from internal disagreements; in which some members believed in the importance of drafting regulations for the parties first, before holding elections to form parliamentary bodies on the different levels. Others preferred to hold the elections first to achieve a sort of clarity and stability regarding party forms and structures, while regulations organizing the party could follow later. This latter strategy had a negative impact in some cases as evidenced by a vagueness of rules, workflow, and commitment among members resulting from that[30].

Evasiveness in the use of rules included in the regulations makes members question these regulations and worry about the idea of not respecting them; therefore, there is nothing to refer to in the case of disagreements or while managing the party's daily work or other details, which of course reduces the opportunity for members' commitment to the party.

There are also some cases, where new rules regarding organization of the procedural and organizational processes within a party were issued, and circulated in a very quick and surprising way, without consulting grassroots or secretariats. This affected the credibility of the grassroots and contributed to the disintegration of the party.

- <u>Party discourse and programmes:</u>

This is one of the effective factors in achieving party line commitment, because party programmes are, to a great extent, similar in terms of outlines imposed by the Egyptian revolution. They do not reflect the true belief or rooting of these thoughts

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[30] Interview with a member of Al-Dostour Party.

and outlines in the mentality of the party or those in charge of it (both leadership and grassroots). This leads to some vagueness that, not only negatively affects the relationship between members and party leadership regarding certain decisions and stances, but also affects the confidence of ordinary citizens in political parties and their members31.

Finally, historically strong and well-established political parties, such as British political parties, stress the fact that party line commitment is a foundational building process. It is based on the variable of accumulation and constant investment in dialogue and negotiations between the party leadership, members, and different categories of members, in order to reach agreement on consensual general rules. It should be accompanied by a certain level of openness toward other circles such as technical experts, that do not belong to the party but that might play a role in the drafting of rules, especially those related to general policies. This requires transparency from the beginning, that members are informed about all variables and rules and constantly involved in the process.

Accordingly, the issue of party line commitment in the Egyptian case is not an issue that can be dealt with separately from the party situation or the general political context. Without a law that promotes freedom of party organization and work, does not impose any constraints on party creation and work in terms of numbers, complicated procedures, or strict supervision; without a legislation that encourages pluralism and considers

31 محمد العجاتي، نوران أحمد، " مفهوم المواطنة في خطاب التيارات السياسية المختلفة: دراسة مقارنة"،
منتدى البدائل العربي للدراسات، ديسمبر 2014، ص: 35
Mohammad Al-Agati, Nouran Ahmad, "Concept of citizenship in the discourse of the different political movements: comparative study", Arab Forum for Alternatives for Studies, December 2014, page 35.

parties a tool to achieve it, encouraging citizens to engage in political work based on party programmes; and above all else, without a party whose structures, mechanisms and practices are based on internal democracy; it will be very difficult to develop the performance of party representatives and to make them abide by the concept of "party line commitment".